

Co-Chair Justin Eichorn and Co-Chair FOUNG Hawj
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue W.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

January 22, 2025

Senator Eichorn, Senator Hawj and Committee members:

We write to you, as dedicated members of Minnesota's conservation community, to offer perspective on Senate File 106. Our organizations help ensure Outdoor Heritage Funds from the 2008 Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment deliver on the expectations set in the state's constitution and under the direction of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC), and work to benefit people, wildlife, and habitat in the state with these nation-leading funds.

Senate File 106 would require projects receiving an appropriation through the Outdoor Heritage Fund or Clean Water Fund to take unnecessary, burdensome and in some cases redundant steps that would increase project costs, delay project outcomes, and further spread thin these resources which are popular with the public and in high demand across Minnesota, ultimately limiting and reducing the number of restoration projects completed using Legacy funds.

Requiring public hearings to explain the ecological need to, for example, remove trees from a prairie grassland or restore a small pothole wetland on public land, or private land under a conservation easement would add significant time and expense and make poor use of these state taxpayer dollars for activities that are commonly conducted as part of habitat projects across the state. Additionally, LSOHC meetings are already public, and each proposal with restoration gives a public presentation to the council.

Senate File 106 also includes several provisions related to adjacent landowners and potential impacts to neighboring properties. Recipients of Outdoor Heritage Funds conducting projects funded using Legacy dollars strive to be good neighbors, but there are legal mechanisms within state law for neighbors whose lands may be impacted to seek recourse or raise concerns and have them be addressed. While there can be problems that may arise related to Legacy projects, there are many existing laws and regulations to address trespass issues and violation of neighboring lands that apply beyond the Legacy funds.

For these reasons, we oppose Senate File 106 and thank the committee for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Audubon Upper Mississippi River
Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Minnesota Land Trust
MN Division of the Izaak Walton League of America
Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society
The Conservation Fund
Trust for Public Land

Conservation Minnesota
Minnesota Conservation Federation
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
Minnesota Valley Trust
Pheasants Forever
The Nature Conservancy