

## Clean Water Council Meeting Agenda

Monday, August 19, 2024

9:00 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**IN PERSON with Webex Available (Hybrid Meeting)**

### **9:00 Regular Clean Water Council Business**

- **(INFORMATION ITEM)** Introductions
- **(ACTION ITEM)** Agenda - comments/additions and approve agenda
- **(ACTION ITEM)** Meeting Minutes - comments/additions and approve meeting minutes
- **(INFORMATION ITEM)** Chair, Committee, and Council Staff update
  - Policy Committee Update
  - Budget and Outcomes Committee Update
  - Ad Hoc Outreach Group Update
  - Staff update

**To the public: If you would like to speak to the Council, please let staff know ASAP at [paul.gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:paul.gardner@state.mn.us). We may expand the public input time in response to demand.**

### **9:30 Public Input & Discussion**

- How Socially and Culturally Diverse Minnesotans Value Water (Mae Davenport)
- Public testifiers

### **10:30 BREAK**

### **10:45 Public Input & Discussion**

- Discuss what stood out to you/what changes you might want to make
- As appropriate, direct committees or future full council to take up a topic later
- Offer responses to input and record them on the summary document

### **11:30 Report from Budget & Outcomes Committee on August 2<sup>nd</sup> Discussions**

### **12:00 Lunch**

### **12:30 Final discussions and recommendations from full council to BOC for setting their final recs**

### **2:00 Adjourn**

**Steering Committee Meets Directly After Adjournment**

**Clean Water Council**  
July 15, 2024 Meeting Summary

**Members present:** John Barten (Chair), Steve Besser, Rich Biske (Vice Chair), Dick Brainerd, Gary Burdorf, Gail Cederberg, Steve Christenson, Tannie Eshenaur, Warren Formo, Brad Gausman, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Justin Hanson, Holly Hatlewick, Rep. Josh Heintzeman, Sen. Nicole Mitchell, Jason Moeckel, Ole Olmanson, Jeff Peterson, Rep. Kristi Pursell, Peter Schwagerl, Glenn Skuta, Marcie Weinandt, Jessica Wilson

**Others Present:** Jeff Anderson (Voyageurs project), Jan Voit (MN Watersheds), Lee Helgen (MN Crop Production Retailers), Jim Stark (Subcommittee on MN Water Policy), Meghan Anderson (MN Farmers Union), Alex Trunnell (MN Corn Growers), Angelica Anderson (Nature Conservancy), Heather Johnson (MPCA), Frieda von Qualen (MDH), Chris O'Brien (Freshwater), Annie Felix-Gerth (BWSR), Quinn Carr (MPCA), Trevor Russell (Friends of the Mississippi River), Judy Sventek (Met Council), Molly Jansen (Red River Watershed Management Board), Margaret Wagner (MDA), Paul Gardner (Clean Water Council), Jim Zlener (Conservation MN), Richard Gruenes (MDA), Sharon Doucette (BWSR), Jen Kader (Met Council), Myra Kunas (MDH)

**Members absent:** Peter Kjeseth, Annie Knight, Trista Martinson, Glenn Skuta, Sen. Nathan Wesenberg

To watch the Webex video recording of this meeting, please go to <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/clean-water-council/meetings>, or contact [Brianna Frisch](#).

**Regular Clean Water Council Business**

- Introductions
  - Approval of July 15, 2024 meeting agenda, motion by Dick Brainerd seconded by Peter Schwagerl. Motion carries. Approval of June 17, 2024 meeting summary, motion by Dick Brainerd seconded by Marcie Weinandt. Motion carries.
- Chair, Committee, and Council Staff Update
  - Don Wyse passed away and he was a longtime director/co-director of the Forever Green initiative. The Celebration of Life for Don Wyse will be at the University of Minnesota (UMN) McNamara Alumni Center on July 26<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m., followed by a reception.
  - Jason Moeckel – I will be at the water policy subcommittee today speaking about the high level of flooding. We have established nine new record flows this spring at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) gauges. I think the month of June is going to go down as the record wettest month.
  - Jim Stark – The Subcommittee on Water Policy will be talking about flooding and water storage. A field tour will be taking place on August 19 and 20<sup>th</sup>. The tour will start in Rice around Little Walk Creek and will go to Park Rapids. We will look at the Straight River and some of the water use conflicts in both of those areas. The second day will be overnight in Park Rapids focusing on deep water lakes.
  - Policy & Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) Updates (*Webex 00:12:30*)
    - The next Policy meeting is Friday, July 26. and that will continue discussion on a groundwater protection and private well policy statement. We might also touch on the prevailing wage statute and how it might impact legacy funds.
    - The next BOC meeting is Friday, August 2. We had very robust discussion with Justin Hanson in the hot seat. Steve Christenson prepared a wonderful framework for developing our budget recommendations if we must do some cuts and potentially areas to increase.
  - Staff update (*Webex 00:14:48*)
    - Minnesota Management Budget (MMB) shows monthly sales tax revenue above forecast every month since February except. Nothing radically wild off the forecast yet.
    - There is still a vacancy for our rural county member. The steering committee will be discussing a possible recommendation among four qualified candidates for that position. Commissioner Martinson, who is our Metro County Representative, just accepted a job in solid waste and is going to step down from the Ramsey County Board on August 1, so we'll have a vacancy for the Metro Counties.

**Review of Revised Timeline and Process for Public Input and FY26-27 Recommendations (*Webex 00:19:11*)**

At your August 19 meeting, the plan is to agree on initial Clean Water Fund (CWF) recommendations. Council members expressed the desire to extend the public comment period through August and to have a longer-term

outreach strategy. The Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) will use the input from Friday's BOC meeting and today's council meeting to assemble the information to deliberate at the next meeting and again in September.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Dick Brainerd: Why is the ICT meeting later and why are we meeting upfront? *Steve Christenson Answer:* I think it is good that the BOC gives feedback to the agencies first so that they can react to our proposals.
- Brad Gausman: Is there another budget forecast that would possibly allow us to fund all the work? *Answer:* There will be a budget forecast in November and then another one in February. The forecast in November will guide your final recommendations that will be submitted January 15, 2025. We want a contingency plan if there is more or less money so we can act quickly. The BOC agenda on August 2 will focus on the contingency.

**Outreach Strategy Ideas (Paul Gardner) (Webex 00:28:14)**

Many members expressed the desire to have an additional opportunity for immediate public input and to have a longer-term strategy for reaching groups that have generally not been represented at the Council. The first strategic planning process in 2019 and 2020 reached a lot of entities and looked for others who were interested. Our bi-weekly newsletter reaches 5,000 subscribers. The council desires for more public engagement outside the usual groups. I spoke with Mae Davenport at the UMN Center for Changing Landscapes. She has done research with many communities and can present to you at the August meeting. Agencies that receive CWFs do tribal consultation throughout the year, and we could dovetail with agency efforts.

*Questions/Comments*

- John Barten: This is not in my wheelhouse to any extent, so I don't have strong feelings about which direction.
- Marcie Weinandt: We want a wide range of MN citizens and residents to comment on and know about the CWF and the Legacy Amendment. I would be happy to serve on a committee and help put it together.
- Holly Hatlewick: I think this is going to be multi-layered. Part of the requirement to receive CWFs is that you identify where the funds came from. Maybe it's a model of how that is rolled out, possibly additional resources to fund recipients on, or permanent signage or education piece about the amendment. Maybe part of this is consulting but we would want Paul's recommendation for that.
- Steve Christenson: Looking at the statute it states that the Clean Water Council (CWC) must develop strategies for informing, educating, and encouraging the participation of citizens. I was shocked to find out that there is only one person trying to coordinate all this stuff and that there are no communication staff. I'm strongly in favor of adding a full-time equivalent (FTE) for this and maybe complement it with some external consulting resources.
- Jessica Wilson: I would be willing to serve on any subcommittee as we explore this idea. First step is to get some outside help for people that their careers are focused on doing this work, versus adding on to someone who's great at the technical water side or policy side. Let's get a strategy and then we can work on the recommendation for an FTE model.
- Brad Gausman: I agree with the consulting idea to do it professionally and quickly.
- Rich Biske: A consultant is a steppingstone to sustain engagement over the next ten years.
- Tannie Eshenaur: In broadening the discussion, this is not just communication or marketing campaign but also participation and engagement. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) looks at a matrix for those engaged, not engaged, affected, and not affected to focus our effort.
- Senator Mitchell: People in my community are very interested in the environment but they don't know where their money is going. If we illustrated that, people would feel better. Engage and educate the young.
- Paul Gardner: Our new communications contractor is developing a story map that helps fit everything together, developing fact sheets that explain the strategy for how we use the dollars.
- Dick Brainerd: Paul, what is going to work best for you in the short-term--having a couple of Council members frame-up what it is that you are comfortable asking for? *Answer:* Yes. I can configure staff or contractors to do whatever the objective is. We have funds that we could use on outreach consulting. Budgeting for FTEs is a large step. Figuring out your objective, what audience you are looking for, and how much time you want to spend, is the key to a longer-term strategy.
- Margaret Wagner: Agencies can share efforts on communications and engagement.
- Marcie Weinandt: I move that we establish a subcommittee to assist Paul in thinking about communication and outreach with particular focus on those populations that we have not successfully engaged in.

- Senator Mitchell: I second the motion and agree to making it an ad hoc committee and if it proves fruitful, then look at expanding it. Motion carries.

### **Report from Budget & Outcomes Committee on July 12<sup>th</sup> Discussions (Paul Gardner) (Webex 01:35:18)**

You have a summary spreadsheet of \$37 million of unspent CWFs through FY23. The BOC discussed what the plans are for those dollars. Most of the funds are in easement programs.

#### *Questions/Comments*

- Peter Schwagerl: Is there a point in time when these unspent funds become no longer authorized and go back into the CWFs? How does that work? *Answer:* Yes, and no. Many legislative appropriations have an expiration date within three to four years, and the unspent money goes back to the Fund. There are some appropriations that do not expire.
- Justin Hanson: Some of the easement pieces are connected to the federal programs that were tied up in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).
- Rich Biske: Some of the easement programs are not included in this next round like the CREP ones but some of them like working flood plains and others are. What is the burn rate for previous appropriations? *Answer:* I don't have the specifics and can follow up. The Wellhead Protection Program has a low burn rate. There isn't a backlog of applications and we've talked about being more strategic about those funds.
- Steve Besser: A Wellhead Protection easement can take more valuable land off the market. It's almost like a condemnation, and in a condemnation, you have to offer a fair market value. They may still be able to have certain uses on it, but as a Council we should state that we would be in favor of authorizing or allowing this. It represents an incremental benefit to the state of MN, the people, and drinking water.
- Steve Christenson: My thought on that is that the Policy committee explore that.

### **Preliminary Framework for Developing FY26-27 CWF Budget Recommendations (Steve Christenson)**

*(Webex 01:50:21)*

The BOC had a robust discussion focusing on potential cuts to meet a 5% decline in sales tax revenues, or \$15 million for a total of \$307 million. We're facing inflation and possible new prevailing wage. We probably need another \$15 million or more just to sustain the momentum of existing programs. After hours of debate on Friday we came up with six targeted programs that we're recommending for reduction. Considerations included the strategic plan, legislative framework, biannual performance report, communications plan, biannual impaired waters list, and scalability. All 65 programs are good programs and are delivering good outcomes.

#### **1. AgBMP Loan Program (Line Item 3)**

Partially cut by \$3.4 million since we gave an additional \$3.4 million appropriation in FY24-25. The loan repayment schedule doesn't enable this program to become self-funding without further investments.

##### *Question/Comments*

- Peter Schwagerl: This has been a good program for scalability because it is going into a loan program. Ag margins are tight this year and these programs are critical if we want accelerated implementation. The long-term goal is to make this a self-funding program that outlasts the Legacy amendment.
- Rich Biske: How much is available for loans on an annual basis, knowing how that changes based on repayments? *Answer from Margaret Wagner:* The demand side is high between \$60 to \$70 million. The clean water revolving principal is \$18.9 million. The loan is paid up to 10 years so there is money always coming back into the program.

#### **2. St. Louis River AOC (Line item 16)**

This project is done at the end of the year, and we will not need to fund it.

##### *Question/Comments*

#### **3. DNR Water Storage Project (Line item 34)**

DNR withdraws proposal due to capacity constraints.

##### *Question/Comments*

- Rich Biske: This seems like such an important body of work why wouldn't we be advancing it with more agency participation, and the role that DNR has with their skilled hydrologists that could support not just DNR lands but also private landowners and public infrastructures. *Answer by Jason Moeckel:* Basically, it comes down to the same folks that would be doing these projects on state administered land are also being asked to provide all kinds of technical assistance on all the other local government projects. We're



spread so thin right now that I don't want to ask for money that we can't do anything with because we're busy doing other projects. We know that the projects that we have are challenging and take considerable amount of time and effort. It doesn't make sense for us to ask for money that we can't spend right away.

- Steve Christenson: What would you do with a \$10 million appropriation for water storage? *Answer:* These projects take several years to implement. This gets bigger down the road. (*Webex 02:11:50*)
- Steve Christenson: With climate change, water storage becomes more important. *Answer:* Since 1988 we've had a flood mitigation program in the state, \$623 million of state funds that has gone into flood mitigation projects have leveraged another \$800 million of federal and local money. The overall message is that we can use our flood plain the way that nature uses them.
- Paul Gardner: Can you confirm that this line item only funds storage on two parcels of state-owned land, and isn't broader than that? *Answer:* Yes. Those two projects are currently going through early design. They are wildlife management areas that were farmed. They had been ditched and disconnected from the flood plain. We have four years to finish.
- Senator Mitchell: I support the cut given everything that was said.
- Holly Hatlewick: 1W1P addresses flood plain, water storage, buffer restoration, etc. through BWSR Projects and Practices grants, and help leverage funds for water storage. It's not all DNR.

#### **4. Surface & Drinking Water Protection/Restoration Grants (Projects & Practices) (Line item 37)**

The BOC suggested that we could take \$5 million out of the \$17 million base of the Projects & Practices program, because it doesn't destroy the program and it still is getting funded by \$12 million that we can use to protect drinking water and maintain funding for 1W1P.

##### *Question/Comments*

- Steve Christenson: Justin, could you comment on what the implications would be for drinking water programs from this cut? *Answer:* 20% goes for drinking water specific programs and if we are thinking of cutting this program that we should raising that percentage. Drinking water and ground water protection are also built into other programs (1W1P).
- Marcie Weinandt: What are the implications for MDH for the proposed cuts? *Answer by Tannie Eshenaur:* At the BOC meeting I talked about the flexibility that is in Project and Practices and that we don't want to see that go away. We have an ongoing, civil disagreement with BWSR about WBIF. Their formula is based on miles of shoreland and the acres of privately-owned land which makes sense for surface water. Where we disagree is its adequacy for ground water and drinking water. We agree that in every 1W1P drinking water is among the top three priorities. The challenge is what actions directly benefit drinking water. We don't want to see Projects and Practices reduced too much so increasing the DW percentage is good.

#### **5. Watershed Management Transition (1W1P) (Line item 44)**

This was to develop those 1W1Ps and most of these plans have been developed and approved. There's a few yet to get done but trimming this back to \$2 million versus \$3.5 million seemed okay.

##### *Question/Comments*

#### **6. Wetland Restoration Easements (Line item 49)**

In FY24-25 this was funded at \$10 million out of \$23 million overall for easements. Wetland restoration is more expensive than protection and preventing. This will revert to same spending level as FY22-23.

##### *Questions/Comments*

- John Barten: Our rationale was that BWSR can work through unspent funds in the short-term.

#### **Other Unspent Appropriations and Recap (Steve Christenson) (*Webex 02:39:31*)**

BWSR has \$348,506 that is unspent from the following programs and can be cancelled: BWSR Conservation Partners, Performance Based Watershed, SWCD Capacity, and MDH Water Reuse. To recap proposed reductions: \$3 million out of MDA, \$1.5 million out of the MPCA for St. Louis River, \$1 million from DNR Water Storage, \$5 million for BWSR Projects & Practices, \$1.5 million from the 1W1P, and \$5 million out of the Wetland Restorations that is close to the \$15 million target that we need to deliver. This will not be enough due to fund inflation so we need to find other areas to trim.

