



**STATEMENT BY STEVE MORSE**

*Executive Director*

*Minnesota Environmental Partnership*

*March 28, 2011*

*RE: ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGET BILLS AND GOVERNOR DAYTON DIRECTIVE*

**Policy Provisions Should Be Removed**

**Environmental Budget Bills  
“Unravel Minnesota’s Great Outdoors Legacy”**

“The House and Senate budget bills are an embarrassing attempt to unravel Minnesota’s Great Outdoors legacy to solve a short-term budget gap.

“Not only do these bills bring us dangerously close to violating the intent of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Constitutional Amendment, they include outlandish policy provisions – such as logging Minnesota’s treasured timbers in state parks to make a few bucks – that do not belong in budget bills.

“We’re willing to do our share to help solve the state’s budget crisis, but we’re not willing to have funds for our lakes, river and streams; wildlife habitat and natural areas disproportionately raided to modestly impact the state’s budget problem.

“Today, Governor Mark Dayton made it clear he will not sign revenue or expenditure bills that include extraneous policy provisions. The numerous policy provisions included in these Legislative Omnibus Environmental Finance bills are blatantly extraneous – as well as damaging – and they weaken Minnesota’s existing laws that protect our air and water, including:

- Lowering water quality standards for phosphorus discharges into Lake Pepin;
- Repealing protections for the Mississippi River Corridor;
- Prohibiting new water rules to protect and restore our lakes, rivers and streams;
- Threatening the future of wild rice, our state grain, by suspending sulfide pollution standards for wild rice waters;
- Weakening of permit standards for large feedlots; and
- Removing the goal of “sound natural resource conservation and management principles” for our millions of acres school trust fund lands.

“These policy actions are not only bad for our water, land and air, but it is also irresponsible for the Legislature to shoehorn these policy issues into omnibus funding bills.

“We currently are at historic low of one percent of general fund support for Minnesota’s Great Outdoors – this bill takes us below that nominal share. Furthermore, it does not maintain our constitution’s ‘traditional sources of funding’ and is inconsistent with the wishes of the 1.6 million who voted to raise their taxes in tough economic times to protect and restore our Great Outdoors.

“Therefore, we urge the Legislature to stand up for our constitution; keep the faith with Minnesota voters; and protect our Great Outdoors – by removing bad policy provisions and cleaning up these bills, or defeating these bills.”

*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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