

Metropolitan Regional Parks & Trails Implementing Agencies

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

Chair Joe McDonald
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Samantha Vang
5th Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair McDonald and Chair Vang:

As metro regional park implementing agencies, we are writing with shared concerns and opposition to the H.F. No. 2563DE1 Amendment. In Article 3, Sec. 4 it states the following:

(b) \$100,000 the first year and \$100,000 the second year are for grants to Wilderness Inquiry to connect Minnesota youth and families to natural resources through activities that support parks and trails of regional significance within the seven-county metropolitan area.

We appreciate the opportunity to express our strong opposition to the proposed earmark legislation that would allocate Parks and Trails Legacy funds to a nonprofit organization, contrary to the clear constitutional intent of the Legacy Amendment. These funds are expressly dedicated to benefit state, regional, and Greater MN park and trail agencies—public entities that are accountable to taxpayers and have a proven track record of stewarding these resources for the public good.

When Minnesota voters approved the Legacy Amendment, they did so with the understanding that funds would be used transparently and equitably to support publicly managed parks and trails. Earmarking public dollars for a private nonprofit—no matter how well-meaning—undermines that promise and sets a dangerous precedent that weakens accountability, public oversight, and constitutional integrity.

Our park and trail systems are among the most cherished assets in our communities. They rely on stable and appropriately allocated funding to maintain accessibility, environmental stewardship, and public trust. Redirecting funds to a nonprofit not only diminishes the resources available to these agencies, but also violates the spirit of the Legacy Amendment.

I urge you to remove this provision and protect the constitutional framework that voters overwhelmingly support.

The *Parks and Trails Legacy Plan* recommends how the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund should be used. The Parks and Trails Fund, one of the four funds created by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment passed in 2008, receives 14.25% of the money raised by the sales tax increase. The purpose of the amendment is to provide supplemental financial resources to traditional funding sources for support of

Metropolitan Regional Parks & Trails Implementing Agencies

state and regionally significant park and trail systems. The 40/40/20 allocation between the DNR/Metro Parks and Trails/Greater MN Parks and Trails has been in place for over 15 years and has proven to be successful.

As always, we remain grateful for the work that you do with our agencies to provide vital park spaces and programs to metro area residents, and all the health, recreation and economic benefits that come from this investment.

Sincerely,



Jeff Perry
Parks Director
Anoka County



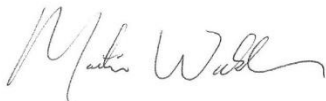
Niki Geisler
Director of Parks
Dakota County



Ann Kattreh
Parks and Recreation Director
City of Bloomington



Al Bangoura
Superintendent
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board



Martin Walsh
Parks and Recreation Director
Carver County



Mark McCabe
Director of Parks and Recreation
Ramsey County



Andy Rodriguez
Parks and Recreation Director
City of Saint Paul



Superintendent
Three Rivers Park District



Patricia Freeman
General Manager of Parks and Trails
Scott County
Boe Carlson



Alex McKinney
Parks Director
Washington County



April 8, 2025

HF2563 - Wilderness Inquiry Legacy Request, Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund

Chairs and Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

Thank You for including Wilderness Inquiry in the Legacy Finance Bill (HF2563 DE1 amendment), which we view as recognition of the impactful work we do every year in some 40 communities across Minnesota.

Our programming model, known as Canoemobile, is unique in that it shows up where the kids are in neighborhoods and townships in every corner of the state. Wilderness Inquiry believes **Everyone Belongs in the Outdoors**, and we make sure every kid—regardless of their abilities or background—can participate in meaningful outdoor experiences and hands-on activities that teach Minnesota history and our shared cultural heritage.

As an organization, **we would respectfully request consideration of our appropriation request included in the bi-partisan House File 1328, led by co-authors Rep. Spencer Igo and Rep. Fue Lee, from the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund**, which we feel is the best fit for the program content that we deliver with Legacy dollars. The DE1 amendment would shift funding to the Parks & Trails Fund, which presents a number of challenges for funding Wilderness Inquiry programming given the wide range of locations we serve.

Legacy is an important source of funding for our organization and makes an outsized impact for Minnesotans. Reductions in Legacy support will reduce this impact statewide. **At a flat appropriation level, we will be able to serve nearly 10,000 Minnesota youth and caring adults (at a cost of just \$112/participant)** through our progression of outdoor educational and recreational opportunities. Wilderness Inquiry is also proud to leverage Legacy support, matching nearly \$3 in philanthropic and earned revenues for every \$1 invested by the State of Minnesota.