#### **Items in Debate during the BOC Meeting (Steve Christenson)**

1. **Forever Green** (Line item 8): The ICT proposes reducing from \$6 million to \$4 million. Advocates would like to increase it to \$10 million so this item is still in debate.

##### *Questions/Comments*

- Peter Schwagerl: I would be very careful scaling down this program. These plants and crops are career long efforts and if you lose that funding to support that key person they could potentially be gone forever.
- Marcie Weinandt: How do these numbers reflect in the \$17 million? *Answer:* Everything that we are discussing now is assumed to be funded and we are in debate. If the \$2 million from Forever Green is cut, we'd be looking at a total cut of \$19 million.
- Holly Hatlewick: Let's clarify what is in that \$2 million reduction before we make that final cut.
- John Barten: I am hesitant to cut due to the long-term implications.
- Margaret Wagner: Their ask is much higher than what we've ever been able to maintain. The need is \$10 million. This program leverages about \$5 for every \$1 of CWF. It opens up big federal grants.
- Steve Christenson: The CWF has seeded it and gets a five to one return. Do we need to keep seeding it? *Answer:* I think the need is there and at times when we leverage those dollars, they may be just for one crop as opposed to the whole portfolio, and we want to track that. The bigger federal dollars might be focused on the winter oil seeds, but we don't want to lose focus on some of the perennial grains such as Kernza. I think we agree it has seeded the program well but like anything that is successful those needs continue to pile on the back end.
- Steve Besser: The two most significant impacts on climate are the fossil fuel industry and farming. Modern farming is also the biggest threat to clean water. Rather than cut, I would argue for an increase but certainly we can't do any cut on this. This program is our future, and we owe it to the waters of the state and to our farmers.

## 2. Conservation Equipment Assistance (Line item 10)

We had a disagreement about scaling this program up or down.

*Questions/Comment*

- Jessica Wilson: What is the difference between the AgBMP Loans and this? *Answer:* This is a grant program while the AgBMP Program is a loan program. It supports soil health practices such as conservation tillage. We have funded staff and cover crops for soil health but not equipment..
- Steve Christenson: We debated whether this program equips individuals to make money by performing work for others, and whether it should be restricted to SWCDs to receive the equipment for renting.
- Peter Schwagerl: This accelerates adoption and addresses a critical need when margins are tight.
- Rich Biske: To achieve soil health we need the private sector to be fully involved now and beyond 2034.
- Brad Gausman: I looked at the authorizing statute. I see benefits but they are a couple steps removed from that authority. We are buying equipment and it gets used. I'm glad we were able to have the debate, but if I look at our statutory authority regarding programs, I possibly would cut this.
- Margaret Wagner: I can share information about the current investment. We do track how many acres the equipment is used on and anticipated outcomes for nutrient reductions.

## 3. National Park Water Quality Protection Program (Line item 21)

We debated the \$4 million proposal by the Voyageur folks. Everyone agrees that replacing old septic tanks with new sewer lines is a good thing. There was debate about whether this funding economic development that private developers should be paying for.

*Questions/Comments*

- John Barten: What percentage of these funds are correcting an existing problem and what percentage of these funds could or are being used to allow additional properties to be developed, which is not our function. *Answer by Jeff Anderson:* I will confirm this but 100% of the funds from Clean Water dollars are used to deal with the existing issues. What Commissioner McDonald referred to when he presented was specific to one area, Ash River, where there is a resort now that is limited in what they can do because of their sewer capacity. I think the commissioner was speaking specifically to the fact that if this existing resort had more capacity, they would be able to do more events, leading to economic development. I can tell you with certainty that these funds are not used to create any economic development opportunities and they are used to fix existing issues.
- Steve Christenson: We are going to leave this on the list at the same level it was for the prior biennium at the \$2 million base.

**Discussion on Input to Interagency Coordination Team (Webex 03:38:56)**

The agencies were tasked internally to find a number for budgeting within \$307 million that is currently protected to be available for FY26-27. Eventually, the agencies will give you numbers sometime after July 18, 2024, and then the BOC will deliberate those numbers and send the full council its recommendations. If there are some big strategic issues you want to discuss, this would be a good time. We have the spreadsheet put together from this morning and is that sufficient?

Questions/Comments

### **Wetland Restoration (Sharon Doucette, BWSR)**

I like all our easements so I can't weigh in on your protection versus restoration discussion. It is a tough choice. We use wetland restoration easements in the southwest and spend that money well. For FY22-23 we have a \$600,000 commitment out of \$1.5 million but it isn't encumbered. About \$400,000 is set aside for restoration. We have no FY22-23 money remaining to take new easements. For FY24-25 we have \$10 million and 15 easements in process. As of this morning, we just committed to funding several more at about \$2.5 million worth. Right now, we have \$1.2 million left. Based on average land cost that is enough for us to fund about two or three more. We are in conversation with Farm Service Agency (FSA) to do a CREP extension. We can spend it on our standalone easement program that's funded with both OHF and CWF. This money for wetland restoration easements can fund CREP easements. If we receive the extension, it could fund both wetland restoration done under CREP, where we would get that federal match as well as our standalone RIM easement that is funded by OHF and CWF. We can spend more than we can get in the wetland easement program, and I would not like to see the program cut in half, and potentially recommend from the council to make smaller cuts in other easement programs or some other creative solutions.

Question/Comments

- Dick Brainerd: Can you expand on the \$2.5 million that you allocated this morning and the \$1.2 million that hasn't been allocated? *Answer:* We setup an internal budget and we tap the amount of money that we think is available for landowner payments out of that appropriation because we generally know what all the other associated costs. What we didn't have, even as of last Friday, was an active batching period for the wetlands program signup and we just selected easements for funding and just assigned them to an appropriation and how we were going to pay for them and that is the \$2.5 million. For easement processing, we first get in potential applications, decide which ones should be funded, and commit the funds from an appropriation to pay for that easement. It is too early to encumber those funds and so we wait until we get to a purchase agreement and a regular fee title transaction. That is the first written commitment from the landowner and the State. That is about three to six months after we receive the application. If we take that \$2.5 million away from what's available for landowner payments with the most recent biennium FY24-25 that leaves us about \$1.2 million for landowner payments for the actual easements. That can get us maybe two or three more easements with the most recent year or biennium. Going from \$10 million to \$5 million is going to hurt this program. It would be a substantial reduction if we get the CREP extension and RIM wetlands and CREP applications.

Question/Comments for any of the potential cuts (Webex 03:56:11)

- Rich Biske: Are we holding at \$12 million for soil and health and cover crops? There is a lot of new funding coming from federal funding to private sector partners through climate smart commodities. *Answer:* There is general fund money added to the CWF money to deploy more people into the field. The general funding was matched with the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) federal funding.
- Rich Biske: Does the \$12 million support the staff through five? *Answer:* I would have to check, but usually that's a biennium allocation. We're doing grant appropriations for a couple of years. I can follow up.
- Steve Christenson: Is the ICT requesting anything more from the BOC? *Answer:* We have met several times to discuss initial agency requests, inflation, and getting that initial ask closer to our \$307 target. We have an additional meeting next week with the goal of recommendation by the end of July. Anything in writing will be helpful and this spreadsheet is good. In the strategic plan that talks about the need to increase implementation over the life of the amendment. From the Council's perspective, what is included in implementation? Is it just WBIF? If there's any feedback about programs that might be considered if additional funding is available that would be helpful.
- Paul Gardner: Are the cuts suggested going to be enough? Does anyone want to discuss the watershed-based implementation funding proposal to increase that by \$20 million?

