



April 8, 2025

Chair Hawj, Lead Green, and members of the Senate Environment Committee,

I am writing in regard to provisions in the delete-everything amendment for [SF 2077](#) (Hawj), the Senate's omnibus environment and natural resources bill.

I appreciate the inclusion of funding for regional parks and trails operations and maintenance funding. We also appreciate that the DE amendment includes the language put forward by the Met Council to add tribal governments to the tree planting grant program found in [Minnesota Statute 473.355](#).

Regional parks and trails operations and maintenance funding is critical for the regional parks and trails system in the metropolitan area. Governor Walz's budget recommends \$2.54 million in general fund and \$8.95 million from the natural resources fund (lottery-in-lieu) in each of the next two fiscal years (FY26 and FY27) to the Metropolitan Council for regional parks operations and maintenance. State funds to operate and maintain regional parks are an investment in the people who call this region home. Every dollar allocated to the Met Council for this program is passed through to the 10 regional park implementing agencies.

The regional system is comprised of 46 regional parks, 12 park reserves, eight special recreation features, and nearly 500 miles of regional trails. These high-quality spaces connect people to the outdoors, build health, and support assets that drive our economy. Operations and maintenance funding from the state is used for many critical activities in regional parks, including:

- Facility maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation
- Trail maintenance and upkeep
- Forestry and groundskeeping (mowing, tree trimming, native plant restoration, and invasive species control)
- Staff salaries and overhead expenses (facilities, natural resources, and programming)

Again, we appreciate the inclusion of updates to the community tree planting statute and parks and trails funding in your bill. Please reach out to me or Judd Schetnan (judd.schetnan@metc.state.mn.us) with any questions or comments. We are available to meet at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles A. Zelle'.

Charles A. Zelle
Chair