From day-long schoolyard outdoor programs to extended overnight adventures across Minnesota's wide range of public lands and waterways, Legacy support helps ensure that Wilderness Inquiry can deliver programs that center Minnesota's history, outdoor heritage, and cultural connections to the natural world—and do so with attention to making the experiences accessible to everyone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Erika Rivers, Executive Director
Wilderness Inquiry

Members of the Minnesota Legislature:

April 7, 2025

We write to you, as dedicated members of Minnesota's conservation community, to express support of the funding recommendations for the Outdoor Heritage Fund forwarded to you by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) and included in HF2563.

This nation-leading Outdoor Heritage Fund was created when Minnesotans voted overwhelmingly in 2008 in favor of the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment. With that vote, Minnesotans called for acceleration of conservation in Minnesota and full transparency of spending decisions and outcomes. The structure and process followed by the LSOHC has met and continues to meet those expectations.

This year's funding package was unanimously approved by the LSOHC before being submitted to the legislature. The recommendations contain 50 high priority conservation projects across the state, in addition to more projects that will be funded through the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program. The selected projects have been thoroughly vetted by the LSOHC through its competitive, public process, which received over **\$400 million in requests** and resulted in recommendations to you that total \$162.886 million.

In considering full approval of the recommendations, we encourage you to reflect on the following:

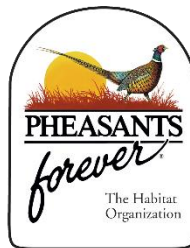
1. LSOHC members are citizens and legislators chosen for their expertise in conservation from a statewide perspective. The LSOHC is well-qualified to select projects that are urgent and most likely to return positive results from taxpayer investment.
2. The LSOHC's competitive grant application process is thorough, fair and transparent. It demands that proposals are well-designed, high-priority, science-based projects that address conservation goals enumerated by LSOHC and state plans.
3. The LSOHC adheres to a rigorous review process each year to determine its final recommendations for the Legislature. It prioritizes projects based upon several criteria, including urgency, reasonableness and ability of the proposer to achieve the outcomes.
4. The conservation projects recommended by the LSOHC are urgent and ready to implement.
5. LSOHC and the Minnesota DNR developed the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program, which sub-grants funding to smaller, community-level conservation projects. This popular Outdoor Heritage Fund program funds projects up to \$500,000.

The LSOHC package presented to you is worthy of your support. We are available as a resource to you and thank you for your support of conservation in Minnesota.

Respectfully submitted by the following organizations,



CONSERVATION MINNESOTA



*The Outdoor Heritage Fund created by the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment
“may be spent only to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and
habitat for fish, game, and wildlife.”*

Minnesota Constitution, Art. XI, Sec. 15

April 8th, 2025

Dear Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

On behalf of Hastings Community TV, I am writing to express our strong support for HF2563 to include an appropriation for community cable television stations.

The Legacy Fund appropriation would help public, educational, and government (PEG) access stations throughout Minnesota continue to deliver vital local programming to our communities.

HF2563/SF2865 would also help address the funding shortfalls many stations are experiencing due to the steady decline in cable subscriptions as more viewers transition to streaming services. Stations like HCTV rely heavily on franchise and PEG fees to support the coverage of local government meetings, election programming, high school sports, local news, education and health programming, arts and music events, nonprofit initiatives, community festivals, and much more. These services play an essential role in keeping our residents informed and connected.

We appreciate your consideration of this important legislation. Please don't hesitate to reach out if we can provide any additional information. Thank you for your dedication to supporting our communities.

Regards,

Mike Bremer

Executive Director

Hastings Community TV



SOUTH WASHINGTON COUNTY TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
COTTAGE GROVE | GREY CLOUD | NEWPORT | SAINT PAUL PARK | WOODBURY

Dear Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

On behalf of the member cities of the South Washington County Telecommunications Commission (Woodbury, Cottage Grove, St. Paul Park, Newport, Grey Cloud Island) I am writing in **support of HF1740** appropriation for community cable television.

This request will assist community media facilities across the state of Minnesota, including greater Minnesota and metro communities.

After reading what the 11 principles are that help determine where the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund are distributed, we strongly feel that community media is an ideal candidate. Many of our stations have been creating local video coverage for over 40 years.

HF 1740/SF2289 will help fill the gap caused by declining cable television subscribership moving to streaming video services. Community Television stations, like SWCTC, across the state rely on cable TV franchise fees and PEG fees to support coverage of government meetings, candidate and election programming, sports, news, business and chamber of commerce, education and health, community events and festivals, music, arts, nonprofits that allow residents to engage in our community.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents and our community!

