
Susan Thornton, Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Mike Banker
Ph: 651.296.2668
Fax: 651.296.1321
Email: mike.banker@lccmr.leg.mn

Environment, energy, and economy in Minnesota to gain from state-funded projects

~\$25.7 million provided to 63 projects around the state

(St. Paul, MN, May 26, 2009) – A bill based on funding recommendations from the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), which was recently adopted with broad bi-partisan support by the Minnesota Legislature, was signed into law by Governor Pawlenty late last Friday, May 22. With the exception of two projects line-item vetoed by the Governor, a total of nearly \$25.7 million, primarily from Minnesota’s Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (“Trust Fund”), has been appropriated to 63 individual projects around the state.

The projects, which will receive state funds that can only be spent on environment and natural resources efforts, will collectively protect and enhance the state’s lands and waters, advance energy conservation, and increase employment in several natural resource based fields.

“When voters approved a constitutional amendment dedicating proceeds from the Minnesota State Lottery they began an environmental legacy,” said Rep. Jean Wagenius, bill sponsor in the House and Co-Vice Chair of the LCCMR. “The projects approved in this bill continue the innovative, forward-thinking efforts we’ve been investing in since 1991.”

Sen. Ellen Anderson, bill sponsor in the Senate, noted, “we are currently facing challenging economic times. Despite those challenges, because of the wise way voters set up the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, we can at least rest assured we’re able to continue providing critical support for our air, lands, and waters.”

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 essential for effective planning and management through programs that survey, map, and interpret data on Minnesota’s groundwater resources, soils, plant and animal distribution, and more.
- Acquisition of approximately 2,000 acres to protect wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat.
- Restoration of an estimated 5,100 acres through soil preparation, native vegetation installation, and exotic and invasive species removal.
- Research and analysis advancing our knowledge and providing recommendations for addressing problems pertaining to climate change, ballast water treatment, invasive species, and more.
- Education and outreach that will assist communities with local conservation efforts and develop programs to increase residential energy efficiency statewide.

– MORE –

\$25.7 million to projects – Page 2

Two projects recommended by the LCCMR were vetoed by the Governor. One project would have funded ongoing research into effective removal of endocrine-disrupting compounds from Minnesota waters – an emerging class of contaminants harmful to the reproduction and physical development of humans, fish, and wildlife. The second project would have provided critical guidance on options for de-carbonizing Minnesota's electrical power system. Carbon dioxide emitted during electricity production is a major greenhouse gas contributor to climate change within the state. All of the \$418,000 that had been allocated for the projects 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 two-phase request for proposals in June and July 2008. In response, 146 individual proposals requesting a total of approximately \$105.3 million were received – more than \$4 requested for every \$1 available. Ninety of these proposals were called in to present and answer questions before the LCCMR and from this pool, 65 projects were recommended to receive funding from the \$26.1 million available. Of this total, \$25.6 million was from the Trust Fund, \$400,000 from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, \$66,000 is from the Great Lakes Protection Account.

Projects can begin work on July 1, 2009, 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. The LCCMR makes project funding recommendations on an annual cycle for up to 5.5% of the 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 Land and Water Conservation Fund is a federal program that provides matching grants to state and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation and facilities. The LCCMR makes biennial recommendations for use of the funds provided to Minnesota through this program.

The Great Lakes Protection Account is an endowment created in 1986 by a cooperative partnership between the eight states bordering the Great Lakes. Funds from the account can only be used for protecting water quality in the Great Lakes. The LCCMR makes periodic recommendations for allocation of funds available from the account.

The LCCMR has already begun its process for making its 2010 recommendations. A request for proposals was issued in February with proposals due May 1. The Commission received more than 230 proposals by the May 1 deadline and will be considering those proposals between now and October.

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 \$600 million has been appropriated to over 1,250 projects working to benefit Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

#