

A [March 12 letter](#) from Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board officials includes disinformation related to the Legacy of Nature (LON) bill. To provide clarification, following in our response to misleading conclusions stated by the MPRB.

THEY SAY: The Minneapolis Park Board, like all the other implementing park agencies in the metropolitan area, opposes HF 2703 and SF 3511.

REALITY: The park agencies are opposed to a bill that will:

- Increase transparency and accountability of how these funds are being spent
- Assure compliance with the 25-year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan -- a legislatively mandated report created to guide how parks and trails Legacy funds should be invested
- Better meet citizens' expectations for the Legacy Amendment

THEY SAY: The bill will direct resources away from parks and trails to other purposes.

REALITY: False. The bill does not direct resources away from parks and trails to other purposes. The bill rebalances spending to align with the investment guidelines per the 25-year Legacy Plan. Since inception, parks and trails spending has been viewed by metro park agencies as additional bonding dollars for capital development. Bonding dollars will continue to provide millions of dollars annually for capital development. Legacy spending will go beyond that to focus on pertinent needs including taking care of natural resources, outreach and programming to help inspire the next generation of stewards.

THEY SAY: The bill will also strip elected officials of the 10 regional park agencies on how to spend those funds and give that authority to DNR appointees.

REALITY: False. Elected officials of the 10 park agencies can continue to spend those funds in alignment with the 25-year Plan. (Many would agree that a legislatively mandated report that took 18-months to create and involved more than 1,000 citizens should not simply be disregarded.) This bill will increase accountability for how the funds are being spent by establishing an oversight body similar to other park and trail agencies to assure the grant funded projects comprehensively align with the legislatively mandated 25-year Legacy Plan.

THEY SAY: The bill is about who decides to spend parks and trail legacy funding and whether the will of the voters will be maintained.

REALITY: The reason most people voted for the Legacy Amendment was to preserve nature and clean water. The overarching vision of the 25-year Legacy Plan is to preserve nature and inspire the next generation of stewards. Increasing investments in restoration and stewardship is indeed the will of the voters, and this bill will help to assure that the will of the voters will be maintained rather than ignored.

THEY SAY: This bill isn't about nature.

REALITY: False. This bill is about Nature for the benefit of people and wildlife. The regional parks system is a nature-based system containing significant natural resources such as lakeshore, wetlands, hardwood forests, native prairies, and groundwater recharging areas. Collectively these parks provide

carbon sequestration and other benefits including stormwater management, urban heat island mitigation, biodiversity enhancement and improvements to air and water quality. Enhancing, not diminishing, the park systems natural resource base is essential.

In conclusion, if the ten park agencies in the metropolitan area were investing these funds as voters intended there would be no need for the Legacy of Nature bill. Perhaps that is why they thwarted public testimony.

The bill will enhance the integrity of our Nature-based regional parks system for now and future generations of people and wildlife. **We urge public and legislative support for the Legacy of Nature bill, HF2703 / SF3511.**