Regards,



Ann Schweisguth Executive Director
South Washington County Telecommunications Commission (SWCTC)



April 8, 2025

Chair and Representative Joe McDonald
House Legacy Finance Committee
Room G3, State Capitol Building
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for HF1740 - Community cable television programming funding in HF2563

Dear Chair McDonald and Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee,

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public. With our statewide membership of more than 2,200 members representing 33 local Leagues across the state, we envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.

LWV Minnesota strongly supports HF1740 because of the importance of local community media to our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy.

Many of our local Leagues rely on community stations for their nonpartisan candidate forums and informational programs. For example, the League of Women Voters of White Bear Lake Area (LWVWBLA) worked in partnership with four community stations: Lakes Area TV, Nine North, Suburban Community Channels, and Valley Access Channels to record 18 candidate forums this past fall. These channels broadcast the forums live, re-played them numerous times, and made them available to post on LWVWBLA's own YouTube channel. In total, local Leagues held **198 forums** that have reached 63,193 views.

In 2024, CCX Media recorded and published 22 forums, shared candidate statements and provided election night reporting to communities across the west metro despite absorbing more than \$1.8 million in lost revenue since 2017. While they have met the demand online, cut costs and utilized ads, CCX and other trusted stations are struggling with the decline of cable.

Please include HF1740 in the Legacy bill, HF2563, to ensure that communities around the state can continue to rely on local media as a trusted source of information in our democracy.

Sincerely,

Sam Streukens, Civic Engagement Director
League of Women Voters Minnesota
sstreukens@lwvmn.org

Jackie Reis, President
League of Women Voters White Bear Lake Area



April 9th, 2025

House Legacy Finance Committee
Co-Chair Joe McDonald
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

House Legacy Finance Committee
Co-Chair Samantha Vang
5th Floor Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co -Chair McDonald Co-Chair Vang and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association's (MCGA) nearly 7,000 members I appreciate the opportunity to provide written comments in support of several programs within the Clean Water Fund (CWF) article of the DE-1 amendment for HF 2563.

We encourage the Clean Water Council (CWC) and the legislature to continue to find ways to maximize CWF dollars for on the ground projects. We are happy to see a few of the programs listed below being recommended that will help give farmers the tools they need to make decisions and apply farming techniques that will provide clean water benefits for all Minnesotans.

MCGA strongly supports the following recommended programs:

Conservation Equipment Assistance- We greatly appreciate the Council adding this program recommendation two years ago. Since then, farmer interest in soil health practice implementation has been proven out by the tremendous popularity of this program. Since this program's original inception as a pilot in 2022 MDA has received over \$24.5 million in funding requests vs the \$5.2 million that has been made available from general and clean water funds. The upfront cost of retrofitting or buying new equipment is often the biggest barrier to farmers as they look for ways to implement different tillage or cover cropping systems on their farms as well as the broader suite of practices that can enhance soil health and improve water quality. Prior to this program the only options available to farmers who were interested in trying a new practice and offsetting some of the risk, was either through a cost-share program and/or renting equipment through their local SWCD. These programs may have had farmer interest, but they were not designed for large scale adoption. It is our view that the best way to expand adoption of these practices is by farmers owning their own equipment and working with other farmers to do custom work. We would encourage the legislature and the CWC to consider this when evaluating the various soil health programs that currently exist to encourage farmer adoption of soil health practices.

AgBMP Loan Program- The AgBMP Loan Program complements several programs including the Conservation Equipment Assistance Program that will allow Minnesota farmers to take advantage of low interests loans and begin to implement soil health practices to benefit clean water.

We are dedicated to identifying and promoting opportunities for corn growers while enhancing quality of life

MDA Technical Assistance – We appreciate the CWC’s and the legislature’s continued support for this program as it funds research for on-farm demonstrations like Discovery Farms that increases education and promotion of best management practices on the farm.

Expanding the Ag Weather Station Network (MDA)- These weather stations give farmers the local information they need to make the best possible agronomic decisions regarding planting dates, crop protection application timing, and more. This detailed local information will create opportunities to more effectively utilize crop protection chemical applications. With precise information on disease risk due to weather conditions, farmers can delay disease prevention applications until risk is high in their area. Additionally, information on when weather conditions are favorable for effective crop protectant application means less unusable applications, which has a benefit for water quality in Minnesota. We strongly support the funding recommendation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written comments. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to MCGA’s Senior Public Policy Director Amanda Bilek at abilek@mncorn.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Kanten". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jim Kanten
President
Minnesota Corn Growers Association



April 8, 2025

Dear Chair McDonald, Chair Vang, and Members of the House Legacy Committee:

Metro Cities, representing the shared interests of cities across the metropolitan area, appreciates the opportunity to comment on HF 2563 (Vang), as amended by the DE1 amendment.