- John Barten: I'm looking at how many dollars are going toward implementation and not concerned about which pot of money it is coming out of. Should the money come from existing grant programs or new programs that were not in place when we started the watershed-based implementation (i.e., soil health).
- Marcie Weinandt: I would not agree with reducing anything within the watershed-based implementation work. The communities, counties, SWCDs and individuals that work with the 1W1Ps understand that if they do the planning and prioritizing, there will be implementation money.
- Holly Hatlewick: I agree. I would add that in 1W1P it has come back down to voluntary conservation.
- Tannie Eshenaur: For soil health and other programs like this, how do the dollars get delivered to local partners? Is it only SWCDs? *Answer:* For Projects and Practices, it is not just SWCDs. It's any Local Government Unit (LGU) that shows the need and can write a fundable grant. Soil health grants are leveraging some of those private sector partners. The grants are going through the SWCDs but within those districts they are working locally with those partners.
- Steve Christenson: What would be the consequence of holding line item 36, Grants to Watersheds with Approved Comprehensive Watershed Plans, flat at \$79 million? *Answer:* It would delay implementation.
- John Barten: The \$79 million for this biennium is for 54 1W1Ps and the next biennium will be 60 plans total? What would be the reduction for 1W1P if we held it at \$79 million for the next biennium? *Answer:* When everyone is implementing it will be 60 total plans across the state. I would have to look at where those plans are at now to understand what that will look like in the next biennium.
- Paul Gardner: In theory to understand the extent of the reduction would be to consider that in FY24-25 you have 54 watersheds that were given a total of \$79 million and that leaves \$1.46 million per watershed. If held flat for the next biennium of \$79 million for a total of 60 watersheds, that would leave each watershed with \$1.31 million, although that is a gross oversimplification because of the formula.
- Rich Biske: Are some of these programs meant to address unmet needs that aren't included in the WBIF or can they complement it? *Answer:* The Projects and Practices is the best way of describing this because it's the strategy or work that is in the Plan. The Soil Health program is the State applying for the federal funding on behalf of the program and not individually. The Accelerated Implementation program is grants and programs to local government units to provide the technical training support that's leveraged funding to you and that one is less scalable. That is the question, which programs are scalable? BMPs is the easy one but it's really the hardest as some of the biggest Program and Practices that we've implemented for 10 years have gone through that program.

#### **Review of Written Public Input and Any In Person Input (Webex 04:30:53)**

- **Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR), Trevor Russell**

A letter of support was submitted for Forever Green Initiative from FMR. This program integrates perennial and winter annual crops into existing farming systems to hold soil in place and stop pollutants from leaching into groundwater. It provides producers with new revenue streams that can bolster the agricultural economy through the development of high valued commercially marketable food, feed, and fuel products. This is an important investment in addressing nitrate contamination in groundwater. Kernza can get us 97% to 99% reduction in nitrate contamination. Winter oilseeds like camelina and pennycress can reduce groundwater nitrate contamination by around 95% to 97%. On average, this is about a five to one return on investment. There is a potential for these cover crops to be a sustainable aviation fuel. Cargill is expanding a pilot acreage in MN from 2,000 acres with a goal of 20,000 acres this fall with a pathway to well over one million acres of winter annual oil seeds for the sustainable aviation fuel market in MN within ten years. We are requesting \$10 million to cover more applications, there is more demand than what the \$6 million can provide. We're in the process of hiring a director of outreach in partnership, building out a communication strategy, equitable strategy and pursuing a rapidly growing market opportunity. The total budget for the partnership work is \$1.2 million and we only allocate \$300,000 to that program. The University of MN has needs for prioritized projects, upgrades to growth chambers, genetic genomics, infrastructure, sample processing, field equipment and that list as of 2013 was \$19.3 million of investments and that doesn't include any of the food science infrastructure. There is general funding support through the agricultural budget for Forever Green through Great Pathway that's at \$1.6 million. There is potential of that cutting to \$1.3 million.

*Comments/Questions*

- Margaret Wagner: There is a broad support for Forever Green as a solution-based approach and we saw that reflected in the legislature. It looks to continuing that through the general funds. There was \$800,000 a year appropriation through the general fund that comes through the Department of Agriculture and is passed through to the University. Both appropriations 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year appropriations have come through for a total of \$1.6 million.
- **Minnesota Crop Production Retailers (MCPR), Lee Helgen (Webex: 04:43:11)**  
We think that the Ag retailers, co-ops, and crop advisors could be at a spot where they could help advance a conversation with growers, looking at the crop systems and trying to make a difference in water quality improvements. There are very few programs that provide reimbursement strategies to engage ag retailers. There isn't a clear pathway for them to get funded to do the work or to add the staff that they might need to add conservation economists or additional folks. We are suggesting creating some sort of program that would allow facilities to get certified and then create like a bonus payment per acre for all the acres to get documented using health practices with maybe a bonus if you use certified crop advisor as a way to really help make sure that the messaging is getting out there.

### ***Comments/Questions***

- John Barten: One of the comments indicated developing a monitoring system program or to verify the certification would be a good idea. If we continue to monitor that ag water quality certification program by the termination of the legacy amendment the CWF will have invested close to \$70 million. We need to figure out how to setup a monitoring program so that we can verify that the millions of dollars that we've invested in this program are paying the dividends. We need the actual numbers to explain the reduction of nutrients to watersheds or farms to maintain the funding for these programs.
- Peter Schwagerl: To get actual useful data for this would be expensive because you can't spot test, but it would be a worthwhile discussion.
- Rich Biske: Dakota County had a good letter for support for ground water protection. I will bring this up in the policy committee to look at in terms of water efficiency and capital improvement grants.

**Adjournment** – Motioned by Dick Brainerd, second by Jessica Wilson (Webex 04:51:25)

## MDA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) Award Summary

**Climate-friendly agricultural practices:** implement 834,500 acres of on-farm practices for immediate and long-term GHGe reductions and carbon sequestration by accelerating producer participation in the nationally recognized Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) and Soil Health Financial Assistance Program (SHFAP).

- \$9,871,430 for per-acre practice incentive payments delivered through the MAWQCP over 5 years.
  - Three practices selected: Nitrification inhibitors, continuous living cover/diversified crop rotations, and marginal land transition.
  - Practices chosen based on feasibility, emissions reductions potential, and are not currently funded by the MAWQCP.
- \$8,750,000 for the SHFAP over 5 years.
  - \$1.75 million annually for the purchase of specialized soil health equipment necessary for practice implementation and adoption.

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### Full CPRG proposal recap:

1. **Peatland restoration:** protect and restore 10,000 acres of degraded peatlands, originally drained for agriculture, to convert them from carbon sources to sinks through collaboration across Tribal, state, local government, and private lands. This supports culturally significant food sources and provides a scalable, cost-effective model to apply across peatlands in other states and countries.
2. **Climate-friendly agricultural practices:** implement 834,500 acres of on-farm practices for immediate and long-term GHGe reductions and carbon sequestration by accelerating producer participation in the nationally recognized Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification and Soil Health Financial Assistance programs, providing an exponential increase in environmental benefits as acceptance of climate-friendly practices spreads and norms shift.
3. **Industrial innovation:** implement circular economy principles and innovative technologies at food and organic waste processing sites toward achieving carbon-neutrality and zero waste through energy efficiency, fuel-switching, and strategic integration and stacking of advanced technologies.
4. **Low and ultra-low GWP refrigerants:** accelerate the transition to climate-friendly refrigerants in small businesses, supermarkets, schools, hospitals, food banks, and corner stores, making it possible for smaller entities to deploy the lowest GWP technologies. This will catalyze lower market costs, enabling others to invest in essential equipment.
5. **Vehicle and equipment replacement:** transition gasoline and diesel vehicles and equipment used in food systems, such as terminal tractors, freight transport trucks, and agricultural equipment, to electric and advanced clean fuels, with a strategic focus on lowering air pollution in LIDACs and serving as a model for other states to follow on the road to decarbonization.
6. **Prevention of wasted food and organics management:** scale up successful programs to prevent food from going to waste and divert food waste and other organic material away from disposal, keeping valuable nutrients in circulation to feed people and livestock, create valuable soil amendments, and avoid significant methane emissions.
7. **Food sovereignty and vibrant local food economies:** improve food security, strengthen food sovereignty, and unlock Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (LIDAC) economic prosperity by investing in Tribal- and local community-driven climate pollution reduction strategies informed by coordination and collaboration with Tribal Nations and engagement with LIDACs through regional food networks statewide.



