

Conservation Connection

A Minnesota Legislative Outdoor Newsletter: Created by Kim Scott and Alexandra David

*Sponsored by: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Pheasants Forever, Mn Musky and Pike Alliance, Sportsmen for the BWC/A, Mn Sharptail Grouse Society, Outdoor News, Ferguson Falls Fish and Game Club, Nicollet Conservation Club**

April 21, 2023

Important Dates:

- April 22: Earth day: The DNR is waiving vehicle permit fees at all 75 state parks and recreation areas on Saturday, April 22 to celebrate Earth Day.
- May 12-12: Governor's Fishing Opener, greater Mankato area
- May 22, 2023: Regular Session adjourns.

2023 Legislative News Highlights

Governor Walz's State of the State address: While Minnesotans have a reputation for being somewhat conflict-averse, [Gov. Tim Walz](#) talked a lot about fighting Wednesday during his annual State of the State address. Yet he also displayed the sunny optimism about the state's future that's come to be one of his trademarks. Walz held up this year's legislative session as being one of the chief drivers of that optimism . . . In his 28-minute speech, Walz cited the current Legislature's success in passing bills that he said would cut taxes, unlock federal funds for infrastructure, provide financial assistance for families, send emergency funding to food shelves, help unemployed miners, establish a carbon-free electricity standard, and provide free breakfast and lunch at Minnesota schools . . . "We've got a gun safety bill on the table. And we're going to get it passed. And I'm going to sign it, and this is what's going to happen: We're going to have universal background checks. We're going to have red flag laws to keep guns out of the hands of people. And we're going to have lawful gun owners not be impinged upon one bit. If anyone in America doubts that we're going to take meaningful action to protect our kids, I've got two words: Watch us." Walz concluded the speech in a tone even more optimistic than usual, perhaps inspired by the combination of a state government led by one party and a \$17.5 billion surplus. [Read more.](#)

House Unveils Tax Bill: Democrats in control of the Minnesota House on Monday released details of their plans to change tax rates by \$3 billion — including \$275 per person rebates as well as cuts and

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credits for families and seniors — while also generating about \$1 billion in new revenue. . . The big ticket tax reductions proposed by Democrats include \$1.25 billion in rebates, \$1.30 billion in credits for families and \$409 million in reduced taxes on Social Security. . . The tax rebates are worth \$275 for a single filer and \$550 for couples, plus \$275 each for up to three dependents, with income limits of \$75,000 for individuals and \$150,000 for families. [Read more.](#) [See bill summary [here.](#)] [Read more.](#)

The Minnesota House of Representatives has passed the Environment, Natural Resources, Climate and Energy Budget Bill by a party-line vote of 69-59. The bill, H.F. 2310 , which was debated for eight hours and which passed just before midnight Tuesday, now must be reconciled with a similar bill advancing in the Senate before going on to the governor to be signed into law. . . . The bill, authored by Rep. Rick Hansen, DFL-South St. Paul, invests over \$670 million in new funding above previous levels spent for the environment and natural resources. [Read more.](#) [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul), sponsors [HF2310](#) which includes \$93 million appropriation to replant trees in the wake of emerald ash borer devastation, money to replenish the metropolitan landfill trust fund, provisions to regulate perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances and funding for Lawns to Legumes, one of the most popular pollinator habitat programs in the country. The bill does not contain funding for an invasive carp deterrent in the Mississippi River.

The bill would authorize approximately \$1.7 billion to fund operations at the Department of Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency, Board of Water and Soil Resources, parks and trails managed by the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Zoo . . . It would also increase certain fees to fund ongoing operations. A lifetime fishing license for adults would go from \$574 to \$689, registration for a boat bigger than 40 feet would go from \$90 to \$209, and a one-day state park parking pass would go from \$7 to \$10. The bill calls for approximately \$1 billion in General Fund spending for outdoor recreation, natural resource management and pollution control programs, including about \$673 million in new biennial spending. It would also authorize spending \$79.3 million on about 85 projects from proceeds of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which receives money from the lottery. [MORE: [Download detailed environment and natural resources budget](#), [change items](#), [Details of the environment and natural resources portion of the bill](#)] and [Environmental Trust Fund appropriations](#)]

Some policy provisions would:

- require labeling of products containing PFAS and prohibit their use in things such as children’s products, cookware, dental floss, cosmetics, and ski wax;
- prohibit the use of lead sinkers in metro area native swan habitats and lead shot for small game in some wildlife management areas;
- simplify snowmobile registration decals;
- phase in watercraft operator education and permitting for adults;
- increase fencing requirements for white-tailed deer farms; and
- transfer state-owned land within the boundaries of Upper Sioux Agency State Park to the Upper Sioux Community.

Provisions that would increase fines for anyone who kills wild game with malicious intent and would prohibit managing the wolf population by recreational hunting were added by amendments Monday. [Read more](#). See also: [Details of the climate and energy portion of the bill](#), [Charges upgraded in Ely deer crashing case](#).

