



Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

April 8, 2021

TO: House Environment & Natural Resources Committee
FROM: Kara Josephson, Legislative Director, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
RE: HF 1076 - House Environment & Natural Resources Omnibus Bill

Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your service to the people of Minnesota during this challenging time and thank you for the opportunity to testify on HF 1076, the House Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus Bill. Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) is a nonprofit organization with almost 50 years of experience using law and science to protect Minnesota's environment and the health of its people.

We are glad to see that the House budget provides general fund revenue support to agencies and avoids the shifts to dedicated funds in the Senate's proposed budget (SF 959.) As this bill moves forward, MCEA hopes the House stands strong against shifts that violate the statutes that established funds like the Heritage Enhancement Account, that are meant to provide additional funding for habitat as opposed to being used to fill holes in the general fund budget for the MPCA and DNR.

We also support HF 1076 because it contains many important provisions that will help improve our state's air, water, and soil. By no means is this an exhaustive list of the sections we support, but we would like to state the sections which MCEA strongly supports.

Articles 2 and 3: Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) Appropriations for Fiscal Years 2021 and 2022

While we generally believe that ENRTF bills ought to travel as standalone legislation, we strongly support Articles 2 and 3. They represent progress toward finally releasing ENRTF funds after nearly two years of gridlock. This would support hundreds of jobs and make important investments in scientific research and habitat protection and restoration across Minnesota. We applaud the authors of this bill for respecting the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources' process and following its recommendations.

Article 4, Sections 5, 9, 10, 30, 33, 34: Environmental Justice

We are glad to see the inclusion of several sections in Article 4 that address environmental justice and the impact on overburdened communities, particularly:

Section 5 - public hearings before settlements

Section 9 and 10 - defining environmental justice and environmental justice areas

Section 30 - addressing permitting in environmental justice areas

Section 33 - public hearings for non-expiring air permits

Section 34 - requiring MPCA to ensure that impact on environmental justice areas be addressed and consultation with environmental justice communities be conducted

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We commend Chair Hansen and Reps. Lee and Wazlawik for their work on environmental justice in these sections. MCEA has testified in favor of several of these bills in this session and previous sessions and supports these efforts. We encourage continued consultation with the communities who are overburdened by pollution as this bill moves forward so that those most impacted by pollution are part of the process of defining environmental justice and advancing solutions to injustice through the legislative process.

In addition, we would like to call attention to other provisions in the bill which we support:

Article 5, Sections 81 & 82: Water Management

MCEA supports these provisions that would expand prohibitions on new Mt. Simon-Hinckley Aquifer water appropriations permits and prohibit the bulk transport or sale of water use permits more than 50 miles from the well.

Article 6 Section 5: Water Quality & Storage

We support the effort to fund plans for effective water quality and storage management. This plan improves drinking water for Minnesotans and helps with climate change mitigation as more rains overwhelm the current system. The plan also includes utilizing natural infrastructures like wetlands and previously drained lakes, which we support as good water storage and quality practice.

Article 6, Section 6 & 7: Soil-Healthy Farming

We support the establishment of a state-wide soil-healthy farming goal of at least 30 percent of Minnesota farmland utilizing cover crops, perennial crops, no-till or managed rotational grazing by 2030. This would have many positive benefits, including boosting farm income, building soil health, preventing or minimizing erosion and runoff, retaining and cleaning water, sequestering carbon, supporting pollinators, and increasing farm resiliency.

In the interest of brevity, we would add that there are many other important provisions that MCEA supports, and we urge the Committee members to support HF 1076. We appreciate the work that has gone into this bill that will protect and improve our state's air, water, and soil, and that will include and benefit all Minnesotans.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the House Environment and Natural Resources omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

Kara Josephson
Legislative Director, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy