

April 29, 2024

Senator Foug 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 Environment and Natural Resources Supplemental Budget and Policy Bill (Senate File 3887). We appreciate inclusion of the investments and many of the policy provisions proposed by DNR and Governor Walz.

The investments included in the Governor's supplemental budget and Senate File 3887 are focused on operational needs that are time sensitive and cannot wait for the biennial budget process, including legal costs, reimbursement for public safety response, compensation increases recently agreed to in Minnesota Law Enforcement Association (MLEA) negotiations, and a modern licensing system. Thank you for recognizing the importance of these investments.

We would also like to thank the committee for including many of our policy provisions in Senate File 3887 (in addition to those provisions passed from the floor in Senate File 2904). Among the policy provisions included in the current bill, we greatly appreciate the inclusion of policies related to helium and nonpetroleum gas exploration and production as well as the inclusion of the report on geologic carbon sequestration. In addition, as the bill moves forward toward finalization, we would ask the committee to consider including policy provisions previously included in Senate File 2904 before final passage including forestry industry data, removal of production limits to our state forest nurseries, clarification of our shoreland and public water rulemaking authority, and game and fish technical provisions.

As the bill advances into conference committee, the DNR also wants to share a few items that we hope can be successfully resolved through the remainder of the legislative process.

### **Legal Costs**

We appreciate that Senate File 3887 includes partial funding for legal costs so that the department can defend environmental review, permitting, leasing, and other regulatory decisions through the remainder of the FY24-25 biennium. We encourage the committee to consider full funding for this request.

**Grants for Outdoor Schools and Outreach to Non-Native English Speakers**

Senate File 3887 includes \$2 million for grants to outdoor schools and \$1.4 million to the DNR for outreach grants to non-native English-speaking communities. The DNR is supportive of these grant purposes as they align with the DNR’s mission and strategic priorities. As the bill moves forward to finalization, we would like to discuss the possibility of aligning these new grant programs with existing programs that serve similar purposes, such as the No Child Left Inside Program created in 2019 by the Minnesota Legislature for “outdoor environmental, ecological, and other natural-resource-based education and recreation programs serving youth.” We look forward to working with you and the committee to find a grant structure that is efficient and effective.

**Non-Lethal Beaver Management Grants**

Senate File 3887 includes funding for non-lethal beaver management grants within the Metropolitan area. DNR advises against these grants, as beaver are occupying all available habitats within the metropolitan area, and relocation is not a viable or humane strategy when all available habitat is occupied. The DNR currently provides Minnesotans with the information they need to manage the impacts of beavers on our website, including promoting the use of Clemson levelers to alleviate flooding and providing beaver deterrent recommendations.

Thank you and the committee again for your work on this important bill and for your consideration of our concerns. We look forward to working with you as the bill moves towards finalization.

Sincerely,



Sarah Strommen  
Commissioner

cc:

Majority Leader Erin Murphy  
Minority Leader Mark Johnson  
Vice Chair Jennifer McEwen, Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee  
Ranking Minority Member Justin Eichorn, Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee  
Joseph Birkholz, Policy Advisor, Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan