

LEGISLATIVE-CITIZEN COMMISSION ON MINNESOTA RESOURCES

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Susan Thornton, Director

December 1, 2014

David Hartwell
Chair
Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC)
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Room 95 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Hartwell,

At the LCCMR meeting of November 19, 2014 the LCCMR received overviews from the Office of the Legislative Auditor, the University of Minnesota and the DNR about the process and use of public funds for conservation easements as a tool.

After presentation and discussion by Dr. Steve Taff and Dr. Mike Kilgore, University of Minnesota, on valuation of the costs and benefits of conservation easements, LCCMR members concluded that it would be important to provide funding for further work on this issue.

A recommendation of \$250,000 was approved by the LCCMR from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) to be placed in the ML 2015 funding recommending legislation. Members concluded that if they were going to continue to recommend conservation easements as a conservation tool that it was an important investment. This funding represents approximately 5% of the ML 2015 ENRTF recommendations for conservation easement initiatives (\$5.0 million).

The appropriation would be to assess the effectiveness of existing conservation easements acquired with state expenditures at achieving their intended public and ecological benefits and to develop a standardized, objective conservation easement valuation system for guiding future state investments in conservation easements.

The outcome of such an initiative would provide an estimate of the public benefits associated with easements already purchased compared to the public costs. Using this information, a standardized easement valuation program would be developed to quantify such benefits related to costs to assist in future decisions and rankings when conservation easements are purchased in the future.

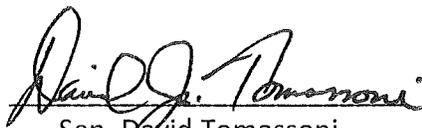
Jeff Broberg, Sen. Gary Dahms, Sen. Kari Dziedzic, William Faber, Rep. Dan Fabian, Nancy Gibson,
Bonnie Harper-Lore, John Hoffman, Gary Lamppa, Rep. Leon Lillie, Norman Moody, Rep. John Persell,
Sen. David Tomassoni, Rep. Paul Torkelson, Rep. Jean Wagenius, Sen. Torrey Westrom, Della Young

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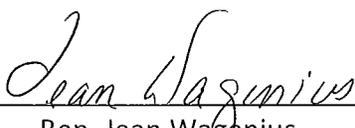
As part of the motion on November 19, the LCCMR is requesting that the LSOHC join in the funding of this evaluation and analysis due to the large investments into this conservation tool from the Outdoor Heritage Fund. LCCMR staff were requested to contact the LSOHC about this initiative and request consideration of this partnership funding of an equal match.

Attached is draft appropriation language being used for the ML 2015 ENRTF recommendation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish additional information. I look forward to hearing from you.

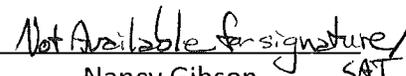
Regards,



Sen. David Tomassoni
Co-Chair, LCCMR



Rep. Jean Wagenius
Co-Chair, LCCMR



Nancy Gibson
Co-Chair, LCCMR

SAT

cc: Mark Johnson, Executive Director, LSOHC

k) Conservation Easement Assessment and Valuation System Development

\$250,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the Board of Regents of the University of Minnesota to assess the effectiveness of existing conservation easements acquired through state expenditures at achieving their intended outcomes of public value and ecological benefits and to develop a standardized, objective conservation easement valuation system for guiding future state investments in conservation easements in order to ensure the proposed environmental benefits are being achieved in a cost effective manner. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2018, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

