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\$50.6 million in strategic projects recommended to benefit Minnesota's environment and economy

2011-2012 Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund projects selected

(St. Paul, MN, July 16, 2010) – The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) has completed this year's competitive process for making recommendations to the Minnesota Legislature on funding for special environment and natural resources projects in Minnesota. The LCCMR's recommendations to the 2011 Legislature provide a total of approximately \$50.6 million from the state's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund ("Trust Fund") to 92 unique projects around the state. The projects will collectively achieve multiple long-term benefits for Minnesota's environment, fish, and wildlife, in addition to helping provide jobs and economic stimulus to Minnesota communities throughout the state where the projects will occur.

Shortly after the LCCMR recommendations were finalized, Co-Chair, long-time Commission member, and retiring Senator Jim Vickerman made a point that, "the Commission worked closely as a group and put together a well-balanced package of projects to address the range of priorities for Minnesota's natural resources."

The 92 projects being recommended address all of the funding priority categories specified in the LCCMR's 2011-2012 Request for Proposal (RFP). This year's RFP solicited projects to provide the critical natural resource information needed for on-the-ground natural resource protection or to address water, energy, invasive species, and habitat issues in innovative ways. Examples of recommended projects include:

- Efforts to mitigate the effects of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill on Minnesota's migrating bird species.
- Acceleration of public access and recreational opportunities in the new Lake Vermilion State Park.
- Expansion and enhanced protection of natural areas in state and regional parks and trails and unique habitat throughout the state.
- Acceleration of efforts acquiring essential information for understanding Minnesota's soils, plants and animals, and drinking water and groundwater resources.
- Research on Minnesota's water resources, including analysis of water quality issues in the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers and efforts to understand the effects that climate change and invasive species are having on Lake Superior.
- Efforts pertaining to Emerald Ash Borer, both in providing biocontrol of the invasive insect and ensuring that other control efforts do not have unintended consequences for other species or water quality.

Co-Chair Nancy Gibson, a citizen member of the LCCMR, emphasized that, "the Commission showed particular leadership in directing funds toward protecting Minnesota's migrating bird species from the impacts of the Gulf oil spill. Specific funds were set aside for this purpose and several projects are being directed to revise their proposed efforts to directly respond to this issue."

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Co-Chair Rep. Jean Wagenius expressed similarly positive sentiments about the package of recommendations, stating, "I think Minnesotans will very much appreciate this year's project recommendations. They are based on the strongest consensus the Commission has exhibited in recent memory and were unanimously adopted by members."

A total of approximately \$50.6 million is available from the Trust Fund for recommendation by the LCCMR in 2011-2012. The LCCMR's recommendations will now go before the 2011 Legislature for consideration and approval during the legislative session beginning January 4. Recommended projects will begin work on July 1, 2011, when the funds become available.

In response to the LCCMR's 2011-2012 proposal process, proposals requesting a total of approximately \$161.9 million were received. Combined requests amounted to more than \$3 requested for every \$1 available, making for a very competitive process. Of the original 241 proposals received, 105 were requested to give presentations and answer questions before the LCCMR. From this reduced pool, 92 projects received a recommendation for some portion of the \$50.6 million available.

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund was created in 1988. Forty percent of the net proceeds, or approximately seven cents of every dollar spent on playing the lottery, goes into the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which is then managed and invested for continued growth by the State Board of Investment. The LCCMR can make recommendations for up to 5.5% of the existing annual market value of the Trust Fund. Expenditures from the Trust Fund must 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

Additional information on the LCCMR's 2011-2012 proposal recommendations and the 2011-2012 proposal process can be found online at: www.lccmr.leg.mn.

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 appointed by each the Senate and the House). The function of the LCCMR (formerly LCMR) 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 1963, over \$650 million has been appropriated to more than 1,300 projects recommended by the Commission to protect and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

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