



March 3, 2011

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**LEGISLATURE, GOVERNOR URGED TO
“STOP THE ROLLBACKS”**

SAINT PAUL (March 3, 2011) – Leaders of conservation, civic, farm and environmental organizations joined with legislators today to urge members of the Minnesota Legislature and Governor Mark Dayton to “stop the rollbacks” of Minnesota’s environmental protections.

The current concern to members of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP), Minnesota League of Women Voters and other organizations at a State Capitol news conference was House File 1, which weakens existing laws to protect Minnesota’s air, water and land. Joining these organizations worried about the future of Minnesota’s lakes, rivers and streams, natural areas and public health – if more environmental rollbacks occur – were Sen. Gary Kubley, DFL-Granite Falls, and Rep. Andrew Falk, DFL-Murdock. There are numerous other bills moving quickly through the legislature that weaken existing laws and move toward dirty coal and more nuclear waste. There are also bills to weaken water protections, all of which move Minnesota away from clean water, clean energy and environmental protections.

“Lowering the bar for environmental review undermines the public’s confidence and participation in decisions that affect our neighborhoods, our health, and Minnesota’s Great Outdoors,” said Steve Morse, executive director of MEP. “We believe that any discussion of expediting the process needs to be balanced by determining how to better protect our environment and enhance – not decrease – the opportunities for public input.”

MEP and dozens of other organizations sent letters to the Minnesota Legislature and Governor Dayton with concerns about H.F. 1. One major area of concern in the legislation is a provision that allows the business proposing a major development to write its own draft environmental impact statement.

League of Women Voters member and former teacher Gwen Myers scolded members of the Legislature for rushing the environmental review bill through the process and limiting citizen input.

Northern Minnesota resident and former miner Bob Tammen expressed his concerns that legislators allowed the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board to be exempted from the environmental review process. Without adequate oversight, more pollution from mines could end up in Minnesota’s treasured Boundary Waters and Lake Superior, he said.

Julie Jansen, a mother and resident of Olivia, Minn., cited the need to protect public health when decisions are made about major developments. She told her personal story of how air pollution from large scale hog operations in her community affected her family’s health. She noted that H.F. 1 places a

larger burden on rural citizens wanting to voice their concerns in the courts, increasing legal expenses and reducing access to local district courts.

“We are here today to say ‘NO’ to rollbacks on current environmental protections,” Morse noted. “We are gravely concerned about the speed of the legislature’s proposed rollbacks on existing clean water and clean energy policies. Minnesotans want solar and wind power not more dirty coal plants and nuclear waste. We urge the Legislature and the Governor to take a strong position to defend the remainder of Minnesota’s current policies to protect Minnesota’s Great Outdoors.”

Minnesota Environmental Partnership is a statewide coalition of 80 nonprofit conservation and environmental organizations, representing more than 500,000 Minnesotans. Formed in 1998, MEP works with its member organizations to protect and restore Minnesota’s lakes, rivers, streams, forests, wildlife habitat and natural areas.

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