



Working to protect the Mississippi River
and its watershed in the Twin Cities area.

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Rep. Melissa Hortman
Speaker of the House
463 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Patty Acomb
593 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

February 2, 2022

Dear Speaker Hortman and Representative Acomb,

I am writing on behalf of Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) to express my sincere appreciation for the work you and your colleagues have put into the House Climate Action Caucus Plan released in January.

While each of the measures outlined in the Plan will be vital to achieving our shared climate goals, FMR is particularly encouraged by the inclusion of investments that accelerate development of plant genetics, markets and value chains for next-generation “continuous living cover” (CLC) cropping systems.

As you know, CLC systems have strong potential to improve water quality, soil health, habitat, and climate resilience in Minnesota, while enhancing farm prosperity and rural economic vitality. This non-regulatory, market-based approach will help accelerate progress toward our state’s environmental and economic goals without relying solely on at-times piecemeal, expensive, and impermanent on-farm conservation measures.

In particular, we are pleased to see two high-leverage investments included in the House Climate Caucus proposal.

1. **Forever Green:** \$20 million for Forever Green will allow University of Minnesota researchers to ramp up their efforts to bring improved CLC cropping systems from the lab to the field. The Forever Green Initiative’s burgeoning reputation has already garnered significant federal investment and allowed the University of Minnesota to attract some of the best crop researchers in the world, not to mention a dynamic and expanding commercialization team.

2. **CLC Value Chain Development Fund:** \$10 million to develop new markets and value chains for CLC crops is an outstanding down payment that will allow Minnesota-based processors and consumer product developers – and, in turn, the farmers who supply them – to jump the first major hurdles to success. We imagine a future close at hand when these businesses help form the new backbone of Minnesota’s agriculture sector.

Through each of these programs, increased investment in CLC systems will strengthen Minnesota’s leadership position in this emerging area and reap major dividends for our state.

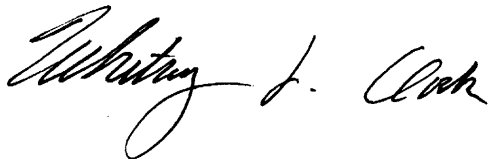
In addition, we are glad to see the House’s commitment to the **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)** and other state programs that conserve native habitat. CREP remains an important tool for protecting land and habitat for generations to come, and serves as an important pathway for permanent soil carbon storage. New funding through this proposal will also enhance water quality work statewide by relieving competition for CREP dollars in the Clean Water Fund.

As you work with your colleagues to set budget targets this session, please ensure that relevant committee budget targets incorporate these investments.

On behalf of Friends of the Mississippi River and our thousands of members and supporters, thank you again for advancing this comprehensive Climate Action Plan and including robust funding for Forever Green, CLC value chain development and CREP.

This proposal helps lay the groundwork for a more vibrant and sustainable future for Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Whitney L. Clark
Executive Director

CC:

Representative Todd Lippert
Representative Ginny Klevorn
Representative Rick Hansen
Representative Mike Sundin
Representative Jamie Long