Members of the Minnesota Legislature:

March 16, 2026

We write to you, as dedicated members of Minnesota's conservation community, to express support of the funding recommendations for the Outdoor Heritage Fund forwarded to you by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) and included in SF4304

This nation-leading Outdoor Heritage Fund was created when Minnesotans voted overwhelmingly in 2008 in favor of the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment. With that vote, Minnesotans called for acceleration of conservation in Minnesota and full transparency of spending decisions and outcomes. The structure and process followed by the LSOHC has met and continues to meet those expectations.

This year's funding package was unanimously approved by the LSOHC before being submitted to the legislature. The recommendations contain 54 high priority conservation projects across the state, in addition to more projects that will be funded through the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program. The selected projects have been thoroughly vetted by the LSOHC through its competitive, public process, which received over **$499 million in requests** and resulted in recommendations to you that total $188.926 million.

In considering full approval of the recommendations, we encourage you to reflect on the following:

1. LSOHC members are citizens and legislators chosen for their expertise in conservation from a statewide perspective. The LSOHC is well-qualified to select projects that are urgent and most likely to return positive results from taxpayer investment.

2. The LSOHC's competitive grant application process is thorough, fair and transparent. It demands that proposals are well-designed, high-priority, science-based projects that address conservation goals enumerated by LSOHC and state plans.

3. The LSOHC adheres to a rigorous review process each year to determine its final recommendations for the Legislature. It prioritizes projects based upon several criteria, including urgency, reasonableness and ability of the proposer to achieve the outcomes.

4. The conservation projects recommended by the LSOHC are urgent and ready to implement.

5. LSOHC and the Minnesota DNR developed the Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program, which sub-grants funding to smaller, community-level conservation projects. This popular Outdoor Heritage Fund program funds projects up to $500,000.

The LSOHC package presented to you is worthy of your support. We are available as a resource to you and thank you for your support of conservation in Minnesota.

Respectfully submitted by the following organizations,

The Outdoor Heritage Fund created by the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment "may be spent only to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife."

Minnesota Constitution, Art. XI, Sec. 15