Clean Water Fund: Article 2 – Metro Cities supports the \$1.375 million in each year of the 2026-2027 biennium for the Metropolitan Council to support communities implementing projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats and overall water sustainability. Metro Cities further supports the funding for grants to assist municipalities in the metropolitan area with implementing water demand reduction measures to ensure the reliability and protection of drinking water supplies.

Parks and Trails Fund: Article 3 – In the seven-county metropolitan area, regional parks essentially serve as state parks, and the state should continue to provide capital funding for the acquisition, development, and improvement of these parks in a manner that is equitable with funding for state parks. Metro Cities supports state funding for regional parks and trails that is fair, creates a balance of investment across the state, and meets the needs of the region. Metro Cities appreciates and supports the \$24.2 million in FY 2026 and \$27.1 million in FY 2027 for the regional parks system.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike Lund'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mike Lund
Government Relations Specialist
Metro Cities



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area
111 E. Kellogg Blvd., Suite 105
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1256

IN REPLY REFER TO:

7.A.1

April 8, 2025

Minnesota House Legacy Committee

RE: Letter of Support for Wilderness Inquiry's Legacy Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund Appropriation Request

To Chair Vang, Chair McDonald, and the Legacy Committee Members:

Thank you for your leadership in maintaining and enhancing Minnesota's arts and cultural heritage. I write in support of Wilderness Inquiry's request for a \$1.4M appropriation from the Arts & Cultural Legacy Account to support impactful programs that center Minnesota's history, outdoor heritage, and cultural connections to the natural world through provides a progression of outdoor educational and recreational opportunities for more than 12,500 Minnesota youth and families.

Wilderness Inquiry and the National Park Service have partnered for decades to provide immersive opportunities for youth and their caring adults to experience nature and explore local rivers and waterways. On the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area alone, we have worked together to connect tens of thousands of Minnesotans to this national treasure while teaching stewardship ethics, training and career pathways, and recreation and education programs that build confidence, connection, and interest in our state's history and culture.

Wilderness Inquiry's current proposal will help the National Park Service continue to reach diverse audiences while supporting a continuum of outdoor experiences for youth, adults, and families through Wilderness Inquiry's Pyramid of Outdoor Engagement. These experiences across the state – from tree planting along the Mississippi River to fishing on Lake Bemidji to canoeing in the Boundary Waters – connect thousands of individuals to Minnesota's outdoor cultural heritage, thus investing in the health and wellbeing of our communities and the next generation of stewards and lovers of the Minnesota outdoors.

I encourage you to support and fully fund this project. Arts and Cultural Heritage Funds are critical to enabling Minnesotans to participate in Wilderness Inquiry's transformative place-based programs and build life-long connections with each other, with their community, and with the natural world.

Sincerely,

Matthew Tucker Blythe
Superintendent

OSSEO AREA SCHOOLS



**Park Center Senior High
International Baccalaureate World School**

April 7, 2025

House Legacy Committee

To Chair Vang, Chair McDonald, and Legacy Committee Members:

Thank you for your leadership in maintaining and enhancing Minnesota's arts and cultural heritage. I write in support of Wilderness Inquiry's request for a \$1.4M appropriation from the Arts & Cultural Legacy Account to support impactful programs that center Minnesota's history, outdoor heritage, and cultural connections to the natural world through a progression of outdoor educational and recreational opportunities for more than 12,500 Minnesota youth and families.

Wilderness Inquiry has provided enriching outdoor experiences for more than 2,000 Osseo students, which have been transformative for many of our students as they venture from schoolyard outdoor experiences to backcountry adventures. Wilderness Inquiry is unique in their commitment to enriching outdoor and environmental education through multicultural perspectives and attention to making their experiences accessible to all students, regardless of their background or ability.

It is our understanding that the demand for Wilderness Inquiry programs in Minnesota exceeds the resources available to provide these transformative experiences for students across the state. We are concerned that a reduction in Legacy funding will jeopardize our ability to reach diverse audiences, while supporting a continuum of outdoor experiences for students and families through Wilderness Inquiry's Pyramid of Outdoor Engagement.

