

FRESHWATER

May 2, 2024

Chair Samantha Vang
House Agriculture Finance and Policy
545 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Aric Putnam
Senate Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development
3215 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for water quality and soil health provisions in Agriculture omnibus bill

Dear Chair Vang and Chair Putnam,

We are grateful for your leadership and thoughtful approach to understanding and addressing the nitrate situation in southeastern Minnesota. We appreciated the opportunity to participate in many of these discussions with you and your committees.

As you consider how to reconcile the House and Senate versions of the Agriculture Omnibus bill, we would like to encourage you to sort out the nitrate response differences in favor of the Senate approach; which balances the nitrate response funding between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health:

- MDA. Nitrate Treatment – Reverse Osmosis Systems in SE MN Counties: \$750,000
- MDA. Soil Health Equipment Grants – Targeted to SE MN Counties: \$500,000
- MDH. Addressing Nitrate Contamination in Private Wells in SE MN counties: \$2 million

We also appreciate the leadership in the House related to clean water, climate and soil healthy farming. While we were disappointed most of the provisions of this initiative were not included in an omnibus bill, we encourage you to adopt the House language that creates a working group to explore a state carbon market, which could help incentivize soil health initiatives that sequester carbon in the soil while protecting water quality.

Again, thank you for your work this session to address these large and complex agricultural issues given a limited budget, and for your ongoing partnership in protecting and restoring Minnesota waters. We look forward to continuing to work with you on efforts to put forward a more robust response to the nitrate issue plaguing drinking water in rural Minnesota. We now have sound science that will guide us toward long-term solutions to this issue.

Sincerely,



Michelle Stockness, PE
Executive Director, Freshwater

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Freshwater is a nonprofit organization working to inspire and empower people to value and preserve water.