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Members of the House Energy Finance and Policy Committee

Dear Co-Chairs Acomb and Swedzinski and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Minnesota Trout Unlimited to express our support for HF 2928. This bill, specifically section 1 and 2, addresses the large water use typical of proposals for large data centers.

Groundwater and surface waters are closely connected in the case of trout streams. Groundwater is a consistently cold temperature and its flow into trout streams through natural springs is what makes these streams cold enough to support trout. In short, groundwater springs are the lifeblood of trout streams. Groundwater is also the source of drinking water for the majority of Minnesotans.

Unfortunately, proposers of data centers see these cold drinking water supplies as a cheap way to cool the data centers. For example, a proposal in Farmington would double the City's pumping of groundwater from the shallow aquifers that also support the Vermillion River trout fishery. Proposers of data centers are asking municipalities to increase the allowed groundwater withdrawals under municipal permits, making it difficult to assess water usage and environmental impacts. This result is a lack of public understanding about who is using the water, for what, and whether the increased pumping is sustainable.

We support the provisions of HF 2928 that set additional requirements for water withdrawals, including preapplication evaluation of large water appropriation projects, prioritize water reuse and efficiency measures, and ensure environmental review. We applaud this effort to closely examine groundwater use and urge that the bill's protections of groundwater be strengthened as it moves through the legislative process.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

John P. Lenczewski