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## **Minnesota Outdoors & Conservation Groups Stand United: “Don’t Raid Our Legacy”**

### *Dayton Bonding Proposal Doesn’t Meet Test*

**Saint Paul (Feb. 2, 2011)** – In a letter sent to Governor Mark Dayton and Minnesota legislative leaders today, 66 conservation and outdoors groups called upon elected leaders to “to keep the faith with the voters of Minnesota who overwhelmingly passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Constitutional Amendment.”

Groups including Minnesota Deer Hunters Association, Pheasants Forever, Minnesota Trout Unlimited and the Minnesota Conservation Federation joined with Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, Izaak Walton League of America and more to remind elected officials of the 1.6 million Minnesotans who voted to pass the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in 2008.

“These 66 organizations are sending a clear message: ‘Don’t Raid Our Legacy’,” said Steve Morse, executive director of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, the statewide coalition of environmental and conservation organizations.

“Some legislators have hinted that they are looking at the Clean Water, Land and Legacy funds as a way to help solve the state’s budget crisis,” said Dave Zentner of the Izaak Walton League of America. “Those funds are constitutionally dedicated. They can’t be tapped to fix the state’s budget problem.”

The three principles outlined in the letter are:

1. *Minnesota’s Great Outdoors must maintain its traditional share of the total state general fund budget and not dip below its already small one percent proportion – a 30-year low. Any general fund cuts proposed for environmental and conservation programs must not result in a percentage reduction in these*

- programs that is greater than any percentage reduction in total general fund spending.*
2. *Statutorily dedicated funds already in existence for Minnesota's Great Outdoors cannot be raided to pay for other budget items.*
  3. *Capital investments for Minnesota's Great Outdoors must be maintained at a level at least equal to the traditional 10-year average of 22.2 percent of the total general fund obligation bonding authority.*

“Governor Dayton’s bonding recommendations announced Monday are a step in the right direction, but with only 16 percent going toward conservation and clean water, they do not go far enough to meet the voters’ mandate,” Morse said. “The legislature must now finish the job to reach the 22 percent to adhere to the Minnesota Constitution.”

Morse said Dayton’s conservation and clean water bonding recommendations amount to only \$85.65 million of his total \$530.811 million general obligation bonding recommendations.

Mark Johnson, Executive Director of the Minnesota Deer Hunters Association emphasized the importance of the letter: “We have a new governor and new legislative leadership. They need to hear the united voice of Minnesota’s outdoors community: the hunters and anglers of Minnesota who worked for more than 10 years for passage of the Amendment. Joining with environmental and conservation groups, these organizations represent Minnesotans from every legislative district, and we all want continued protection of wildlife habitat, clean water, land conservation and maintenance of our parks and trails.”

“Minnesotans continue to highly value our lakes, rivers and streams and Minnesota’s Great Outdoors,” said Morse. The letter referenced a statewide poll conducted for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership in November 2010 by a bipartisan national polling team, in which two-thirds of voters agreed with the statement that: “*In these tough economic times, elected officials must be reminded that we want to protect Minnesota’s Great Outdoors for the long-term. We must not let elected officials raid constitutionally dedicated conservation funds to solve short-term state budget problems.*”

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See link for copy of letter and list of 66 organizations signing:

<http://bit.ly/AmendmentLetter>

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Poll results from a statewide telephone poll of 701 registered Minnesota voters, conducted Nov. 16-21, 2010, for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership by the bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (D) and Public Opinion Strategies (R). The margin of sampling error for the full statewide samples is 3.7 percentage points, plus or minus, at a 95 percent confidence level.