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Senator Foug Hawj
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
3231 Minnesota Senate Building
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Chair Hawj and members of the Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee: April 4, 2023

As the Committee reviews the delete-all (A3) amendment to SF1682, which would create the Legacy Omnibus bill, we write to highlight our support for the A3 amendment and the efforts of the committee to advance the work of the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment passed by Minnesota voters in 2008.

We especially thank you for including appropriation recommendations made to the legislature by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council as represented in Article 1, Outdoor Heritage Fund. We also thank you for including the appropriation recommendations of the Clean Water Council for the Clean Water Fund, contained in Article 2.

The work of each of these councils is unique, and important to helping ensure dollars from these two Legacy funds are spent in a way that achieves the purposes set in state's constitution: In regard to the Outdoor Heritage Fund "to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife" and for the Clean Water Fund "to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater from degradation...and drinking water sources." (*Minnesota Constitution Article XI, Section 15*)

The Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, comprised of citizen experts and legislators, works over the course of a year to ensure that their recommendations are consistent with the constitution and several state conservation plans. They vet proposed projects through hearings, recipient tours, and ensuring accountability with past project appropriations. The Council deliberates thoroughly, and regularly reviews and updates application criteria for prospective recipients as circumstances require.

The Clean Water Council, made up of both citizen volunteers representing diverse stakeholders and legislators, spent the last two years gathering input from state agencies and a variety of constituencies from across the state to aid in the development of its recommendations for how the Clean Water Fund should be spent. The Council is a deliberative body who spends significant time and effort in making recommendations in line with their strategic plan, which the Council recently worked to update in 2020. The Council, state agencies and stakeholders have identified and recommended new programs to address clean water needs.

The Conservancy supports the recommendations of each of these councils and the thorough process each conducted to arrive at their recommendations now contained in the SF1682 A3 delete-all amendment.

Thank you for your work to continue the benefits of the Legacy funds for Minnesota.

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