I encourage you to support and fully fund this appropriation request. Arts and Cultural Heritage Funds are critical to enabling Osseo schools' students to participate in Wilderness Inquiry's place-based programs and build life-long connections with each other, with their community, and with the natural world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Antwan Harris", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Antwan Harris

Principal

Park Center Senior High

Ph: (763) 569-7600

Fx: (763) 569-7606

7300 Brooklyn Blvd.
Brooklyn Park, MN 55443

district279.org



RESOLUTION NO. 4-02-2025

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF STATE LEGISLATION
TO MODERNIZE FUNDING FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY "PEG"
(PUBLIC / EDUCATION / GOVERNMENT) PROGRAMMING**

WHEREAS, the Northern Dakota County Cable Communications Commission ("NDC4") is authorized by its seven Member Cities (Inver Grove Heights, Lilydale, Mendota, Mendota Heights, South St. Paul, Sunfish Lake and West St. Paul) to negotiate and manage the cable franchise agreements of the seven cities, to provide local government programming, and to contract with the non-profit corporation Town Square Television ("TST") to provide local community Public Education and Government ("PEG") programming; and

WHEREAS, for over thirty-five years, NDC4 and TST have provided essential local coverage of community events and issues, non-profits and charities, school sports and academic programs, business, chamber of commerce and tourism, school board, city, county and state government meetings, candidate information and election coverage, local history, public health and education, music, arts and other uniquely local programs that broadcast stations typically do not cover; and

WHEREAS, in light of rapidly decreasing local media, Town Square Television is the principal, and in some cities the only professional media source providing local video and online coverage; and

WHEREAS, NDC4 and TST are funded through franchise fee and PEG fee support negotiated in the cable franchise agreements with local cable providers, which are currently limited to ONLY the revenues on traditional cable TV and NOT on streaming or internet revenues; and

WHEREAS, NDC4 and TST are projecting an ongoing substantial loss of franchise fee and PEG fee revenues due to the marketplace trend of "cord cutting" (traditional cable TV subscribers migrating to multiple digital video service providers that are currently NOT required to support local community PEG programming); and

WHEREAS, NDC4 and TST distribute essential local community programming on multiple platforms including cable TV, online streaming, and social media, to ensure access to all residents regardless of their income level or choice of technology; and

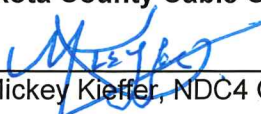
WHEREAS, "MACTA" (Minnesota Association of Community Telecommunications Administrators) supports legislation to Modernize the Funding for Local Community PEG Programming.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the NDC4 Cable Commission offers their support to the "MACTA" (Minnesota Association of Community Telecommunications Administrators) effort to modernize local community Public, Education, and Government ("PEG") programming funding through legislative change, consistent with federal law.

Passed and adopted this 2nd day of April, 2025.

Northern Dakota County Cable Communications Commission

By:


Mickey Kieffer, NDC4 Chair

ATTEST:


Dennis Rafferty, NDC4 Government Programming Manager



April 8, 2025

Dear Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

On behalf of the member cities of the Quad Cities Cable Communications Commission (Andover, Anoka, Champlin, Ramsey) I am writing in support of including the HF1740 appropriation for community PEG cable television stations by amending HF2563.

This Legacy Fund appropriation will provide funding for public, educational, and government cable television stations across the state to continue valuable community programming at the most local level.

In addition, these Legacy funds will help fill the gap caused by declining cable television subscribership moving to streaming video services. Community Television stations, like QCTV, across the state rely on cable TV franchise fees and PEG fees to support coverage of government meetings, candidate and election programming, sports, news, business and chamber of commerce, education and health, community events and festivals, music, arts, nonprofits that allow residents to engage in our community. This funding will help to keep these stations serving the needs of their community.

Please let us know if you need further information. Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents and our community!

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen A. George'.

Karen A. George Executive Director
Quad Cities Cable Communications Commission (QCTV)



Serving Andover, Anoka, Champlin, Ramsey
12254 Ensign Ave. N., Champlin, MN 55316



April 8, 2025

Dear Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

On behalf of the member cities of the Ramsey Washington Suburban Cable Commission (Birchwood Village, Dellwood, Grant, Lake Elmo, Mahtomedi, Oakdale White Bear Lake, White Bear Township and Willernie), I'm writing in support of HF2563 to include an appropriation for community cable television stations.

The Legacy Fund appropriation will provide funding for public, educational, and government cable television stations across the state to continue valuable community programming at the most local level.

In addition, HF2563/SF2865 could help fill the gap caused by declining cable television subscribership moving to streaming video services. Community Television stations across the state, like SCC, rely on cable TV franchise fees and PEG fees to support coverage of government meetings, city parades and festivals, concerts, news, high school sports, city profiles, business and chamber of commerce meetings, and government features which allow residents to engage in our community. This funding will help to keep these stations serving the needs of their community.

