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72 strategic projects totaling \$28.9 million recommended to benefit Minnesota's environment

Funding is from the MN Lottery-generated Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

(St. Paul, MN, October 24, 2013) – At its October 22-23 meetings the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) completed this year's competitive process for selecting environmental projects from around the state to recommend to the Minnesota Legislature for funding. The LCCMR's recommendations to the 2014 Legislature would provide a total of approximately \$29 million from the Minnesota Lottery-generated Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) to 72 projects to begin in July 2014.

"The 2014 LCCMR recommendations address a wide array of environmental and quality of life concerns across the entire state," said Co-Chair Sen. David Tomassoni. "It was a very fair and open process and the entire commission and staff did a very impressive and cooperative job arriving at the end product."

The LCCMR's 2014 Request for Proposal (RFP) sought projects that would produce information necessary for effective on-the-ground natural resource management and protection or implement innovative activities addressing water resources, invasive species, climate change, energy, invasive species, or habitat issues. The 72 projects being recommended address the spectrum of funding priorities specified in the RFP and provide a balance of scope on issues addressed and areas of the state impacted. Examples include:

- An array of efforts involving research, outreach, and education on the importance of pollinators to Minnesota's ecology and economy and actions that can be taken to counteract recent, unprecedented pollinator declines, particularly amongst bees.
- Research and data collection on Minnesota wildlife species including efforts to determine why northeastern Minnesota moose populations are plummeting, completion of a Breeding Bird Atlas for the state, and documenting some ongoing challenges posed to loons, white pelicans, and freshwater mussels.
- Research efforts on the water quality impacts and remediation options for a variety of contaminants including antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals, endocrine disrupters, pesticides, mercury, and excessive nutrients.
- Environmental education and outreach efforts that provide first-hand outdoors experiences to youth and that engage communities on energy and climate change issues.
- Research into control methods for Asian carp and emerald ash borer and evaluation of emerging invasive species threats to Minnesota posed by mountain pine beetle and brown marmorated stink bug.
- Renewable energy research on innovative solar cell and geothermal technologies as well as utilization of waste products from water treatment and agricultural byproducts for energy production.
- Acquisition and restoration of lands for unique natural areas and parks and development of trails around the state, including regional parks in the metro area, a new park north of Stillwater bordered by the St. Croix River and the new Brown's Creek State Trail, and the Mesabi Trail in northern Minnesota.

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“Minnesota is so fortunate to have this unique source of funds set aside by voters 25 years ago to address our most pressing environmental problems,” said Co-Chair Nancy Gibson following Wednesday’s meeting. “Thanks to these funds there is the needed support to seek out solutions for a host of emerging issues facing our pollinators, wildlife, drinking water, and more.”

“Minnesota’s air, land, and water, and its citizens, will all benefit greatly from these projects,” said Co-Chair Rep. Jean Wagenius. “The projects selected had unanimous approval. The LCCMR process is a premier example of how a diverse group of non-legislators and legislators from both parties really can work together to create valuable consensus for the public.”

A total of approximately \$29.5 million is available from the ENRTF for recommendation by the LCCMR for 2014. The Commission chose to reserve some funds to consider for addition to some of the recommended projects at its December 3 meeting upon receipt of some additional requested information. Following the December 3 meeting, the LCCMR’s recommendations will next go before the 2014 Legislature for consideration and approval during the legislative session beginning February 25. Recommended projects will begin work on July 1, 2014, when the funds become available.

In response to the LCCMR’s 2014 proposal process, 192 proposals requesting a total of approximately \$111 million were received. Combined requests amounted to nearly \$4 requested for every \$1 available, making for a very competitive process. Of the original 192 proposals received, 94 were requested to give presentations and answer questions before the LCCMR. From this reduced pool, 72 projects received a recommendation for some portion of the funds available.

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is a permanent dedicated fund in the Minnesota state treasury that was established by 77% voter approval of a constitutional amendment in 1988. The amendment directs forty percent of the net proceeds of the Minnesota Lottery, or approximately seven cents of every dollar spent on playing the lottery, into the ENRTF. The ENRTF is intended to provide a long-term, stable source of funding for innovative and far-sighted activities that protect and enhance Minnesota’s environment and natural resources for the benefit of current citizens and future generations. Up to 5.5% of the existing market value of the ENRTF can be expended each year.

Additional information on the LCCMR’s 2014 proposal recommendations and 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, 1 citizen appointed by the Senate, and 1 citizen appointed by 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. The LCCMR developed from a program initiated in 1963. Since then nearly \$800 million has been appropriated to approximately 1,800 projects recommended to protect and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

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