



Facts about

MPCA Elimination of Malformed Frogs Investigation

Introduction

The MPCA has experienced a three-year trend in decreased funding, and needs to trim staff by about nine percent. Therefore, we've had to reduce service in a number of programs so that the state's highest environmental priorities can still be met.

Malformed frogs were discovered in Minnesota in 1995. In 1996, the MPCA began to research the problem and later participated in efforts by other state and national researchers through 2000. The MPCA received several supplemental grants or appropriations for conducting this research, first from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources and later from the Minnesota Legislature. As of July 2001, the MPCA is no longer funded by the Legislature to continue this research. This fact sheet describes the status of the investigation and who is continuing the work.

Current status

Since 1997 the MPCA has at various times had as many as five staff working full-time on investigating the problem of malformed frogs during the field season. During this time research here and elsewhere in the U.S. and Canada focused in on three primary suspected causes:

- Chemical contaminants in the water where frogs develop
- Parasites
- Ultraviolet radiation

By now most researchers agree that no one single factor probably will be found, and that frog malformations can be caused by all or a combination of these factors in different places at different times.

The most comprehensive recap of the current state of malformed frogs research in this country is a fact sheet produced in May 2001 by the U.S. Geological Survey. It is found on the Internet at

<http://water.usgs.gov/pubs/FS/fs-043-01/>.

How will MPCA's services change in this area?

As of July 1, 2001, the MPCA no longer has any staff working on the investigation of malformed frogs, nor are there plans to staff the investigation in the future. Citizen reports of malformed frogs will no longer be logged by the MPCA. At least through the close of the 2001 field season, citizens may continue to report malformed frogs to the Thousand Friends of Frogs program at Hamline University, by calling 1-800-888-2182 or (651) 523-2812. Findings may also be reported to the North American Reporting Center for Malformed Amphibians, at www.npsc.nbs.gov/narcam/index.htm or 1-800-238-9801.

Future strategies

Malformed frogs remain a popular topic of public interest, and the problem is not going away (i.e., malformed frogs are still being found in Minnesota). Therefore, reports, fact sheets, and other information related to malformed frogs will remain on the MPCA's Web site (www.pca.state.mn.us/hot/frogs.html) for at least the foreseeable future. Also the popular "live frog cam" page on the agency's Web site will remain in operation. For more information about the MPCA's elimination of the investigation, contact Ralph Pribble at the MPCA, (651) 296-7792, or toll free at 1-800-657-3864.

The MPCA regrets this necessary loss of service to citizens and students who have followed with interest the agency's search for causes to this problem. Hard financial realities have necessitated cutbacks in many other program areas as well.

For more information about current reductions in MPCA program service, please visit our Web site at www.pca.state.mn.us/about/changes.