Please let us know if you need further information. Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents and our community!

Regards,

Mary Kline, Production and Content Manager
Community Channels (SCC)

Suburban



April 8, 2025

Chairs McDonald and Vang and members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

I am writing in regard to provisions in the [DE1 amendment](#) to [HF 2563](#) (Vang, McDonald), the House's omnibus Legacy bill, that relate to the Met Council.

Regional Parks and Trails

The Metropolitan Council supports the continued 40-40-20 split of the parks and trails funding found in the [DE1 amendment](#). The Parks and Trails Legacy Fund is shared between the Metropolitan Council, the Department of Natural Resources, and Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails. The 40% of funds allocated to the Met Council are passed through to the 10 regional parks implementing agencies, which use Legacy funds to ensure that the metro region has access to high-quality recreational opportunities. This vital funding fuels our efforts to connect people and the outdoors, acquire land and development opportunities, and take care of the existing system.

The Metropolitan Council has concerns about the \$200,000 appropriation from Regional Parks and Trails funding to Wilderness Inquiry found in Article 3, Section 3. The Council supports the Governor's recommendations for distribution of parks and trails funding that supports the regional parks implementing agencies in their efforts to connect youth and families to the abundant natural resources in our regional parks and trails.

Clean Water Fund Recommendations

The Metropolitan Council also supports the Governor's and Clean Water Council's recommendations for the Clean Water Fund. The [DE1 amendment](#) to [HF 2563](#) includes two recommendations related to the Met Council. Adjusted for the February budget forecast, the recommendations include:

- Water Sustainability Program: \$2.75 million for the FY26-FY27 biennium would support local actions that address emerging drinking water supply threats and overall water sustainability, provide cost-effective regional solutions, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of wellhead protection plans, and prevent degradation of groundwater and surface water resources.
- Water Efficiency Grant Program: \$1.4 million for the FY26-FY27 biennium would allow the Met Council to give grants to cities and townships served by a municipal water supply system to offer residents rebates or grants to replace toilets, washing machines, dishwashers, and more with efficient appliances, install advanced metering infrastructure technology to better prevent loss of water from major leaks, install smart irrigation systems, and allow municipalities to conduct water audits.

I appreciate your consideration of these provisions. Please reach out to me or Judd Schetnan (judd.schetnan@metc.state.mn.us) with any questions or comments. We are available to meet at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles A. Zelle".

Charles A. Zelle
Chair



5845 Blaine Avenue,
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076
Phone: 651-352-6100
Web: www.townsquare.tv

April 8, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs McDonald and Vang, and House Legacy Finance Committee Members:

I am writing in support of an amendment to include HF1740, an appropriation for community cable television stations in the Legacy omnibus bill (HF2563). This Legacy Fund appropriation will provide funding for public, educational, and government (PEG) cable television stations across the state, including NDC4 and Town Square Television, to continue valuable community programming at the most local level. This funding will help fill the gap caused by declining cable television subscribership (cord-cutting) and the shift to streaming video services. It provides stop-gap funding to allow stations like ours keep serving the needs of our communities while we work to modernizing our funding model over the next few years.

HF1740/SF2289 will help Community Television stations who rely on cable TV franchise fees and PEG fees to support coverage of hyper-local programming. We are active in our communities and cover topics that are important to local residents, including local government and school board meetings, elections, news, local sports and community events in Inver Grove Heights, South St. Paul, West St. Paul, Mendota Heights, Lilydale, Sunfish Lake, and Mendota. We produce over 800 local programs per year which were viewed over 102,000 times through our online platforms in 2024 and that are broadcast on cable TV.

Please, let us know if you need further information. Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents.

Regards,

Carmen Hauck

NDC4/Town Square Television Government Producer

Vice President - Minnesota Association of Community Telecommunications Administrators (MACTA)



CONNECTED COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

Phone [763.533.8196](tel:763.533.8196)
Email info@ccxmedia.org
Web ccxmedia.org

Northwest Community Television
6900 Winnetka Avenue North
Brooklyn Park, MN 55428

April 7, 2025

Dear Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

I am writing to encourage including appropriation for community cable television stations like CCX Media in the House Legacy Omnibus Bill. CCX Media provides essential local coverage and public information to the cities of Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, New Hope, Plymouth, Osseo, and Robbinsdale.

CCX Media is projecting an ongoing substantial loss of franchise fee and PEG (Public, Educational, Governmental) fee revenues due to the marketplace trend of cord cutting, as traditional cable television subscribers migrate to streaming TV services that are not required to support local community PEG programming.

