



Dedicated to a Strong Greater Minnesota

May 17, 2011

Dear Senate and House Conferees for S.F. 1363,

We are writing on behalf of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) to express our strong support of the portion of the Senate's legacy bill, S.F. 1363, providing an exclusive share of funding for regional parks and trails in greater Minnesota. Although the dedicated amount is not nearly as high as the amount dedicated to the metropolitan regional parks and trails, fairness demands that the citizens of greater Minnesota enjoy similar recreational opportunities to those living in the metropolitan area.

Some have argued against dedicating funds to greater Minnesota regional parks and trails because many state parks are located in greater Minnesota. That is not a fair comparison, however, as state parks are not the equivalents of regional parks and trails. State parks are statewide resources. For example, when the Lake Vermillion state park was established last year over the objections of some local legislators, its proponents argued that the park would be a crown jewel for the entire state. Moreover, many counties in Minnesota, such as Stearns, Benton, Meeker and others, have no state parks located within them. Just like metropolitan regional parks and trails, greater Minnesota regional parks and trails provide recreational opportunities to many communities who don't have ready access to the state parks and trails.

Under the current House version of the bill, it is possible that greater Minnesota regional parks and trails could receive none of the competitive grant funding. The Senate bill simply guarantees that greater Minnesota regional parks and trails will receive a portion of the funding, a portion that is smaller than the metropolitan share.

The legacy amendment was passed by citizens across the state and is funded by citizens across the state. The legislature should support the efforts of local governments everywhere to continue building healthy strong communities that include regional recreational opportunities. We ask that you support the Senate bill dedicating a portion of the parks and trails money solely to greater Minnesota parks and trails.

Thank you for your support of our communities.

Best regards,

Heidi Omerza
Ely City Councilwoman
Co-Chair CGMC Environment Committee

Crystal Prentice
Waseca City Manager
Co-Chair CGMC Environment Committee