March 20, 2023

Rep. Rick Hansen, Chair
Environment Finance and Policy Committee
MN House of Representatives
407 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Foung Hawj, Chair
Environment, Climate and Legacy Committee
MN Senate
3231 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Hansen and Chair Hawj:

On behalf of the MN-FISH Coalition, I am writing to offer our strong backing for SF2037 and HF2389, "Protecting Upper Mississippi River from invasive carp." These bills would fund a proven solution to one of the foremost threats to Minnesota's natural resources: invasive carp.

Briefly, four species of carp from Asia (silver, bighead, grass, and black) escaped into the Mississippi River in Arkansas four decades ago. From there they've been spreading ever since, wreaking environmental and economic havoc. Studies of carp-infested waters show that filter-feeding silver and bighead are incredibly damaging. Consuming vast quantities of food, they reduce the number, size and diversity of native fishes by up to 50 percent—including important gamefish. Meanwhile, large silver carp jump up to 9 feet out of the water, creating a serious hazard for recreational boaters and fishers.

Adult silver carp are being caught by the dozens in southern Minnesota waters in Mississippi River pools near Winona. As described in a January 31 *Star Tribune* article, the number of silver carp is doubling annually as they swim upstream from breeding grounds in Iowa. Because female carp each have millions of eggs, once they are established and breeding here, there will be no getting rid of them. Several states (IL, MI, KY, TN) already spend millions annually to remove invasive carp—and that's just to keep even as their fisheries are further reduced. Let's not allow Minnesota to join this group.

Minnesota's outdoor recreational community and industry are at serious risk if invasive carp continue to move upriver and spawn. Fortunately, a team at the University of Minnesota led by Dr. Peter Sorensen has been studying this issue for the past decade. With several millions in LCCMR funding they have identified a feasible and affordable solution that would buy the state decades to identify a permanent solution.

SF2037 and HF2389 would require and fund the MN DNR to enable the Sorensen team's solution. These bills specify that it would be implemented at Lock and Dam 5 (just north of Winona). Research has shown that carp movement upstream is slow enough that it might be reduced to near zero (2 percent)

using a multi-component approach. A carp deterrent would be added to the lock, ongoing carp removal would be enhanced at this location, and engineers would examine whether and how to adjust spillway gate openings to allow even fewer carp to pass—while native fish passage would be facilitated using a native fish elevator.

This plan is supported by the scientific community. Key elements have been published in 4 peer-reviewed scientific publications and assessed by Barr Engineering Company, which also found it reasonable and doable. Four stakeholder meeting conducted by Barr have also been supportive. The DNR has not been overtly supportive, but it has done little to provide an alternative. Despite the ongoing movement of invasive carp into Minnesota, the DNR did not have a carp biologist on staff until 6 months ago, and it has failed to update its own carp action plan since 2011.

Analyses suggest that adult invasive carp will be past lock and Dam 5 in just few short years and breeding in Lake Pepin—and then the St Croix River—if no action is taken. There is just enough time to stop them if we act now.

A plan exists that is capable of arresting would be the worst environmental disaster to strike Minnesota's waters since the zebra mussel.

Please help make Minnesota the first state to take action and stop these invasive fish. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dave Osborne, President
MN-FISH Coalition

C: Representative Peter Fischer, chief author, HF2389
Senator John Hoffman, chief author, SF2037