

## Bill Becker

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**From:** Les Bensch [les.bensch@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 17, 2011 2:05 PM  
**To:** Denny McNamara; bill ingebrigtsen; Bill Becker  
**Subject:** Response to HF471

Denny,

I'm traveling in the Southwest for the next three weeks, but I'll be in touch via cell phone and email.

In response to the three ite4ms in your email:

1. The Minnesota Conservation Corps was never the LSOHC's favorite to be the first line of labor for restoration and maintenance projects. I've always maintained that our local contractors and local sportsmen's clubs should be the first sources. I'd like to see the DNR maintain its present manpower levels and utilize the wildlife managers to oversee and supervise the restoration and maintenance activities with the local contractors and clubs. Let's get the concept of "adopt a WMA" out there and working. Bob Lessard can be the voice to the field to get it established.
2. Delete the native seed local ecotype requirement. We softened this up last year by inserting the language "when available". There is not scientific evidence that this restriction has any beneficial effect. Even the U of M rejects this idea. It's better to stay within the same temperature zone when selecting the seeds. Refer to basic gardening principles and practices.
3. I fully support the concept of establishing a trust fund for future maintenance obligations. I also like the idea of starting a separate LSOHC maintenance fund, identifying an appropriate funding level which does not completely deplete the existing reserve, and re-establishing the reserve in the following year's funding recommendation. We could continue to add to the maintenance reserve fund according to each year's acquisitions. I'd also like to see this fund support the maintenance activities of the local contractors and clubs with the DNR doing oversight, supervision and fund administration.

We need to look at the LSOHC Conservation Partners program as being front row and center for future funding and project selection.

One other area that we need to openly and thoroughly discuss is the PILT process for assessment and taxation of these lands. There is a perception problem with PILT that could be rectified by returning this function to the LUG...that being the county assessor. Let the LUG perform this taxation function. They are more familiar with the land and have all the bureaucracy in place to do this administration. I believe these taxes should continue to be paid from the General Fund, since the state does receive in excess of \$450 million in taxes derived from these lands.

One last item, HF0332. I spoke with Reps. Drazkowski, Torkelson, Westrom, and Franson as to the negative impact HF0332 will have on future conservation efforts in Minnesota. I'll continue to discuss "no net gain" with the county commissioners in Western Minnesota. The no-net-gain concept should be a decision at the local government level, not at the state level. No net gain or no net loss?

If I can be of any assistance, please let me know. My cell # is 701-212-0366. If possible, I'll try to connect with the Monday meeting by cell phone.

Sincerely,

Les Bensch  
LSOHC