

# Roots Return Heritage Farm LLC



E-Mail: rootsreturn@gmail.com

Date: March 15, 2024

To: Representative and Senator members of the Subcommittee on Water Policy, Co-chair Hemmingsen-Jaeger and Co-chair Weber

RE: [HF 4044 \(Jacob\)](#) / [SF 4241 \(Drazkowski\)](#)

Greetings Subcommittee Members and Director Stark:

Representative Jacob's bill proposing a \$5/acre MN Property Tax Credit for agricultural producers 'certified' under MDA's MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program ([MAWQCP](#)) will not provide clean water outcomes.

To date, **there are no measurements the program utilizes. If you place a rubber membrane underneath, and walls around ag parcels emitting pollution, you will improve water quality.** Since that isn't realistic, anyone should be able to **state with ease how practice A will provide 'assurance' of water quality outcome B.** Modeling doesn't explain outcomes are achieved, measurements do as we see in agency monitoring reports. Ag organizations supporting this see another offer of taxpayer subsidy, but again pollution reduction will be put right back into all taxpayers' hands, and that practice needs to cease.

**Perennial use of synthetic nitrogen, overapplication of manure, neonic coated seeds, chemical sprays, tillage, drain tile** does not 'assure' water quality. All practices are producer choice. There are amazing producers implementing amazing conservation practices on their lands, there simply aren't enough of them in MN. Per the [2022 USDA Ag Census](#), the majority of acres still implement no conservation practices. **SE MN and other regions report nitrates and agricultural chemicals in surface water and groundwater** for decades.

I asked MDA to review with the advisory board agricultural pollution and water quality reports provided by them, MPCA, DNR, MDH to help guide the program's efforts where its most needed. My request was met with anger and refusal to review the very data needed to make quantified decisions. Number of acres and farmers enrolled does not equal improved water quality. I live in a [DWSMA](#) area of Carver County, and see no restrictions being upheld by MDA oversight for 'groundwater protection'.

The program's existence relies on Clean Water Funds which cost taxpayers \$54M+ to date. [Agricultural parcels pay the least amount of property taxes of any zoned land use in MN and have additional tax deferment programs.](#) I know, I own two. Taxpayers also currently [pay to clean up and mitigate ag pollution](#) issues through no fault of their own. What if you couldn't drink your well water? Who is responsible?

The program claims to 'remove' agricultural pollution risks to water quality are unsubstantiated. **NRCS-MN stated it next to impossible to make 'guarantees' to a specific water quality outcome due a multitude of factors:** soil types, depth to bedrock, weather, floods/droughts, climate projections, producer education, familiarity, equipment, drainage, irrigation, consistency of practice, etc. How can a tax credit be offered to something one cannot measure?

The program makes contradictory claims: 1) A risk assessment tool only 2) Provides 'assurance' and 'guarantee' of improved water quality outcomes. Which is true? Your opposition to this bill will keep conversation honest that degraded water quality from agricultural sources needs more help than just the MAWQCP program existing. Please consider voting to oppose these bills.

Sincerely,

Lori D. Cox, Owner - Roots Return Heritage Farm LLC

2016 MAWQCP certified farm using no synthetic nitrogen, pesticides, or animal manure; continual no-till cover crops, fallow field; perennial fruits and rotated annuals on highly erodible soils.