The Legacy Fund appropriation will provide funding for valuable community programming at the most local level. At CCX Media, that means support for recording and disseminating 365 city meetings recorded annually, 20+ forums streamed annually during an election year, 1250+ news stories published each year, 120 live high school games, parades and events streamed each year. Staff also work with community nonprofits, veterans' groups, arts organizations, and historical societies to tell and share their stories.

This stopgap funding (originally heard as HF1740) will help stations like CCX Media continue serving the needs of our community through promoting government transparency and hyperlocal news.

Please let us know if you need further information. Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents and our community.

Sincerely,


Shannon Slatton Schwartz
Executive Director

NEWS

SPORTS

CITIES

CREATE

April 8, 2025

Dear Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

On behalf of the City of Coon Rapids and CTN, I am writing in support of HF2563 to include an amendment that would give local PEG cable channels a lifeline as we develop more sustainable funding streams for community cable television stations. While we recognize that the Legislature may not be able to fund our full request to have a statewide impact, we are confident that even a modest investment could be prioritized to save those channels in most critical need.

The Legacy Fund appropriation could provide funding for public, educational, and government cable television stations across the state to continue valuable community programming at the most local level.

In addition, HF2563/SF2865 could help fill the gap caused by declining cable television subscribership moving to streaming video services. Community Television stations, like CTN, across the state rely on cable TV franchise fees and PEG fees to support coverage of government meetings, candidate and election programming, sports, news, business and chamber of commerce, education and health, community events and festivals, music, arts, nonprofits that allow residents to engage in our community. This funding will help to keep these stations serving the needs of their community.

Please let us know if you need further information. Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents and our community!

Sincerely,



Eric Strouse Station Manager
CTN Coon Rapids/City of Coon Rapids





April 8, 2025

Dear Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee:

On behalf of the City of Northfield. I am writing in support of HF2563 to include an appropriation for community cable television stations.

The Legacy Fund appropriation will provide funding for public, educational, and government cable television stations across the state to continue valuable community programming at the most local level.

In addition, HF2563/SF2865 could help fill the gap caused by declining cable television subscribership moving to streaming video services. Community Television stations, like Northfield Public Broadcasting (NPB), across the state rely on cable TV franchise fees and PEG fees to support coverage of government meetings, candidate and election programming, sports, news, business and chamber of commerce, education and health, community events and festivals, music, arts, nonprofits that allow residents to engage in our community. This funding will help to keep these stations serving the needs of their community.

Please let us know if you need further information. Thank you for your work on behalf of our residents and our community!

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Martig'.

Ben Martig
City Administrator



Executive Committee

Chair – Gina Hugo, Sherburne County
Vice Chair – Joseph Tart, Chisago County
Treasurer – Tom Salkowski, Individual Member
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District 1 – Sarah Ciocchetto, St. Louis & Lake Cos. Railroad Authority
District 2 – Sara Thompson, Itasca County
District 3 – Crystal Johnson, City of Granite Falls
District 4 – Josh Baas, City of Elk River
District 5 – Jon Jerabek, McLeod County
District 6 – Karlin Ziegler, Olmsted County

April 8, 2025

Dear Co-Chairs McDonald and Vang and members of the Legacy Committee,

On behalf of our organization—Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails (GMPT)—we are writing to provide feedback on H.F. 2563 DE1, the Omnibus Legacy Bill. GMPT is a non-profit advocacy organization made up of more than 135 cities, counties, parks groups, individuals, and others who seek to connect people to the outdoors and improve the quality of life for Minnesotans. Many of our local government members operate parks and trails that are designated as regionally significant and eligible to receive funding from the Legacy Fund. As explained below, we appreciate the 20% allocation to Greater Minnesota but ask that the Committee cap the grant fees awarded to the DNR and shift the appropriation of \$50,000 from Greater Minnesota's Legacy funds to Wilderness Inquiry back to the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund or a different resource.

The Importance of Regional Parks and Trails in Greater Minnesota.

Regional parks and trails play an essential role in our recreation systems throughout Minnesota. They serve as a bridge between the local park around the corner and Minnesota's outstanding state parks. Regional parks and trails are a close-to-home option for both the community and visitors. They serve as the bridge between Minnesota's state parks and trails and local ones, offering unique and larger scale recreation opportunities closer to home.

Regional parks and trails have existed outside the metro area for decades, but they were not truly recognized until after the passage of the Legacy amendment in 2008, and subsequent discussions shed light on the fact that the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota were being ignored. In 2013, the Legislature created the Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission (GMRPTC), which has been tasked with developing a system of regionally designated facilities in the 80 counties not served by the Metropolitan Council. Since then, 81 facilities—parks, trails, special features, and supportive partnerships across the state have been designated as regional through a rigorous evaluation process. This designation makes them eligible to receive Legacy Funding.

Funding for Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails

The Regional Parks and Trails of Greater Minnesota are woefully underfunded. Until 2023, their only source of funding was a 20% share of the Legacy Fund. In 2023, the Legislature dedicated 1.5% of Lottery-in-lieu funds to Greater Minnesota as well, a welcome addition though not nearly as much as the 22% that the Metro and the DNR receive from that same fund. Greater Minnesota's regional parks and trails do not have the same access to bonding or general fund resources either.

We want to thank this committee for continuing to recognize the importance of our parks and trails by allocating 20% of the available funds this year to Greater Minnesota. As we further explain below, we urge the Committee to devote as much of those funds as possible to projects at the regionally designated facilities in Greater Minnesota.

Capping the DNR's Grant Fees

The current version of this bill would allow the DNR to recover up to 2.5 % of Greater Minnesota's share of the Legacy fund for the actual costs to administer grants. We urge the Committee to follow the lead set forth in H.F. 489 instead and cap the fee at a flat rate of \$140,000 per year, freeing up more than \$300,000 during the biennium for projects. That amount is an infinitesimally small portion of the DNR's budget but can make a significant difference for our members. That funding could go to the creative grantmaking that enabled a partnership between Isanti, Wright, and Stearns County for a mobile fleet of winter gear that gets people of all ages outdoors and helped create a mobile mountain bike fleet in Duluth to assist underserved kids and adults who are learning to bike. It could add potable water to a park reserve and trail head or rehabilitate a section of trail. However the funds are used, please know they will be put to good use.

Funding Locally based Outdoor Programming

We are deeply concerned with the portion of the bill that would allocate a portion of Greater Minnesota's legacy funds to Wilderness Inquiry, a metro-based (Bloomington) nonprofit with national and international operations. Our members respect the work of Wilderness Inquiry but believe that its history and culture-based learning it provides should be funded through the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund as it has been in the past. There are multiple reasons that Greater Minnesota's Regional Parks and Trails funding should not be awarded in this manner:

- As explained earlier, the regional parks and trails of Greater Minnesota are already woefully underfunded. This allocation cuts into those scarce funds.
- The Greater Minnesota Regional Parks and Trails Commission is already engaged in creative grantmaking to connect more people with the outdoors. For example, the mobile winter fleet and mobile mountain bike fleet mentioned above allow multiple facilities to provide equipment and programming on an ongoing basis to underserved communities. Other designated facilities have used the connection grants to obtain Track Chairs (all-terrain electric wheelchairs) that allow people of all abilities to get off the pavement and on trails.
- Awarding the funds through the Commission instead helps to ensure that long-term investments can be made by organizations that are already based in Greater Minnesota.

We appreciate all the time and energy this committee has put toward assembling this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.



Gina Hugo
Parks Director, Sherburne County
Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails



Joseph Tart
Parks Director, Chisago County
Vice Chair, Greater Minnesota Parks & Trails

Co-Chair Samantha Vang
House Legacy Finance Committee
58 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Co-Chair Joe McDonald
House Legacy Finance Committee
658 Cedar Street
Saint Paul, MN 55155

April 7, 2025

Co-Chairs McDonald and Vang, and members of the House Legacy Finance Committee,

The organizations listed below support the recommendations the Clean Water Council to the legislature for Clean Water Fund appropriations. Thank you for your inclusion of these recommendations in the delete-everything amendment to HF2563. The 28-member Council is comprised of citizen members, as well as legislative and state agency representatives, chosen for their expertise and interest in the management and stewardship of our water resources in Minnesota.

Each two-year budget cycle, the Council goes through a rigorous and thorough months-long process to review and assemble a list of recommendations to the legislature for how Clean Water Funds should be spent to reflect the current clean water priorities of the state. This thorough process includes stakeholder engagement before recommendations are made. Because water management is complex and involving many different agencies and entities across the state, the Council's ability to take a holistic look is important to identifying priorities that align with the Council's strategic plan.

Especially in this year when funds available based on the change between the November 2024 and February 2025 budget forecasts have resulted in a reduction of anticipated funds, it is imperative the legislature follow the lead of the Council to make the best use of these limited funds that address priorities that will benefit water across the state.

We appreciate the Committee's support of these recommendations forwarded by the Council. Thank you for helping to protect Minnesota waters.

Sincerely,



CONSERVATION
MINNESOTA

FRESHWATER



Minnesota
Environmental
Partnership

The Nature
Conservancy 