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State commitment to protecting Minnesota's environment and natural resources remains strong
~$26.1 million secured for 71 projects around the state

(St. Paul, MN, May 19, 2010) – $26.1 million from Minnesota's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund ("Trust Fund") has been appropriated to 71 individual projects around the state. The bill containing the appropriations, which recently passed the Minnesota Legislature with bi-partisan support, was based on project recommendations from the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Governor Pawlenty signed the bill into law on May 15, thereby approving funds for all but one of 72 projects contained in the bill – one project was rejected by the governor through a line-item veto.

Generated by profits from the Minnesota State Lottery, Trust Fund dollars are constitutionally-dedicated by Minnesota voters to ensure a long-term, stable source of funds for protecting and enhancing the state's environment and natural resources, even during times of challenging budget situations for the state.

Sen. Ellen Anderson, bill author in the Senate, noted, "That the Trust Fund can ensure support for the types of efforts represented in these projects, despite state budget issues, is evidence of the firm priority and commitment that Minnesotans have placed on protecting our state's outdoors for current and future generations."

"Collectively, these projects are a very strong package for Minnesota, "said Rep. Jean Wagenius, bill author in the House and Co-Chair of the LCCMR. "However, I'm extremely disappointed that the Governor vetoed a project that was designed to promote energy independence for the state and give us the information to make smart decisions about which renewable energy options to invest in. The project would have helped ensure choices are based on good information rather than politics."

Projects funded by the bill will produce broad and diverse benefits for Minnesota's environment and natural resources statewide – in addition to numerous jobs resulting from the projects – by providing:

- Natural resource information and planning essential for effective management through programs that survey, map, and interpret data on Minnesota's groundwater, surface water, plant and animal habitat, and more.
- Acquisition of approximately 2,775 acres to protect wetlands, prairies, forests, shoreline, and other habitat.
- Restoration of an estimated 5,800 acres of habitat and parkland through soil preparation, native vegetation installation, exotic and invasive species removal, and structural improvements.
- Research and analysis advancing our knowledge and providing recommendations for addressing issues relating to aquatic contaminants, pollinator decline, invasive species, wildlife habitat, energy production, and more.
- Education, outreach, and technical assistance that will educate and provide training on topics including water resources, wildlife and ecosystems, energy efficiency and sustainability, and climate change.

<div align="center">– MORE –</div>

One project recommended by the LCCMR and adopted by the Legislature was vetoed by the Governor. The project, titled "Analysis of Options for Minnesota's Energy Independence", would have provided critical guidance on which renewable energy options are best suited for implementation in Minnesota. All of the $143,000 that had been allocated for the project will now remain within the Trust Fund.

The LCCMR's recommendations for project funding were the product of a competitive, multi-step proposal and selection process. The LCCMR issued a request for proposal in January 2009. In response, 240 proposals requesting a total of approximately $163.8 million were received – more than $7 requested for every $1 available. Eight-five of these proposals were called in to present and answer questions before the LCCMR and from this pool, 48 proposals, containing a total of 72 individual projects, were recommended to receive funding from the $26.1 million available.

Projects can begin work on July 1, 2010, when the dollars from the Trust Fund first become available. Additional information on individual projects and the LCCMR proposal and funding process can be found on the LCCMR's website at www.lccmr.leg.mn.

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund was created in 1988. Forty percent of the net proceeds from the Minnesota State Lottery, or approximately seven cents of every dollar spent on playing the lottery, goes into the Trust Fund and is then invested by the State Board of Investment. The LCCMR makes project funding recommendations for up to 5.5% of the annual existing value in the Trust Fund. Money from the Trust Fund can only be used for the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources.

The LCCMR has already begun its process for making its 2011-2012 recommendations. A request for proposal was issued in February with proposals due April 9. The Commission received more than 240 proposals by the April 9 deadline and will be considering those proposals in June and July.

Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)

The LCCMR is made up of 17 members (5 Senators, 5 Representatives, 5 citizens appointed by the governor, and one citizen each appointed by the Senate and the House). The function of the LCCMR is to make funding recommendations to the Minnesota State Legislature for special environment and natural resource projects, primarily from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. These projects help maintain and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources. The LCCMR developed from a program initiated in 1963. Since then over $650 million has been appropriated to over 1,300 projects working to benefit Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

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