



Friends of Minnesota Scientific & Natural Areas

March 29, 2023

VIA E-MAIL ONLY

kara.josephson@senate.mn

Senator Founq Hawj, Chair, and
Senate Environment, Climate, and Energy Committee

Re: Requested Amendments to SF 2438A-3

Scientific and Natural Areas appropriation for maintenance (please add House language)

Swan Protection Areas (please add House language)

Scheduled for Committee Hearing, Thursday, March 30, 2023

Dear Chair Hawj and Committee Members:

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas (FMSNA) is a Minnesota non-profit, tax-exempt [“501(c)(3)”] corporation organized to protect and enhance Minnesota’s Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs). SNAs are the “crown jewels” of Minnesota’s state land base, protecting some of Minnesota’s rarest and most sensitive plant and animal species and the ecosystems upon which they depend.

Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) Management Appropriation

FMSNA supports the House Omnibus Environment bill language for an appropriation for Scientific and Natural Area maintenance (HF 2310DE1, lines 34.23 – 34.31) which will provide **essential general funds** for maintaining and managing SNAs with experienced staff. We respectfully request that you amend **SF 2438A-3** to include the House language below:

“\$6,000,000 the first year is for improved maintenance at scientific and natural areas under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 5, including additional natural resource specialists and technicians, coordinators, seasonal crews, equipment, supplies, and administrative support. This is a onetime appropriation and is available until June 30, 2027.”

The general funds for the SNA program have been diminishing over the last decades. The results, in terms of exotic invasives, can be seen everywhere when one visits the SNAs.

On-going General Funds for the SNA program are essential to ensure that experienced staff will be present from year to year. Experienced staff know the over 160 SNA sites and numerous Prairie Bank sites in each DNR region. They are familiar with the particular needs and management strategies for individual sites.

Because of this knowledge, experienced staff are in the best position to direct temporary funds from LCCMR and OHC for management and maintenance. Experienced staff don't require training every two-year funding cycle, but can serve as prescribed burn bosses and can train temporary crews hired to do prescribed burns.

Experienced staff also are necessary to monitor management and maintenance projects to ensure actions taken are not threatening the rare resources and that they achieve the desired results. They are in the best position to personally know adjacent landowners, issues associated with any site, and follow through on long term commitments.

In order to have experienced staff, it is necessary to assure an employee that their position will continue beyond a 2- year funding cycle. While LCCMR and OHC funds are important, there is no assurance they will be directed to the SNA Program, every biennium. **Only General funds can be depended upon to provide continuity from year to year by allowing the retention of knowledgeable, trained and experienced staff.**

I have attached two documents, explaining the SNA maintenance budget issues in more detail.

**Minnesota Swan Protection Act
(HF 2310DE1, pages 204-205, lines 204.27 to 205.30, etc.)**

It is important to state that FMSNA recognizes and fully supports the Minnesota Constitution, including Article XIII, Section 12, which states: “**Hunting and fishing** and the taking of game and fish are a valued part of our heritage that shall be **forever preserved** for the people and **shall be managed by law and regulation for the public good.**” [Emphasis added.]

FMSNA also recognizes that the science is clear. Lead is a potent neurotoxin, for which **no safe exposure level exists.** [Emphasis added.] <https://www.lung.org/clean-air/at-home/indoor-air-pollutants/lead> [Last visited 3/4/23.]

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FMSNA is pleased that the House Environment and Natural Resources Omnibus bill (HF 2310DE1, pages 204-205, and elsewhere) includes a version of the original bill entitled the “Minnesota Swan Protection Act” (HF2368), a bill that would prohibit lead sinkers within a “swan protection area.” However, we are concerned that HF2310DE1 reduces the “swan protection area” possibilities from state-wide to the 7-county metropolitan area.

Nevertheless, FMSNA recognizes this language as an important legislative step forward, for “the public good”, towards “getting the lead out” of our hunting and fishing activities. Therefore, we request that the Minnesota Senate, at the least, adopt the House language. Of course, we welcome even more protective language.

As a reminder, we are on record advocating that the Minnesota Legislature adopt comprehensive legislation to require the phase out of lead ammunition and lead fishing tackle – state-wide -on all Minnesota land and waters.

FMSNAs looks forward to working with you – and other legislators on both sides of the aisle – to promote the passage of this bill, with our requested amendments, and to adopt subsequent legislation to **phase out the use of lead ammunition and lead fishing tackle on all of Minnesota’s land and waters.**

On behalf of FMSNA, I **thank you** in advance for your kind consideration. Please contact me any time, if you have questions or comments.

Very truly yours,

Thomas E. Casey

Thomas E. Casey
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Enclosures: two documents

P.S. - The Walter J. Breckenridge Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America has signed on in support of this letter.