Dear Governor Dayton,

You championed and signed into law in June 2015 the legislation that mandates Minnesota farmers install vegetative buffers along waterways on their farm property. Since that time, farmers, regulators and local governments have been working diligently on the implementation of this new law. In fact, on April 12th, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources noted that Minnesota is now 98% in compliance for installing buffers on public waters.

While Minnesota farmers have been doing their part to comply, farmers are highly frustrated with the lack of action to address the most important piece of unfinished business in the 2015 buffer law – the lack of compensation for this taking of productive farmland. Farmers and most Minnesotans understand the basic concept that if government takes private property for a public purpose, government MUST compensate the private property owner. In addition, if there is a significant reduction in the value of a home or business, by law, the assessed value must be lowered to its new/lower market value, which results in lower property taxes on that property.

This is a fairness and equity issue that is well understood by farmers and Minnesotans. The current buffer law, however, not only requires farmers to install buffers at their expense, but further penalizes farmers by continuing to tax buffer acres at valuations that assume these acres are still producing crops and income. This is an unfair financial penalty at a time of significant economic stress for Minnesota farm families.

**Minnesota farmers demand to know – why are the same basic principles of fairness being ignored with respect to buffers?**

Bipartisan legislation was introduced this session – HF 4395/SF 3960 – to provide a much-needed property tax credit for farm acres that are required to be removed from production and converted into buffers. This legislation responsibly included a funding provision – utilizing Clean Water Funds – dollars that are specifically designated for projects and initiatives to improve water quality in Minnesota. The farm community was ecstatic to see your April 20th news release where you thanked the legislative authors “for authoring this sensible, bipartisan proposal to support Minnesota farmers, who are working to protect clean water throughout our state” and you further noted, “I strongly support this legislation, and encourage Republican legislative leaders to send it to me, as a clean bill, as soon as possible.”

Now we hear that you have backed off that position. We also hear rumblings of other political agendas regarding this issue. Let us be absolutely clear – **anything other than final passage of the buffer property tax credit this year with your signature will be considered a failure and this WILL be a major issue in the elections this fall.**

Farmers are doing their part to comply – it’s time for the state to come through. The time for excuses and political finger-pointing has expired. Farmers demand and expect action. This year.

Continued
Sincerely,

Chicken and Egg Association of Minnesota

Cooperative Network

Minnesota AgriGrowth Council

Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers

Minnesota Barley Growers Association

Minnesota Corn Growers Association

Minnesota Farm Bureau

Minnesota Milk Producers Association

Minnesota Pork Producers Association

Minnesota Soybean Growers Association

Minnesota State Cattlemen’s Association

Minnesota Turkey Growers Association

Northern Plains Potato Growers Association

Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association

Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative

CC:
Speaker Kurt Daudt, Minnesota House of Representatives
Minority Leader Melissa Hortman, Minnesota House of Representatives
Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, Minnesota Senate
Minority Leader Tom Bakk, Minnesota Senate