Address inequities in pollution exposure

Understanding and preventing cumulative impacts of pollution is crucial to protecting the health of Minnesotans.

Challenge

Exposure to polluted air, water, and soil, leads to adverse impacts on human health. While many parts of Minnesota have benefited from pollution reductions, more work is required in areas where Black, Indigenous, people of color, and low-income residents live. Past business decisions and discriminatory government policies resulted in pollution-heavy industrial facilities located in many low-income and diverse communities and neighborhoods, creating multiple sources of pollution impacting homes, schools, and workplaces. This increased exposure corresponds to health disparities exhibited in these same communities.

The MPCA is committed to addressing cumulative impacts that result from exposure to multiple sources or types of pollution along with other stressors such as socioeconomic disadvantages, lack of greenspace, and health vulnerabilities. To successfully do this work, we must have the resources to integrate analysis of cumulative impacts into our decision-making process as an agency.

Proposal

The Governor recommends $715,000 in FY2024 and $200,000 each subsequent year from the Environmental Fund to implement cumulative impacts analysis into the work of the MPCA, including the development of a Cumulative Impacts Framework.

This proposal supports a two-pronged cumulative impacts initiative. The first prong will implement a new law, and corresponding rulemaking, to consider cumulative impacts in the agency's permitting decisions in environmental justice areas of concern. The second prong will allow MPCA to hire one FTE to coordinate the development of a Cumulative Impacts Framework and lead the implementation and program development.

Why it's important

This proposal will clarify the importance of considering cumulative impacts in MPCA's permit decision-making. As part of this work, the agency will undertake a rulemaking effort to design the cumulative impacts analysis process to minimize the cumulative impacts of pollution.

Studies from across the country and MPCA's own data indicate that people of color and those in lower-income areas face disproportionate risk from environmental pollution as well as other non-pollutant stressors. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has recently announced new guidance and to identify and address cumulative impacts in order to consider the lived experience of communities overburdened by pollution. A focus on cumulative impacts will better inform MPCA's efforts to decrease inequity and focus on reducing the most impactful sources of pollution.

For more information

Tom Johnson
Government Relations Director
tom.e.johnson@state.mn.us
651-338-8955

Alexis Donath
Legislative Coordinator
alexis.donath@state.mn.us
651-373-9277

MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY