

Chair Foungh Hawj
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
3231 Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue W.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: SF 5116 - Legacy Omnibus - Clean Water Fund Appropriations

March 21, 2024

Chair Hawj and Members of the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee,

As the committee considers the Clean Water Council's supplemental recommendations for the Clean Water Legacy funds in the Legacy Omnibus bill, we write to highlight support for the work of and the updated recommendations produced by the Clean Water Council and share our concern about changes to those recommendations contained in Senate File 5116.

The Clean Water Council, made up of both citizen volunteers representing diverse stakeholders and legislators, spent 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, and identifying opportunities that will have the highest impact with limited Clean Water Fund dollars.

The updates to their recommendations reflect time sensitive and emerging needs that have evolved since the Council developed their initial recommendations. Revised recommendations include efforts to protect areas of Southeast Minnesota and the Mississippi Headwaters in an effort to prevent water quality degradation.

We are particularly concerned by the reductions the bill makes to six supplemental recommendations by the Council:

- A reduction of \$402,000 from the AgBMP Loan program
- A reduction of \$1,873,000 from the Southeastern Minnesota Nitrate response (local capacity funding)
- Removal of the \$326,000 MPCA River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment Program
- A reduction of \$1,000,000 from Enhanced County Inspection/SSTS Corrective Actions (low-income grants)
- A reduction of \$1,949,000 from the BWSR Working Lands and Floodplain Easements program
- A reduction of \$500,000 from the University of Minnesota's Stormwater Research Council grants



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

These programs have all been considered for their ability to deliver on the outcomes required by the Clean Water Fund and are worthy of being funded at the full recommended level.

We are also concerned by the addition of several line items that were not recommended by the Clean Water Council and are also associated with bills that have sought general funds for these activities. We encourage the committee to remove these programs from the bill and consider funding with general funds:

- \$500,000 for Municipal Effluent Testing for PFAS (as contained in SF 4073, McEwen)
- \$150,000 for Friends of the Minnesota Valley River Watch education program (as contained in SF 3946, Kunesh)
- \$5,400,000 for the 50 Year Water Plan developed by the University of Minnesota (as contained in SF 4143, Morrison)

The Council, state agencies and stakeholders have identified and recommended existing and new programs to address clean water needs. As a participant during many of the Council's meetings, The Nature Conservancy fully supports its recommendations and the thorough process by which the Council has arrived at their updated recommendations, and we encourage the committee to accept the guidance of the Council who have invested a great deal of time in arriving at their recommendations.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the State of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Pinkalla".

Stephanie Pinkalla
Government Relations Director
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota