

Chair, Senator Foug Hawj
Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee
Minnesota Senate Building 3231
Saint Paul, MN 55155

March 4, 2026

Chair Hawj and members of the Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee,

The Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund benefits current citizens and future generations by providing long-term, consistent, and stable funding for projects to protect, conserve, and enhance Minnesota's "air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources." Minnesota voters overwhelmingly endorsed this strategy when they voted to continue sending a portion of the state lottery proceeds to the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) with 77% approval in 2024. Since 1991 ENRTF has provided over \$1.1 billion to 1,700+ projects benefiting every county in the state.

Our organizations are proud to support the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund Appropriations Bill, SF3857, which continues this special Minnesota tradition of environmental stewardship.

This bill contains the recommendations of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), a body of 17 members comprised of citizens and legislators who spend significant time reviewing proposals from across the state to inform the legislature on the best way to direct ENRTF dollars toward cleaner water, healthier forests and prairies, world-class hiking and biking trails, cutting-edge natural resources research institutions, opportunities for enrichment and environmental education programming, and abundant fish and wildlife.

In addition to advancing the recommendations of the LCCMR, we urge the committee to include the annual appropriation from the ENRTF to the Community Grant program. This program created by the legislature in 2023 and operated by the Department of Natural Resources serves as a new tool to increase the ability to "expand the number and diversity of recipients who benefit from the environment and natural resources trust fund, especially in communities that have been adversely affected by pollution and environmental degradation" (Minn. Statutes 116X.03).

Tying together both the LCCMR recommendations and the fiscal year 2027 appropriation to this program was agreed to among the co-chairs of the House Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee; the Chair of the Senate Environment, Climate and Legacy Committee; the co-chairs of the House Ways & Means Committee and the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee during the 2025 Special Legislative Session. As the DNR is now poised to launch this program after extensive preparation and planning, we - and the millions of Minnesotans who voted to establish it - look forward to having next year's funding available on schedule to meet the program goals.

The Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund helps entities from all over Minnesota to protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance Minnesota's natural resources, including small towns to large urban cities, counties and watershed districts, Minnesota colleges and universities, non-profits, federal and state agencies, and more.

Thank you for your support of SF3857 and continued support of the Community Grants appropriation.

Respectfully submitted by the following organizations,

Alliance for Sustainability
Audubon Upper Mississippi River
Austin Audubon Society
Brainerd Lakes Audubon Society
Central Minnesota Audubon Society
Climate Land Leaders
Conservation Minnesota
COPAL
CURE
Ducks Unlimited
Environmental Initiative
Environmental Justice Coordinating Council
Freshwater Society
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness
Friends of the Mississippi River
Great River Greening
Initiative Foundation
Land of Lakes Bird Alliance
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Minnesota Land Trust
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
Mississippi Headwaters Audubon Society
Minnesota Trout Unlimited
Minnesota Valley Trust
Minnesota Wildlife Federation
MN350
Northeastern Minnesota Bird Alliance
Northern Waters Land Trust
Pheasants Forever
Prairie Lakes Audubon Chapter
Public Policy Project
Rainbow Research
Resilient Cities & Communities
Sharon Nordrum, Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians
St. Paul Bird Alliance
The Nature Conservancy
Trust for Public Land
University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships
Urban Bird Conservancy
Wilderness Inquiry
Zumbro Valley Audubon Society