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65 environmental projects throughout Minnesota selected for \$45.8 million in funding

Funding is from the MN Lottery-generated Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

(St. Paul, MN, July 15, 2014) – The Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) met on July 10 and selected 65 environment and natural resources projects totaling \$45.8 million to recommend to the Minnesota Legislature for funding. The recommendations are the result of a competitive, multi-stage process for allocating funds available next year from the Minnesota Lottery-generated Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). If approved by the legislature the projects will begin in July 2015.

The LCCMR's 2015 Request for Proposal (RFP) sought projects across several priority issue areas, including water quality, invasive species, climate change, renewable energy, natural resource management, habitat protection, outdoor recreation, and environmental education. The 65 projects being recommended for funding address this spectrum of issue areas and will collectively benefit every region of the state. Some highlights include:

- A new research center at the University of Minnesota dedicated to providing science-based solutions for preventing and controlling terrestrial invasive species – including introduced plants, animals, insects, and diseases – that threaten the health of the state's prairies, forests, wetlands, and agricultural resources.
- Acceleration of the Minnesota Biological Survey, Minnesota Geological Atlas, the updating of the National Wetlands Inventory, and other related surveying and monitoring efforts that are acquiring essential information for understanding Minnesota's plants, pollinators, animals, water and groundwater resources, and wetlands;
- Development of a comprehensive, statewide framework for transitioning Minnesota away from fossil fuels and toward a long-term sustainable energy future.
- Research, analysis, and planning efforts to inform water management for sustainability and protect water quality from challenges posed by groundwater overuse, drainage systems, and nutrient and sediment runoff.
- Protection, enhancement, and restoration of lands for unique natural areas and parks and trails around the state, including regional parks in the metro area, scientific and natural areas throughout the state, the Mesabi Trail in northern Minnesota, and several state parks and trails. One project involves the reintroduction of American bison at Minneopa State Park, which will provide a unique recreational opportunity for visitors while assisting with national genetic preservation efforts for the species.
- Research and data collection on Minnesota habitat and wildlife species including bats, turtles, elk, loons, white pelicans, and other species in order to inform species preservation and habitat management efforts.
- Research into potential impacts and control methods for emerald ash borer, Canada thistle, and an emerging pine disease.

A total of approximately \$46.3 million is available from the ENRTF for recommendation by the LCCMR for 2015. The Commission chose to reserve some funds to consider for addition to some of the recommended projects at its November or December meeting. Following those meetings, the LCCMR's recommendations will next go before the 2015 Legislature for consideration and approval during the legislative session beginning January 6. Recommended projects will begin work on July 1, 2015, when the funds become available.

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In response to the LCCMR's 2014 proposal process, 152 proposals requesting a total of approximately \$126.3 million were received. Combined requests amounted to nearly \$3 requested for every \$1 available, making for a very competitive process. Of the original 152 proposals received, 76 were requested to give presentations and answer questions before the LCCMR. From this reduced pool, 65 proposals received a recommendation for some portion of the funds available.

The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is a permanent dedicated fund in the Minnesota state treasury that was established by 77% voter approval of a constitutional amendment in 1988. The amendment directs forty percent of the net proceeds of the Minnesota Lottery, or approximately seven cents of every dollar spent on playing the lottery, into the ENRTF. The ENRTF is intended to provide a long-term, stable source of funding for innovative and far-sighted activities that protect and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources for the benefit of current citizens and future generations. Up to 5.5% of the existing market value of the ENRTF can be expended each year.

Additional information on the LCCMR's 2015 proposal recommendations and proposal process can be found online at: www.lccmr.leg.mn.

Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)

The LCCMR is made up of 17 members (5 Senators, 5 Representatives, 5 citizens appointed by the governor, 1 citizen appointed by the Senate, and 1 citizen appointed by the House). The function of the LCCMR is to make funding recommendations to the Minnesota State Legislature for special environment and natural resource projects, primarily from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. The LCCMR developed from a program initiated in 1963. Since then over \$800 million has been appropriated to approximately 1,900 projects recommended to protect and enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

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