

April 9, 2025

Senator Fount Hawj  
Chair, Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee  
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3231  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Hawj:

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would like to thank you and your committee members for your work on the Senate Omnibus Environment and Natural Resources Budget and Policy Bill (Senate File 2077). Below please find DNR's comments on both budget and policy items in the bill.

### **Budget Items**

We appreciate the inclusion of many of the Governor's budget recommendations. We would like to specifically thank you for the inclusion of:

- DNR operating adjustment at the same overall level as the Governor's recommendations. With a careful eye to the health of dedicated funds, we would like to work with the committee on potential impacts to the Game and Fish Fund balances.
- Ground water use and AIS surcharge increase proposals from the Governor's budget. We do have some questions about how the AIS proposal is structured, and we look forward to working with the committee to address these questions.

Additionally, we support the inclusion of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) recommendations for Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund appropriations contained in Article 2 and the appropriations for the Community Grants Program contained in Article 3.

We are, however, concerned that the bill does not include some critical pieces of the Governor's budget recommendations, as follows:

- Proposed state park permit fee increases are omitted from the bill. These fee increases are necessary to keep pace with rising costs, and without this additional revenue, the DNR will be forced to make publicly visible reductions to state park services.
- The bill omits funding for legal costs, which will force costs to be paid from programs and services in areas that are already stretched by general fund pressures.
- The bill also does not include funding for public safety preparedness that is necessary for our conservation officers to be available for general public safety needs and protection of state assets.

Furthermore, we are concerned about General Fund reductions included in the bill. These include:

- Reductions to funding for private forest management work that is critical to effective forest management and climate change mitigation across the state.
- Reductions to chronic wasting disease (CWD) response funding proposed in this bill will reduce our ability to effectively mitigate the disease.

#### **Policy Items**

We appreciate the inclusion of several DNR related policy issues including:

- DNR Policy Bill language including provisions related to burbot, invasive carp, and PWI technical correction
- Lands Bill
- Continuous bass season

DNR does have concerns with several policy provisions in the bill, and we'd like to continue work with the committee on these items. These include:

- The Foraging Task Force language in the bill gives a majority voice to consumptive users of public lands while excluding the voices of those who use public lands for non-consumptive purposes. We would like to work with you to ensure that all voices have a seat at the table.
- The timber sale extension language included in the bill appears to address issues related to a limited number of permit holders. The DNR has permit extension processes to deal with these situations.

Again, we thank you for your thoughtful work on this bill. We look forward to working with you as the bill moves towards finalization.

Sincerely,



Sarah Strommen  
Commissioner