## Lessard – Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Centennial Office Building, First Floor  
658 Cedar St  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Commissioner Nicole Blissenbach  
Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry  
443 Lafayette Road N.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

July 30, 2024

Dear Commissioner Blissenbach:

I write to you on behalf of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) regarding the application of prevailing wage on projects that are financed by the constitutionally dedicated Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) we oversee. These same concerns may apply to projects financed by the Clean Water Fund (created by the 2008 Clean Water, Land and Legacy constitutional amendment) and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund.

The LSOHC provides recommendations to the legislature on how to most appropriately utilize public Outdoor Heritage funds in line with the State's constitution and provides oversight on OHF appropriation spending as guided by state law and the constitution. All people working in Minnesota should be paid the appropriate wage for the activities performed in the course of their duties, and we should all strive to ensure the rates that apply to work funded through dedicated funds are reflective of this value. With that thought in mind, we are respectfully requesting a process by which to establish appropriate rates for restoration-based work.

It has come to our attention that the statute change made during the 2024 legislative session, Minnesota Law 2024, Chapter 110, Article 2, Section 6, governing the application of prevailing wage under the Department of Labor and Industry's (DLI) jurisdiction has a direct unintended detrimental impact on projects supported by the funds we oversee as they relate to restoration and improvement of land available to the public or funded in whole or part by state funds (underlined words represent the new statute language):

Sec. 6. Minnesota Statutes 2023 Supplement, section 177.42, subdivision 2, is amended to read:

Subd. 2. **Project.** "Project" means demolition, erection, construction, alteration, improvement, restoration, remodeling, or repairing of a public building, structure, facility, land, or other public work, which includes any work suitable for and intended for use by the public, or for the public benefit, financed in whole or part by state funds. Project also includes demolition, erection, construction, alteration, improvement, restoration, remodeling, or repairing of a building, structure, facility, land, or public work when the acquisition of property, predesign, design, or demolition is financed in whole or part by state funds.

According to DLI's website, Prevailing Wage is meant to set the "minimum hourly wage employers must pay certain workers who work on **construction** projects where state dollars are used to fund **construction** (*emphasis added*)."<sup>1</sup> This amendment, while apparently intended to clarify the statute, now effectively incorporates more publicly funded projects which may not have a construction element. Stated differently, state funded, non-construction, projects will now be subject to prevailing wage. We request that DLI prioritize a process to bring prevailing wage regulations affecting conservation activities, such as vegetation management, in line with the state law and to resolve inconsistencies between the new statutory language and current regulations and practice. More specifically, what is needed are applicable prevailing wage rates that reflect the nature of conservation-related work activities.

We understand that certain grantees of OHF funding, having engaged in conservation-related vegetation management work activities using these funding awards, have been directed by DLI staff to use the current highway and heavy construction "general laborer" rates for their conservation projects funded with public funding. Under Minn. Rules 5200.1101, Subpart 1A, this labor code is for "work performing tasks involving physical labor at building, highway, and heavy construction projects, tunnel and shaft excavations, and demolition sites including the following tasks or other tasks not listed which are not considered skilled craft work." This has been a poor fit for the type of work and a poor fit for actual market rates for conservation activities.

First, the definition of Highway and heavy construction does not reflect conservation work. Specifically, Minn. Rules 5200.1010 defines Highway and heavy construction as:

...all **construction** projects which are similar in nature to those projects based upon bids as provided under Minnesota Statutes, section 161.32 for the construction or maintenance of highways or other public works and includes **roads, highways, streets, airport runways, bridges, power plants, dams, and utilities** (*emphasis added*).

Minnesota Statutes section 161.32 is specific to Contracting for Work on Minnesota Trunk Highways. Most conservation projects do not match this description. As such, utilizing Highway and Heavy Construction wage determinations for all conservation projects is not appropriate. A new labor category specific to conservation activities is required to more accurately reflect the prevailing wage of this sector.

Second, the amounts being paid in labor by placing vegetation restoration projects into the General Labor category under Minn. Rules 5200.1101, Sub. 1A, is not reflective of the actual Prevailing Wage. To illustrate this point, the general laborer basic rate for Cook County, MN is \$40.26/hour;<sup>2</sup> in contrast the prevailing wage rate in this same county for "forest and conservation workers under federal H2B visa rates is \$17.72/hour."<sup>3</sup> This latter rate is much more in-line with market rates for conservation work and would likely be supported by a wage rate survey conducted by DLI specific to conservation work. However, without having the correct labor category, DLI may have a difficult time establishing labor surveys which reflect the current labor market.

Alignment with the federal rates would help to provide consistency in the conservation restoration and enhancement market as well as ensure a smooth working relationship with federal partners. Many of our Grantees partner with federal agencies to complete conservation projects. Those projects are often

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/prevailing-wage-information>

<sup>2</sup> [https://workplace.doli.state.mn.us/prevwage/highway\\_data.php?region=01](https://workplace.doli.state.mn.us/prevwage/highway_data.php?region=01)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.flcdatcenter.com/>



partially funded with federal dollars, which would be subject to the Davis-Bacon Act or Service Contract Act. Project funding problems could arise if Minnesota's Prevailing Wage laws and regulations conflict with the federal wage rates.

Currently, some OHF grant recipients are experiencing challenges in their use of OHF grant funds resulting from:

- Conflicting prevailing wage determinations and guidance by DLI to grantees.
- Inconsistency in the application of prevailing wages.
- Lack of wage rates reflective of conservation activities.
- Uncertainty in submission of grant proposals and estimates for conservation work.

It is important to note the urgency in resolving the uncertainty around this issue. Contracts issued by our grant partners that span the implementation date of this new requirement face such uncertainty that these contracts may need to be canceled and with it, a stoppage of restoration work until it is sorted out and new contracts negotiated. Some grant partners are so uncertain of what they need to do (in large part due to inadequate DLI guidance) that they are virtually paralyzed from continuing restoration activities and fear missing an entire winter work window resulting in unspent grant funds and potentially expiration and return of unspent grant funds

Do not overlook the fact that construction wages far exceed current competitive wages for restoration work and as a result, far less work would likely be accomplished which will then affect the outcomes promised when the grants were issued. This will result in the citizens of the state not receiving the value expected for funds committed to critical habitat restoration work.

These considerations make it even more critical for DLI to prioritize a process for clear guidance and prevailing wage classifications that are reflective of the land and restoration activities we steward.

We request your timely response on this pressing issue and stand ready to partner with DLI to help ensure a process can incorporate relevant information needed to set appropriate rates.

Thank you for your consideration,

David Hartwell, Chair Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

cc: Governor Tim Walz  
Senator Founj Hawj – Chair, Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee  
Representative Leon Lillie – Chair, House Legacy Finance Committee  
Senator Jennifer McEwen – Chair, Senate Labor Committee  
Sarah Strommen, Commissioner, DNR  
John Jaschke, Executive Director, BWSR

# Summary of Public Comment to Clean Water Council Proposals for the Clean Water Fund FY26-27

of 14 Aug 2024

Entity	Agency	Program Name	Comments	CWC Action 8/19?
Tom Lynch			Concerned about microplastics in water	
Friends of the Mississippi River		Chloride application liability protection for snow removal businesses with Smart Salting certification	Support	
Dakota County		Funding needed for water reuse, esp. capital improvement funds, statewide policy and guidelines, incentivizing better irrigation		
Conservation Minnesota		Lack of transparent tracking and communicating progress towards this goal with the broader public; it is unclear the influence the Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) may have over Clean Water Fund recommendations each biennium		
Nature Conservancy		General	Find more efficiencies to reduce duplication	
Minnesota River Watershed Drainage Collaborative		General comments on Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan	Minimize/eliminate hydrologic changes in MN River watershed; BMPs not keeping up with growth in TSS problem due to land use changes, more drainage, and more precipitation.	
Freshwater	BWSR	Accelerated Implementation	Support	
Friends of the Mississippi River	BWSR	Buffer Implementation	Oppose using all CWF; prefer \$2M from General Fund Riparian Aid funding and fines from APO authority	
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	BWSR	Conservation Drainage and Management	Support	
Nature Conservancy	BWSR	Critical Shoreland Protection Easements	Support	
Scott County Water Management Organization (WMO)	BWSR	One Watershed One Plan Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Don't spend 1W1P funding in the metro; it is redundant and	

