



The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota,
North Dakota, South Dakota
1101 West River Parkway, Suite 200
Minneapolis, MN 55415-1291

tel (612) 331.0700
fax (612) 331.0770
nature.org

Senator John Marty, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
3235 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55155

April 10, 2023

Chair Marty, and Members of the Finance Committee:

As the Committee reviews SF1955, the Agriculture, Broadband and Rural Development omnibus appropriations bill, we write to share our support for and to highlight general fund investments in programs that will benefit people and nature across the state.

We are particularly pleased to see an appropriation for and establishment of the Soil Health Financial Assistance program at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 2(b) and Article 2, Section 3). We are glad to see the inclusion of this important program that provides financial assistance to farmers for a broad set of soil health practices.

The program is not just limited to traditional cost-share and can include down payments on equipment, purchases or subscription of equipment, low interest loans, and purchases of seed, and technical assistance for conservation plans. This financial assistance will lower the risk to soil health adoption and help farmers overcome barriers to implementing practices across the state.

We appreciate the \$2,000,000 one-time investment proposed in the program that is included in SF1955, and know it will help expand and further establish this worthy effort. However, after significant demand for the program on a pilot basis, greater investment will be needed to meet demands and make significant gains towards statewide adoption of these practices. If a future opportunity allows, we encourage the committee to invest closer to \$10,000,000 one-time with an ongoing investment of \$2,000,000 as was included in SF1245, by Senator Gustafson, which had been considered by the Agriculture, Broadband and Rural Development Committee.

Research shows we have a high potential to increase carbon storage through natural lands, including crop lands, in Minnesota. Soil health practices help store carbon while providing benefits for water quality and quantity. There is an urgent need for these activities to expand to a meaningful scale, while require farm operations of all types and sizes to have support to implement and expand soil health practice adoption.

Thank you again for your consideration of SF1955.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pinkalla
Government Relations Director
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota

Molly Jansen
Government Relations Specialist
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota