April 26, 2013

Gentlepersons:

On behalf of the Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee (BOC) established under Minn. Stat. Sec. 97A.055, Subd. 4b, I am sending you this letter to express the BOC’s concern regarding the current language contained in the Senate version of HF0976. The language as
currently drafted does not reflect the Game and Fish Initiative submitted by Governor Dayton. The current language in the bill appropriates only $2 million from the Game and Fish Fund to the agency for enhanced fish and wildlife management and enforcement, far below the $4 million that the Governor included in his budget request.

As part of our statutory responsibility to review and report annually on revenues and expenditures from the Game and Fish Fund, the BOC played a leading role in recent years in identifying the need to increase hunting and fishing license revenues to support ongoing management of Minnesota’s fish and wildlife populations and their respective habitats. In conjunction with individual citizens, local sportsmen’s clubs, and statewide conservation organizations, we supported 2012 legislation that revised the license fee structure in a way that both increased revenues into the Game and Fish Fund without unreasonable impact to hunters and anglers and stabilized the near-term projections of the Fund’s solvency. With the passage of the fee increases, the BOC (and likely the average hunter and angler) understood that the DNR would then begin crafting upcoming biennial budgets that reflected the increased revenues and expenditures needed to maintain, and in some cases restore, programs and budgets designed to support and enhance Minnesotans’ hunting and angling activities.

To have increased revenues coming into the Game and Fish Fund but then not provide the accompanying appropriations to enable the DNR to spend those funds diminishes the ability of the DNR to meet the objectives of its fish and wildlife programs, and does not meet the expectations of the hunters and anglers that supported the license fee increases. The BOC therefore urges the House and Senate conferees to adopt the appropriations from the Game and Fish Fund provided for in the House version of HF0976 to correspond to the levels requested by the Governor.

Sincerely,

John E. Hunt
Chair, Game and Fish Fund Budgetary Oversight Committee
Big Lake, MN