DFL nixes Citizens' Board, narrows environmental justice bill after intra-party split with Greater Minnesota lawmakers: DFL lawmakers had to strip one of their major priorities from that bill — reviving a Citizens' Board to oversee pollution permits — and water down several measures, like an environmental justice policy meant to address the long-term impacts of contamination. It was an unusually public last-minute change, and it drew discontent and disappointment from many Democrats. But a few of their colleagues from Greater Minnesota insisted on the changes amid criticism that the legislation would be a roadblock for economic development and critical industries like mining and agriculture . . . On the House floor Monday, lawmakers amended the environmental omnibus bill to delete the new Citizens' Board. [Read more](#), and [here](#).

The Senate passed their Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Omnibus bill on Thursday: The bill appropriates nearly \$1 billion of the \$17.5 billion surplus to fund energy and environmental agencies, programs and initiatives and garnered seven hours of debate Thursday, April 20th, before receiving final approval on a 37-29 vote. [Read more and watch the debate here](#). Several amendments were offered, including:

- Requiring the DNR to offer electronic angling, trapping or hunting licenses by 2026--Adopted.
- Amend Minn. Stat. § 93.001 to read: "Minnesota is a mining-friendly state"--Adopted.
- Limiting the shotgun use area during the regular firearms deer season to Olmsted County--Adopted.
- Fully fund a state of the art deterrent system at Mississippi River Lock and Dam 5 to impede passage of invasive carp at this location to protect the upper river--Not adopted.
- Removes liability for a cervid farmer whose cervids escape due to a natural disaster or as a result of vandalism or destruction by a third party--Adopted.

The bill was passed on a vote of 37-29 with Republicans Abeler, Coleman, and Housley voting with the Democrats. See additional details of the Senate bill [here](#).

On Monday the Minnesota Senate approved an \$821.8 million Legacy bill that provides funding for the Outdoor Heritage Fund, the Clean Water Fund, the Parks and Trails Fund, and the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. The bill passed the House with a vote of 69-58. The Minnesota Senate Republican Caucus released a [statement](#) regarding the vote: "Democrats want to spend way, way too much on unaccountable individuals and organizations for controversial 'arts projects.' This is not what Minnesotans wanted or expected when they voted for the Legacy Amendment in 2008."

*A conference committee made up of 5 members from each house was appointed to reconcile the differences between the two versions of the omnibus Legacy bill (the conference committee is expected to convene next week).

The conferees are as follows:

House: Lillie, Hussein, Her, Cha, Backer

Senate: Hawj, Morrison, Mohamed, Pha, Housley

Omnibus ag bill passes with security for grain farmers, changes to Board of Animal Health:

[HF2278/SF1955](#)* that, [as amended](#), was passed 70-58 along party lines by the House Thursday. It now returns to the Senate, where the bill was initially passed [58-7](#) April 13. The bill would authorize \$448.4 million in agricultural spending, including \$163.2 million in General Fund spending for the Department of Agriculture and \$125.7 million for the Office of Broadband in the next biennium . . . While many Republicans support provisions in the bill, such as soil health improvements and meat processing training grants, they take issue with spending priorities, possible changes to regulations on pesticide treated seeds and, especially, possible changes to the Board of Animal Health . . . [Rep. Paul Anderson](#) is concerned Minnesota could become an island with regards to pesticide-treated seed use. A provision provoking strong Republican opposition would increase membership in the Board of Animal Health from six members to 11, have one member from each Congressional district, allow membership beyond veterinarians and livestock producers, and allow the governor to appoint board's executive director. [Rep. John Burkel](#) (R-Badger) said the provision would unnecessarily politicize a board which has the authority to order animal quarantines and depopulation. [Read more](#).

*A conference committee made up of 3 members from each house was appointed to reconcile the differences between the two versions of the omnibus Agriculture bill.

The conferees are as follows:

House: Not yet appointed.

Senate: Putnam, Kupec, Westrom

Select DNR News releases

- [Fort Snelling State Park closed temporarily due to flooding](#): Due to rising waters on the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, Fort Snelling State Park will close to the public starting at 8 a.m. on Friday, April 21.
- [DNR shares top 10 tips for planning a camping trip in state parks, recreation areas and forest campgrounds](#): As Minnesotans prepare for the summer camping season, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources shares tips to help in planning an outdoor adventure.
- [Upper Red Lake walleye regulations announced for open water season](#): Anglers fishing on Upper Red Lake in northern Minnesota during the 2023 open-water season that starts May 13 will have a five-walleye possession limit, with only one walleye longer than 17 inches allowed, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- [Free entrance to Minnesota state parks, recreation areas on Earth Day, April 22](#): The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is waiving vehicle permit fees at all 75 state parks and recreation areas on Saturday, April 22. This "Free Park Day" is one of four days each year on which the DNR waives the requirement for a vehicle permit at state parks and recreation areas.

Last week at the Legislature:

On Monday at 9:00 AM, House [Ways and Means](#) discussed the following bills: [HF24](#) (Jordan) Safe drinking water authority modified, drinking water revolving fund provisions modified, grant program established to replace lead drinking water service lines, report required, and money appropriated; [HF100](#) (Stephenson) Omnibus Cannabis Bill; and [HF2278](#) (Vang) Agriculture Budget Bill (see also [Fiscal Spreadsheet](#) and letter of support from: [Pesticide Action Network](#)).