## Summary of Public Comment to Clean Water Council Proposals for the Clean Water Fund FY26-27

			wasteful; give it to Greater Minnesota	
Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission	BWSR	Surface and Drinking Water Protection/Restoration Grants: (Projects and Practices)	Support	
Friends of the Mississippi River	BWSR	Targeted Wellhead/Drinking Water Source Protection	Support higher cost easements within high risk DWSMAs	
Anoka Conservation District	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support and prioritize	
Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	
Bois de Sioux & Mustinka River Watershed Districts	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support and prioritize	
Bois de Sioux Watershed District	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Make CWFs available for flood control since they impact water quality; drainage management can reduce TSS and P at lower cost than cover crops; evaluate grant portfolio by problem scale	
Chippewa River Watershed Association	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support, fully fund, ensure long-term support	
Coon Creek Watershed District	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support and fully fund	
James Raymond, farmer	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	
Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	
Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	
Mississippi River St. Cloud Watershed Partnership	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	
North Fork River Watershed Collaborative	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	
Roseau River Watershed District	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	

## Summary of Public Comment to Clean Water Council Proposals for the Clean Water Fund FY26-27

Rum River Watershed Partnership	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support and fully fund	
Sauk River Watershed Collaborative	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	
West Otter Tail SWCD	BWSR	Watershed Based Implementation Funding	Support	
	BWSR	Watershed Legacy Partners Grant Program	Support	
Friends of the Mississippi River	BWSR	Watershed Partners Legacy Grant Program	Support	
Nature Conservancy	BWSR	Watershed Partners Legacy Grant Program	Support significant increase and appreciate greater outreach esp. tribes	
Nature Conservancy	BWSR	Working Lands Floodplain Easements	Support	
Freshwater	DNR	Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning	Support	
Bois de Sioux Watershed District	DNR	Culvert Replacement	Recognize conflict between connectivity and flood control	
Nature Conservancy	DNR	Culvert Replacement	Support additional investment	
Nature Conservancy	DNR	Mussel Restoration	Support additional investment	
Bois de Sioux Watershed District	DNR MDA	Nonpoint Source Implementation Technical Assistance	Permit delays in Red River; encourage state agencies to standardize and streamline process	
Nature Conservancy	DNR	Non-point Source Implementation	Support additional investment	
Bois de Sioux Watershed District	DNR	Water Storage (could also include any water storage like wetland easements)	Red River not getting CWFs for this--going to less organized parts of MN; make it statewide	
City of Bayport	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of Chanhassen	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of Eden Prairie	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	

## Summary of Public Comment to Clean Water Council Proposals for the Clean Water Fund FY26-27

City of Lake Elmo	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of Minnetonka	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of New Brighton	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of North St. Paul	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of Prior Lake	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of Robbinsdale	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of Shoreview	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of St. Louis Park	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of Woodbury	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support Program	Support	
City of Bayport	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of Chanhassen	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of Eden Prairie	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of Lake Elmo	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of Minnetonka	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of New Brighton	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of North St. Paul	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of Prior Lake	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of Robbinsdale	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of Shoreview	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of St. Louis Park	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
City of Woodbury	MC	Water Demand Reduction Efficiency Grant Program	Support	
Freshwater	MC	Water Demand Reduction Grant Program	Support	
First Farmers and Merchants Bank Cannon Falls	MDA	AgBMP Loan Program	Support; suggests re-allocating unspent funds from counties to areas	

## Summary of Public Comment to Clean Water Council Proposals for the Clean Water Fund FY26-27

			with higher need; big backlog	
AgCountry Bank	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
Carver County	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
Cook County	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
Goodhue County	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
John Rud	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
Lyon County	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support increase	
Mower County	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
Oakwood Bank	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
Rock County	MDA	Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program	Support; waiting list	
Freshwater	MDA	Conservation Equipment Assistance	Support	
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	MDA	Conservation Equipment Assistance	Support at \$7M; support for ownership of equipment not rental and for custom work	
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	MDA	Expand MN Weather Station Network	Support	
Forever Green advocates	MDA	Forever Green Initiative	Support @\$6M	
Freshwater	MDA	Forever Green Initiative	Support @\$6M	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MDA	Forever Green Initiative	Support @ \$10M; market opportunity for sustainable aviation fuel (SAF)	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MDA	Forever Green Initiative	Support @ \$6M, support at \$10M if possible	
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	MDA	Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program	Support; use as conduit for more soil health BMPs	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MDA	MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program	Support policy change: 1) Certified farms inside DWSMA are not exempted from Level 3 & 4 GPR	

## Summary of Public Comment to Clean Water Council Proposals for the Clean Water Fund FY26-27

			mitigation requirements; 2) reduce certification period for farms inside DWSMAs with elevated nitrate levels from 10 years to 5 years	
Simple Harvest Farm Organics	MDA	MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program	Support investment in more monitoring for outcomes	
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	MDA	Nitrate in Groundwater	Support	
MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, MN Well Owners Assn; Winona County Coalition for Clean Water	MDA	Pesticide Testing in Private Wells	Support	
Minnesota Crop Production Retailers	MDA	Suggests new a targeted financial incentive program that would incentivize crop advisors to promote conservation instead of promoting more fertilizer	Thanks for supporting comprehensive SE MN response	
Minnesota Corn Growers Association	MDA	Technical Assistance	Support	
Nature Conservancy	MDA	Technical Assistance	Support	
Freshwater	MDH	Future of Drinking Water Initiative	Support	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MDH	Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies	Support @ \$3.5M	
Pope County SWCD	MDH	Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies	Support	
Mille Lacs SWCD	MDH	Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies	Support	
MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, MN Well Owners Assn; Winona County Coalition for Clean Water	MDH	Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies	Support	
Bruce M. Olson	MDH	Private Well Initiative	Support SE MN work	
Freshwater	MDH	Private Well Initiative	Support	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MDH	Private Well Initiative	Support @ \$6M	
Jeffrey Stoner, retired hydrologist	MDH	Private Well Initiative	Support	
MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, MN Well Owners	MDH	Private Well Initiative	Support; please report progress	

## Summary of Public Comment to Clean Water Council Proposals for the Clean Water Fund FY26-27

Assn; Winona County Coalition for Clean Water				
Minnesota Water Well Association	MDH	Private Well Initiative	Support	
Olmsted County	MDH	Private Well Initiative	Support	
City of Avon	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Cold Spring	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Darwin	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Gibbon	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Glenwood	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Goodhue	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Grey Eagle	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Le Center	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Little Falls	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Luverne	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Mankato	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Milaca	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Moorhead	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Mora	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Ogilvie	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Onamia	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Pipestone	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Randall	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of St. Hilaire	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
City of Waconia	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
Dakota County	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support; PFAS a major issue in drinking water	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
MN Center for Environmental Advocacy, MN Well Owners Assn; Winona County Coalition for Clean Water	MDH	Source Water Protection	Support	
Coalition of Greater MN Cities	MPCA	Chloride Reduction	Support	
Freshwater	MPCA	Chloride Reduction	Support	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MPCA	Chloride Reduction	Support	



## Summary of Public Comment to Clean Water Council Proposals for the Clean Water Fund FY26-27

Nature Conservancy	MPCA	Chloride Reduction	Support	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MPCA	Clean Water Council	Support	
Nature Conservancy	MPCA	Clean Water Council	Support additional staffing	
Ash River Sewer District	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Support @ \$4 million	
Crane Lake Water & Sanitary District	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Support @ \$4 million	
Friends of the Mississippi River	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Oppose using CWF; avoid earmarks; oppose supporting more development	
Kabetogama Township	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Support @ \$4 million	
Koochiching County	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Support @ \$4 million	
Sen. Jen McEwen	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Support @ \$4 million	
Senator Grant Hauschild	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Support @ \$4 million	
David Craig	MPCA	River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment	Monitor all lakes and streams; fine polluters	
Coalition of Greater MN Cities	MPCA	Wastewater/Stormwater TMDL Implementation	Support	
Coalition of Greater MN Cities	PFA	Point Source Implementation Grants	Support	
Minnesota Department of Transportation, Erosion and Stormwater Management Unit	UMN	Stormwater Research and Technology Transfer Program	Support	
Mississippi WMO	UMN	Stormwater Research and Technology Transfer Program	Support	
South Washington Watershed District	UMN	Stormwater Research and Technology Transfer Program	Support current level or increase	
SRF Consulting Group	UMN	Stormwater Research and Technology Transfer Program	Support	

# **Clean Water Council**

## **Ad Hoc Outreach Group Meeting Summary**

**August 5, 2024**

Council members attending online: Marcie Weinandt, Jessica Wilson, and Holly Hatlewick

Others attending: Paul Gardner, Jen Kader (Met Council)

The group identified its objective: To hear from the people the Council serves to inform the Clean Water Fund recommendations process, both in 2024 and beyond.

