



# SIERRA CLUB

## NORTH STAR CHAPTER

**Sierra Club North Star Chapter**  
2300 Myrtle Avenue, Suite 260  
Saint Paul, MN 55114

April 17, 2025

Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development Committee  
Minnesota Senate  
95 University Ave W,  
St. Paul, MN 55103

**RE: Support for [Senate File 3083](#) (McEwen; Kunes; Johnson Stewart; Marty):**  
***“Pesticides from treated seeds addition to the Commissioner of Agriculture's pesticide management plan requirements; appropriating money”***

Dear Committee Leaders and Members:

Founded in 1968, the Sierra Club North Star Chapter is a non-profit environmental organization representing over 50,000 members and supporters across Minnesota. The Sierra Club works to safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and litigation. As a leading grassroots voice working to preserve and protect Minnesota's environment, we empower volunteer leaders to act through environmental advocacy, community organizing, and outdoor exploration. We participate in the administrative process to encourage environmental health and sustainability, long term wildlife and habitat protection, and biodiversity goals.

We are proud to support Senate Bill 3083 because there is a clear and urgent need to protect Minnesota's water, ecosystems, wildlife and people from the widespread use and prevalence of systemic pesticides including neonicotinoids (aka neonics). These neurotoxic insecticides have been proven to pollute our water, soil, air and plants while compromising the health, essential activities and/or typical lifetimes of many animals. These include pollinators such as bees; birds (including songbirds as just one neonics treated seed can kill them); deer (Minnesota's deer samples show very high contamination levels in 2019 and 2021 studies); and aquatic organisms (food for fish). People are also affected due to [neurological and developmental risks and harm](#) (see our large coalition's listing of many studies at: <https://www.house.mn.gov/comm/docs/UUf99IJfaEuN2Td8s1ZhVg.pdf>).

Neonics are long-lived and water soluble. They go where the water goes and can last a long time in the soil. Some of them break down with exposure to light, but many of the breakdown products are also toxic. [One study estimates](#) that only a small percentage (five percent) of the pesticide seed coating is taken up by the corn or soybean plant. The rest goes into the soil and water. And Minnesota has more than 14 million acres of farmland planted with pesticide treated seeds, mostly neonic pesticides.

As more studies about the prevalence and impact of neonics come in, the more we realize how imperative it is to take action to regulate them. Widespread, harmful uses of neonic-treated corn and soybean provide [little to no economic benefits to farmers](#), especially in the upper Midwest. This

joint **extension publication**, which includes the [University of Minnesota](#), also confirms that insecticide seed treatments are rarely beneficial in soybeans.

University of Minnesota researchers and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) studies clearly indicate that neonicotinoid pesticides are present in our surface and groundwaters. Often, they are found in concentrations that will have an impact on aquatic organisms (exceed EPA aquatic life benchmarks).

Among the Sierra Club's stated policy and goals in Minnesota and across the country as posted on our national website is also achieving much more support and protection for pollinators (<https://www.sierraclub.org/grassroots-network/food-agriculture/pollinators>). Several beneficial pollinators who are essential to our nation's own food supplies are already in a severe situation due to the direct and indirect effects of neonics. This also makes them more vulnerable to disease.

In October, 2024, the MDA received a joint rulemaking petition from several groups requesting that MDA take action to protect Minnesota's environment and people from neonicotinoid treated seeds. The Department responded that they did not have the authority to develop programs that would regulate pesticide treated seeds. Passage of this bill would clarify the authority and funding to limit the impact of systemic pesticides on non-target organisms, including pollinators, wildlife, aquatic biota, and people. It is an encouraging approach to this problem, and we strongly recommend that you adopt this bill as part of Minnesota's statutes.

For these reasons and more, we at the Sierra Club North Star Chapter look forward to pesticide-treated seed regulation as part of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's essential management plan requirements. This bill includes partnering with local governments and public health agencies with adequate resources to be appropriated to alleviate the severity of the problem.

Thank you for serious consideration of this proposed legislation.

Sincerely,  
Sierra Club North Star Chapter

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