At 3:00 PM, Senate [Agriculture, Broadband, and Rural Development](#) held an informational hearing on [S.F. 1526 \(Morrison\)](#): Requirement modification for certain owners of farmed Cervidae. See: [SF 1526 Unofficial Engrossment as Amended](#), [Bill Summary](#), joint letter from Michael T. Osterholm, PhD, MPH Director, Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, and Dr. Tiffany Wolf, Ph.D., Co-Director, Minnesota Center for Prion Research at the University of Minnesota, and [Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy CWD Proposal](#).

On Tuesday evening, Senate [Finance](#) discussed, among other bills: [S.F. 2847 \(Frentz\)](#) Omnibus Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate appropriations (NOTE: The language of SF 2847 will be added to SF 2438 after the bill is heard); and [S.F. 2438 \(Hawj\)](#) Omnibus Environment and Climate appropriations (see also: [Bill Summary](#), [SF2438 Spreadsheet](#)).

On Thursday at 9:00 AM, House [Ways and Means](#) discussed, among other bills: [SF2909](#) (Moller) Public Safety Budget Bill ([SF2909](#) is the Senate Companion to [HF2890](#)) See written testimony to the committee from: [Metro Cities](#), [Dr. Ryan Kelly Director, Addiction Medicine, University of Minnesota Medical Center](#), [The Association of Minnesota Counties \(AMC\)](#), [the Minnesota Inter-County Association \(MICA\)](#), [Minnesota Rural Counties \(MRC\)](#), [Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties \(MACCAC\)](#), and [Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers \(MACPO\)](#), [Minnesota Cable Communications Association](#) and [The Association of Minnesota Counties \(AMC\)](#), [the Minnesota Inter-County Association \(MICA\)](#), [Minnesota Rural Counties \(MRC\)](#), [Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties \(MACCAC\)](#), and [Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers \(MACPO\)](#)

Next Week at the Legislature:

The legislative body has commenced the passage of omnibus bills through the House Ways and Means committee and the Senate Finance committee. As these bills get approved by their respective finance committees, the frequency of floor sessions will increase to facilitate the processing of the omnibus bills. Committee schedules may be subject to change or delayed with minimal notice, given the dynamic nature of the legislative session. Conference committees on bills that have passed out of both bodies are expected to begin next week; leadership has requested that conference committee reports be completed by May 5th.

On Monday at 8:30 AM, the [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources](#) will convene for the following agenda items: Director's report, Information: Presentations from recently- completed projects: Den Boxes for Fishers and other Nesting Wildlife, U of MN - Duluth NRRI, Michael Joyce, \$190,000 and

Characterize Unregulated Contaminants in Source Water and Drinking Water, Minnesota Department of Health, Stephen Robertson, \$1,000,000. The commission will also receive an update regarding rights exchange, environmental remediation, and restrictive covenant from Jim Janssen - Town of Crane Lake, Jennifer Force - SEH, and Jeff Anderson. See also: [Staff Memo](#) from August 27, 2022 and [Site Aerial Map](#) Voyageurs National Park Visitors Center, Crane Lake: Land Acquisition for Voyageurs National Park Crane Lake Visitors Center, \$950,000, Crane Lake Voyageurs National Park Campground, \$3,100,000 and Voyageurs National Park Crane Lake Visitors Center Project, \$2,700,000. The Commission will take action on LCCMR [operational procedures](#) modifications and Proposal evaluation/selection process for 2024 LCCMR recommendations: see also [Staff Memo](#). The commission will also discuss Site Visits for Fall 2023 and take public testimony.

Bills of Interest:

There are no deadlines on bill introductions during session, however, committee deadlines have expired for the 2023 session and action is unlikely to be taken on any bills being introduced.

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) and Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF): Please click [here](#) for a list of bills of pertinence to the OHF maintained by LSOHC staff.

Game and Fish:

Minority party legislation:

Swedzinski introduced: [H. F. 3233](#), A bill for an act relating to game and fish; eliminating shotgun zone for taking deer; amending Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 97B.031, by adding a subdivision; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 97B.318. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy. *Senate companion:* [SF3241](#) (Howe).

Swedzinski introduced: [H. F. 3234](#), A bill for an act relating to game and fish; modifying age-related exemptions for certain licenses; amending Minnesota Statutes 2022, sections 97A.451, subdivisions 2, 3; 97A.475, subdivisions 2, 3, 6, 7, 20; 97B.022, subdivision 2; 97B.601, subdivision 4; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 97A.451, subdivisions 2a, 3b, 5, 6. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy. *Senate companion:* [SF3239](#) (Howe).

Senators Howe and Eichorn introduced--[S.F. No. 3271](#): A bill for an act relating to game and fish; modifying muzzleloader provisions; amending Minnesota Statutes 2022, sections 97A.015, subdivision 51; 97B.031, subdivision 1. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy. *House companion* [H. F. 3259](#) (Swedzinski).