Rep. Betty McCollum invited stakeholder testimony
FY 2019 proposed budget
Friday, March 9th, 10:00am to 12:00pm
Room 2308 -- Minnesota State Senate Office Building

My name is John Hottinger testifying for the Sierra Club North Star Chapter where I am an active member and former board chair.

I applaud Rep. McCollum's leadership for holding this hearing for Minnesotans to have an opportunity to voice their views and participate in shaping a response to the budget proposal of President Trump. The lack of real public input into this budget has otherwise been not only a travesty of justice but a mockery of our democracy. Thank you, Rep. McCollum, for demonstrating for those in House and Senate majority leadership that there is value outside their backrooms.

The proposed FY19 budget amounts to a full-scale assault on our children's health, environmental safeguards and the outdoors. The Budget negatively affects Minnesota's people, communities and values. Today I will focus on four areas of concern:

- Clean Water
- Climate
- Public lands and wildlife
- Clean energy

Clean water

- Massive cuts to EPA's budget completely eliminate many clean water programs, leaving Minnesota and it's local communities to pick up the bill or let our families face the consequences of arsenic, lead, mercury, and other dangerous pollution in our drinking water.

- President Trump would terminate or drastically reduce funding for the majority of EPA's geographic programs specifically designed to protect and clean up major water bodies or to improve water infrastructure. For the second year in a row, the President advocates for the elimination or near elimination of funding used to protect iconic waters including the Great Lakes. **A 90 percent cut is proposed for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.** These cuts would have devastating effects for the communities and Minnesotans who rely on these waters for their livelihoods.

Elimination and cuts to climate science and climate related programs.

- The Trump administration's proposed budget would cut EPA funding by 34 percent. EPA's budget today is already 20 percent lower than it was back in 2010. Cuts to critical life-saving programs, including the Climate Change

Research and Partnership Programs, the Indoor Air and Radon Programs, and the Marine Pollution and National Estuary Programs, are likely to

- destroy the progress we have made in the past 25 years mitigating the damage we have been doing to the earth and water,
- accelerate the rate of global warming and
- drastically increase the peril to humans, animals and plant life.

- The only time climate or climate change is mentioned in EPA's budget is when describing eliminated and cut programs. It continues an aggressive pattern of slashing EPA staff to historically low levels, draining off the skilled professionals whose knowledge and institutional memory are essential to making environmental protection work. EPA's workforce around the country would shrink from 14,824 (in FY 17) to 12,250 in FY 2019, giving EPA its smallest workforce since FY 1984 when EPA had significantly fewer congressionally mandated environmental responsibilities.

- The budget provides virtually no funding for EPA climate change programs and research and eliminates most voluntary climate programs. This continues a pattern of attacks on EPA climate work, virtually identical to last year's, and starkly demonstrates the administration's and Administrator Scott Pruitt's stubborn and fatuous denial of the overwhelming scientific consensus that human activities are causing dangerous changes to the earth's climate and that those changes must be addressed.

- It proposes devastating cuts to EPA funding for states like Minnesota, which, as partners, have essential responsibilities for environmental protection and depend on EPA for large parts of their operating budgets.

- The Trump budget makes deep and ruinous cuts of nearly half (48%) to funding for science and would shrink spending at the National Science Foundation by 30 percent. Sound science is at the core of almost everything EPA does to protect the American public from harm. Many forms of science, from toxicology to engineering, are interwoven into standard setting, reviews of new chemicals, disaster relief and Superfund cleanups. Cuts to science funding are the most severe cuts proposed in the budget and make a mockery of the goal adopted in EPA's budget submission to "prioritize robust science."

Department of the Interior cuts sharply reduce the budget to protect America's parks, public lands and wildlife -- the foundation of the $646 billion outdoor recreation economy.

- The proposal increases funding for coal, oil and gas development on public lands.

- **And makes deep cuts for the following programs which have been the heart of conservation, wildlife protection, and the national parks and other protected lands, including key funding from the U.S. Forest Service**-which is already chronically strained by the need to divert funds from various important programs in order to fight wildfires--including those that are specifically intended to reduce the cost and severity of future wildfires. Other damaging cuts for our outdoors will impact:

    - The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) cut to the bone, reducing its budget by roughly 92%. LWCF was designed so there would always be money available for its core purpose of protecting land in order to complete national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and other protected sites, without burdening American taxpayers.

    - The Department of the Interior by about 16%, total (even more compared to a 12% cut in FY'18) selling out public lands and severely undermining the booming outdoor recreation economy.
        - The Trump budget:
            - flat funds park operations which would lead to further staff losses;
            - zeroes out accounts relevant to historic preservation and heritage, land acquisition and the Centennial Challenge program; and
            - establishes a public lands infrastructure funds that relies on increased energy leasing and development.
            - deepens the fiscal wounds suffered by the National Park Service in recent years, imposing a 7% budget cut, focused on operations, conservation and day to day care. The Park Service already operates under a nearly $12 billion deferred maintenance backlog.
            - Cuts the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service by nearly 20 percent below the enacted FY 2017 level. This includes cuts to the:
                - Endangered Species Act implementation,
                - National Wildlife Refuge System,
                - Key Fish and Wildlife Service science programs which would be zeroed out.
                - wildlife trafficking prevention efforts, and
                - grant programs.
                - And makes a particularly egregious 47 percent cut to the endangered species listing program which supports

decisions whether to protect new species under the Endangered Species Act - currently, more than 300 species await listing decisions.

Other Related Cuts with Major Impacts

- FEMA funding by 30% which includes a Disaster Relief Fund cut by $428,515,000 or 5.8%, a FEMA Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis Program cut by $77,531,000 or 44%, and a FEMA Pre-disaster Mitigation Program cut by $23,984,000 or 38% while the FEMA National Flood Insurance Fund is increased by $19,892,000 or 11%.

- The Department Of Energy's (DOE) Office of Science proposed cut is 22% (58% cut to Biological and Environmental Research (BER) where climate studies are done).

- DOE's EERE budget could be cut by 72% (Including elimination of Weatherization and State Energy Program), ARPA-E will be eliminated as will the Title XVII Innovative Technology Loan Guarantee Program, ATVM, and Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program.

Harmful environmental riders of greatest concern:

- The lack of public input, the apparent backroom deals with environmental polluters and the sacrifice of science, and historic bipartisan conservation policy adds emphasis to keep policy decision out of the budget. The Sierra Club **strongly opposes the inclusion of ANY anti-environment riders in the FY19 budget or the FY18 Omnibus Appropriations bill.**

- This opposition is specifically directed to
    - the inclusion of HR 3115, which would compel the US Forest Service to exchange 6,650 acres of contiguous National Forest land with PolyMet Mining Corporation for its proposed sulfide ore mine. That proposal would set a terrible precedent, undercut due process, undermine bedrock **environmental law and undervalue public land. The federal courts are** reviewing the exchange and they should be allowed to do their job and reject this language

- Section 428 "Policies Relating to Biomass Energy" which includes a rider that would permanently legislate on the evolving science of biomass and climate change by declaring the "carbon neutrality of forest bioenergy". We oppose

any legislative effort to broadly and permanently characterize biomass energy as "carbon neutral" which is scientifically indefensible and will have large unintended effects on the climate.

We've outlined a lot, because there is so much at risk and so much potential damage in the Administration's proposal in these areas.

We should remember the guidance from Sierra Club founder John Muir:

"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul. God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools."