



Minnesota  
Environmental  
Partnership

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Minnesota Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee  
Chair Fong Hawj

Dear Chair Hawj and members,

On behalf of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership and the organizations signed below, I would like to express our coalition's views on provisions of SF 570, a bill that would alter Minnesota's permitting practices. We have significant concerns with this bill and ask that it not be approved by this committee without addressing these concerns.

For context, Minnesota currently enjoys a robust yet largely efficient permitting process for most projects. The vast majority - 98% - of MPCA permitting decisions on priority projects meet statutory timelines. Additional staffing at the MPCA to handle permits, which is included in the Governor's proposed budget, would help to accelerate project review. We applaud this approach to create a more timely and efficient permitting process.

Last year, the Legislature passed a law updating the permitting process for energy projects in an effort to balance faster infrastructure development with the need for reasonable safeguards. While some high-profile projects have stalled in the permitting process, this is largely due to incomplete applications, changes in the project or the projects not meeting the requirements of state or federal law.

We appreciate that discussions are underway to address concerns with many provisions of this bill. But this bill remains deeply flawed in how it modifies the rights of Minnesota residents to both engage and protect the natural resources that define our state and make it a place we love to call home.

Specifically, SF 570 would sharply reduce the ability of Minnesotans to make their voice heard in the permitting process on projects that may affect them. Currently, 100 Minnesotans from anywhere in the state may petition for an environmental review; the bill would allow only Minnesotans from the county where a project is proposed, or adjacent counties, to petition. Air pollution, and pollution to water bodies like Lake Superior or the Minnesota River, is seldom contained to one or two counties. Restricting Minnesotans' voices in the decisions of their government agencies, decisions that may profoundly affect their lives, is counter to the public interest.

As we understand it, this legislation has not included consultation with Minnesota tribes. Such profound changes to Minnesota's permitting process should not be contemplated without including these key stakeholders on the front end. The lack of engagement with tribal governments is especially noteworthy, as the water, air and

resources at stake are often treaty resources. This government-to-government consultation is needed before this bill advances.

Minnesota has been widely regarded as a good state to do business in, a state that simultaneously places a high value on safeguarding our land, water, air, and people. The short-sighted changes to our environmental review process in SF 570 would weaken the role of science and citizen participation in agency decisions and further undermine Minnesota's historic balanced approach to building a thriving economy with a high quality of life.

We strongly encourage you to oppose this legislation unless these concerns are addressed. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions regarding our coalition's position on SF 570.

Sincerely,



Steve Morse  
Executive Director

*Submitted on behalf of the organizations listed below.*

Alliance for Sustainability	League of Women Voters Minnesota
Audubon Upper Mississippi River	Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota
Austin Audubon Society*	Metro Blooms*
Austin Coalition for Environmental Sustainability	Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota	Minnesota Well Owners Organization
Central Minnesota Audubon Society, Inc*	Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society*
Clean River Partners	MN350
Climate Generation	Move Minnesota
Climate Land Leaders	Pollinator Friendly Alliance
CURE MN	Renewing the Countryside
Environmental Initiative	Resilient Cities and Communities
Eureka Recycling	Saint Paul Bird Alliance
Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas	Sustainable Farming Association
Friends of the Boundary Waters	Third Act Minnesota
Izaak Walton League Minnesota Division	WaterLegacy
League of Women Voters Duluth	Zumbro Valley Audubon Society*

*\*denotes non-MEP member*