

Minnesota Association of Conservation Professionals



An independent association of current or former resource or conservation professionals whose mission is to promote science-based stewardship of natural resources including air, water, land, native plants, fish, and wildlife and to support aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems

17 March 2011

The Honorable Dennis McNamara
House Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee
375 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Rep. McNamara:

On behalf of the Minnesota Association of Conservation Professionals (MNACP), I am writing to advocate for legislation that maintains, if not increases, the human resource capacity of Natural Resource organizations and agencies so that the goals outlined by the Legacy Amendment and other statewide conservation plans are met. The MNACP is an alliance of natural resource professionals employed by state and local governments and non-governmental conservation organizations. Due to our professional affiliations, our members are uniquely qualified to assess the needs for effective delivery of conservation in Minnesota.

As you are well aware, in the midst of one of the worst recessions in recent memory, Minnesotans overwhelmingly voted to raise their taxes to better protect Minnesota's natural outdoor heritage. Minnesotans recognized that current efforts weren't keeping up with damage to prairies, forests, wetlands, lakes and streams. The voters, acting on a disturbing trend of disproportionate cuts to environmental and conservation funding, found it necessary for the constitution to articulate the importance of conservation of Minnesota's natural resources and to protect our outdoor heritage. Accordingly, Minnesotans are entrusting their tax dollars to our legislators, Governor, conservation organizations and citizen groups so they could work together to ensure that these monies are used efficiently and effectively to protect, enhance, and restore fish and wildlife habitats. Furthermore, many of these resources are held within the public's trust, and it is the responsibility of government to be the guardian of natural resources. We must ensure that state and local governments are supported and able to carry out their obligations that will come with Legacy Amendment projects and acquisitions.

At our annual meeting in 2010, representatives from the LSOHC, LCCMR, Minnesota Environmental Partnership, Green Corridor Legacy Initiative, and Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts all agreed that one of the biggest threats to accomplishing the goals of the Legacy Amendment is the shortage of human resource capacity due to state and local budget cuts and amendment dollars supplanting depleted budgets. Increased human resource capacity at state agencies and local governments will be needed to:

- Consult on projects and acquisitions, review proposals and permit applications, and enforce compliance of projects and acquisitions to state rules, statutes, and local ordinances.