Jen Kader reviewed pre-2020 attitudes among water stakeholders that the Council didn't get input until the budget "cake was baked" and that the recommendations process was opaque. That has changed.

Paul Gardner reviewed the summary document of public input received as of last week. The group would like the most updated version for the Council packet on August 19<sup>th</sup>.

The group discussed principles or values for how we want to engage with people.

- People who are impacted must be involved.
- It is important for people providing input to feel meaningfully engaged and heard.
- "Participation and engagement" are not one-time activities but ongoing opportunities that expand understanding and develop relationships.
- Enhanced participation and engagement are important for us to embed as a council in our processes, as well as in the programs we support.
- The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an established framework and may be a good fit.
- We commit to the ability for input to influence the outcomes.
- We will circle back and close the loop on how input influenced the outcome.
- Both data and public input inform decisions made.
- Meaningful engagement is important, and we might screw up as we go. We are learning and will make changes as we go to keep improving.
- We all have something to contribute, and we all have something to learn.
- Asking a question is a promise to do something with the answer (influence)

The group discussed how we should handle public input on August 19<sup>th</sup> with this conclusion.

- Researchers present on water values (Mae Davenport)
- We Are Water staff share learnings from public engagement
- Offer Met Council Water Values input
- Share the IAP2 spectrum of public participation and discuss the level of participation that defines the public's role in the decision process at hand, the public participation goal, and the promise to the public

- Hear in-person public input
- Discuss what stood out to you/what changes you might want to make
- As appropriate, direct committees or future full council to take up later
- Offer responses to input and record them on the summary document
- Final discussions and recommendations from full council to BOC for setting their final recs

# How socially and culturally diverse Minnesotans value water

February 5, 2024



*Credit: Getty Images*

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL (02/05/2024) — Understanding how different communities value water and prioritize its protection is critical to effective policy and governance.

University of Minnesota research recently published in [Society & Natural Resources](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08941920.2023.2278147) (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08941920.2023.2278147>) explores how socially and culturally diverse Minnesotans value water. While some values are universal — safe drinking water, for example — other values and priorities vary by sociocultural identities.

This work was supported by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Funding for this project was also provided by the [Minnesota Stormwater Research Council](https://wrc.umn.edu/msrc) (<https://wrc.umn.edu/msrc>) and Clean Water Funds established by the Minnesota Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment.

“Minnesotans don’t all experience water in the same ways — we have different water relationships depending on where we live, our cultural worldviews, our life experiences and the hardships we face,” said lead author Mae Davenport, a professor in the Department of Forest Resources and director of the Center for Changing Landscapes. “Unfortunately, because of historical and institutional injustices that still affect people today, culturally diverse and non-dominant racialized groups have been underrepresented in positions of power and underserved by decisions that affect human-water relationships.”

Through two studies, a statewide mail survey of Minnesota residents and an onsite survey of Twin Cities community members at cultural events, the research team observed how variables like gender, race, ethnicity and home ownership are associated with different water priorities. The researchers partnered with community leaders to make the methods more inclusive and representative of diverse water relationships.

They found:

- Safe and clean drinking water was the most important water value in both studies, across all gender, race and ethnic identities.
- Culturally diverse respondents identifying as Asian, American Indian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Middle Eastern or North African, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander placed higher importance than white-only identifying respondents on many water values, including water for cultural and religious practices, for watering vegetable gardens, for recreation opportunities, and fishing for preferred species.

- Female-identifying respondents placed higher importance on average across water values than male-identifying respondents in the statewide survey.
- The inclusive onsite survey methodology led to an increase from culturally diverse (75%) and female-identifying perspectives (56%), compared to the traditional mail survey (97% white, 66% male-identifying).

“What we have learned through this research will support more inclusive and community-centered water dialogue, science, policy development and investments for all Minnesotans,” said Davenport. “I believe we all will benefit from learning more about the deep and meaningful connections people have with water in Mni Sóta Maḵoce, the Dakota name for what is now called Minnesota, meaning ‘where waters reflect the clouds.’ And, water will benefit too as we share in our knowledge and caretaking practices.”

These findings suggest that more inclusive and holistic water science, policy and management is needed. Approaches that acknowledge and support the diversity of water values and relationships should be incorporated into water programs, policies and investments. Additionally, science requires more inclusive research and engagement methodologies to explore and uplift different voices and narratives around water.

The research team is building upon this work in partnership with the Metropolitan Council by surveying Twin Cities residents about their water values and experiences, particularly residents of color, renters and younger residents.

### **About the Center for Changing Landscapes**

The Center for Changing Landscapes offers social science research services, conservation program evaluation, community assessment training, and research design assistance to natural resource agencies, nonprofit organizations, and communities in Minnesota and beyond. The Center’s researchers specialize in the use of interdisciplinary community-based research methods, innovative multi-methods evaluation, and inclusive project planning. A primary goal of the center is to empower communities and natural resource managers in inclusive and visionary planning and problem-solving for sustainable, livable, and equitable futures. Learn more at [changinglandscapes.umn.edu](https://changinglandscapes.umn.edu) (<https://changinglandscapes.umn.edu/>).

### **About the Water Resources Center**

The University of Minnesota’s Water Resources Center (WRC) provides leadership in freshwater management through cutting-edge research, educational opportunities for students and professionals, and community outreach. Authorized by Congress as one of the nation’s 54 water resources research institutes, the WRC also connects the research expertise at the University to research problems at the national level. The Water Resources Center is a unit of the [College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences](https://cfans.umn.edu/) (<https://cfans.umn.edu/>) and [University of Minnesota Extension](https://extension.umn.edu/) (<https://extension.umn.edu/>).

### **About the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences**

The University of Minnesota’s College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) strives to inspire minds, nourish people, and sustainably enhance the natural environment. CFANS has a legacy of innovation, bringing discoveries to life through science and educating the next generation of leaders. Every day, students, faculty, and researchers use science to address the grand challenges of the world today and in the future. CFANS offers an unparalleled expanse of experiential learning opportunities for students and the community, with 12 academic departments, 10 research and outreach centers across the state, the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, the Bell Museum of Natural History, and dozens of interdisciplinary centers. Learn more at [cfans.umn.edu](https://cfans.umn.edu) (<https://cfans.umn.edu/>).

# IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

## Clean Water Fund Appropriations

as of 8/15/2024

leg order	#	Agency	Program Title	ICT FY26-27 recs	Change vs FY24- 25	FY24-25 supple- mental 5/24	FY24-25 appropriat ion 5/23	FY22-23	FY20-21	FY18-19	FY16-17	FY14-15	FY12-13	FY10-11
1	4	MDA	Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater	740	40	-	700	700	700	700	700	700	700	675
2	15	MDA	Nitrate in Groundwater	6,200	(800)	1,000	6,000	5,170	5,170	4,171	5,171	5,000	1,700	1,125
3	34	MDA	AgBMP Loan Program	4,000	(9,000)	3,402	9,598	150	150	150	150	400	9,000	4,500
4	32	MDA	Technical Assistance	3,200	200		3,000	3,000	3,000	2,250	2,250	3,000	1,550	2,665
5	56	MDA	MN Water Research Digital Library [aka Research Inventory Database]	100	20		80	80	100	100	100	250	350	-
6	33	MDA	MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program	7,000	-		7,000	6,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	3,000	-	-
7	17	MDA	Irrigation Water Quality Protection	310	10		300	270	300	220	220	220		
8	81	MDA	Forever Green Agricultural Initiative (U of MN)	4,000	(2,000)		6,000	4,000	4,300	1,500	1,000	-	-	-
9	307	MDA	Pesticide Testing in Private Wells	1,000	-		1,000	870	2,000	2,000	-	-	-	-
10	NEW	MDA	Conservation Equipment Assistance	3,500	-		3,500	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
11	NEW	MDA	Expand MN Ag Weather Station Network	2,500	(500)		3,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	56	MDA	Agricultural Research/Evaluation	-	(1,500)		1,500	-	-	1,325	1,575	2,100	2,100	-
13	10	MPCA	River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment	18,900	474	326	18,100	14,832	16,300	16,550	16,700	15,200	15,000	15,000
14	9	MPCA	Watershed Restoration & Protection Strategies (includes TMDL development)	14,500	1,800		12,700	13,451	15,100	19,000	20,200	18,800	18,800	18,000
15	11	MPCA	Groundwater Monitoring and Assessment	2,000	-		2,000	1,900	2,364	2,363	2,364	2,250	2,250	2,250
16		MPCA	St. Louis River AOC	-	(1,500)		1,500							
17	37	MPCA	NPDES wastewater/stormwater point-source implementation (combined from 2 previous programs)	3,200	200		3,000	2,200	2,200	2,250	2,350	1,800	-	-
18	43	MPCA	Enhanced County inspections/SSTS corrective actions	7,081	(1,969)	1,950	7,100	5,824	6,750	6,870	7,245	6,900	-	-
19	38	MPCA	Chloride Reduction	1,300	(1,000)	1,000	1,300	520	500	-	-	-	-	-
20	62	MPCA	Clean Water Council	922	247		675	600	220	100	100	73	-	-
21	92A	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	-	(2,000)		2,000	1,400	1,550	2,000	-	3,500	-	-
22	NEW	MPCA	Nitrate Sensors	-	(2,000)	2,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
23		MPCA	River Watch for Friends of the MN Valley	-	(50)	50	-							
24	5	DNR	Stream Flow Monitoring Program	5,650	550		5,100	4,000	4,000	3,900	4,000	4,000	3,700	1,500
25	6	DNR	Lake Index of Biological Integrity	3,050	150		2,900	2,000	2,500	2,500	2,600	2,600	2,300	1,320

## Clean Water Fund Appropriations

as of 8/15/2024

26	6	DNR	Fish Contamination Assessment	1,100	100	90	910	350	270	270	270	270	270	270
27	10	DNR	Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies-DNR Portion	5,000	700		4,300	3,800	3,800	3,772	3,880	3,700	3,500	2,100
28	18	DNR	Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning	4,700	700		4,000	3,700	4,150	2,750	2,750	2,750	3,000	1,100
29	34	DNR	Non-point Source Restoration and Implementation	4,500	1,300		3,200	2,500	2,000	1,900	2,000	2,000	2,400	500
30	57	DNR	Tool Development and Evaluation [Formerly Applied Research and Tools]	1,400	100		1,300	1,065	1,400	1,350	1,350	1,350	790	550
31	76	DNR	Buffer Map Maintenance	-	(50)		50	50	200	200	650	-	-	-
32	59	DNR	County Geologic Atlas Part B	200	-		200	-	300	250	500	1,200	-	1,000
33	NEW	DNR	Freshwater Mussel Restoration	700	100		600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
34	NEW	DNR	Water Storage	-	(1,000)		1,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35	NEW	DNR	Culvert Replacement Cost Share	3,000	1,000		2,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
36	17	BWSR	Grants to Watersheds with Approved Comprehensive Watershed Plans (Watershed-based Implementation Funding)	90,000	11,000		79,000	43,564	26,966	9,750	-	-	-	-
37	26	BWSR	Surface and Drinking Water Protection/Restoration Grants: (Projects and Practices)	6,000	(11,000)		17,000	22,266	32,000	19,500	20,380	21,400	29,100	6,000
38	18	BWSR	Accelerated Implementation	8,700	(2,300)		11,000	9,682	8,000	7,600	12,000	8,000	6,600	-
39	23	BWSR	Measures, Results and Accountability	2,500	-		2,500	2,500	2,000	1,900	1,900	1,900	2,100	590
40	24	BWSR	Buffer Law Implementation	4,000	-		4,000	3,872	5,000	5,000	5,000	-	-	-
41	25	BWSR	Working Lands Floodplain Easements [formerly Riparian Buffer-Permanent Conservation Easements]	2,000	(6,434)	3,434	5,000	3,872	9,500	9,750	9,750	13,000	12,000	6,900
42	37	BWSR	Targeted Wellhead/Drinking Water Source Protection	5,000	(1,000)	1,000	5,000	5,000	4,000	3,500	3,500	2,600	3,600	2,300
43	43	BWSR	Technical Evaluation [restoration evaluation]	200	-		200	84	168	168	168	168	168	-
44	16	BWSR	Watershed Management Transition (One Watershed, One Plan)	1,000	(2,500)		3,500	5,808	4,000	3,990	4,200	900	-	-
45	19	BWSR	Conservation Drainage Management and Assistance	2,000	-		2,000	1,700	1,700	1,500	1,500	-	-	-
46	21	BWSR	Critical Shoreland Protection-Permanent Conservation Easements	1,000	(6,000)	4,000	3,000	2,468	2,550	2,000	2,000	-	-	-
47	80	BWSR	Tillage, Cover Crop and Erosion Evaluation	850	-		850	723	850	850	1,000			
48	27	BWSR	Watershed Partners Legacy (WPL) Grants	1,000	(2,000)	2,000	1,000	1,000	-	-	1,500	3,000	3,000	-
49	NEW	BWSR	Wetland Restoration Easements	5,000	(5,000)		10,000	5,660	-	-	-	-	-	-



## Clean Water Fund Appropriations

as of 8/15/2024

50	28	BWSR	Enhancing Soil Health and Landowner Adoption of Cover Crops for Drinking Water & Groundwater Protection	12,000	(77)		12,077	4,200	-	-	-	-	-	-
51	NEW	BWSR	Great Lakes Restoration LAMP	1,000	-	1,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
52	NEW	BWSR	MN & IA Conservation Corps	1,500	1,500									
53	23	MDH	Contaminants of Emerging Concern	11,850	1,366	384	10,100	2,400	3,400	2,200	2,200	2,300	2,040	1,300
54	9	MDH	Private Well Initiative	6,000	3,000		3,000	-	1,500	800	650	650	-	-
55	24	MDH	Source Water Protection	7,790	290		7,500	7,884	5,494	5,470	3,800	3,230	2,830	2,400
56	74	MDH	Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies	3,500	2,000		1,500	1,126	1,100	400	250	300	-	-
57	40	MDH	Future of Drinking Water (formerly Drinking Water Protection)	500	-		500	500	500	300	-	-	-	-
58	NEW	MDH	Recreational Water Portal	600	-		600	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
59	new	MDH	Nitrate response in SE Minnesota**	-	(2,790)	2,790	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
60	42	MC	Metropolitan Area Water Sustainability Support Program	2,750	500		2,250	1,838	2,000	1,900	1,950	2,000	1,000	800
61	35	MC	Water Demand Reduction- Efficiency - Grant Program	1,500	-		1,500	1,250	750	-	500	-	-	-
62	61	UMN	County Geologic Atlas Part A	800	(200)		1,000	900	500	250	-	1,230	-	305
63	82B	UMN	Stormwater Research and Technology Transfer Program	1,600	(1,400)	1,000	2,000	1,500	1,500	1,500	550	-	-	-
64	63	LCC	Legislative Coordinating Commission Website	7	1		6	8	9	15	-	30	13	25
65	7	PFA	Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Program	16,500	-		16,500	15,936	18,000	15,750	18,000	18,000	30,920	30,200
66	41	PFA	Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program	100	(100)		200	200	250	250	500	4,000	2,500	2,500
				\$ 307,000		\$25,426	\$318,396							

FY24-25 base budget	318,396
plus supplemental FY24-25 that has tails (in red above)	4,590
minus completed St. Louis River AOC (in blue above)	(1,500)
FY24-25 base budget (revised)	321,486
MMB revenue estimate for FY26-27	307,422
Difference between FY24-25 revised base and FY26-27 estimate	14,064

4.4%

## Clean Water Fund Appropriations

as of 8/15/2024

\* in 1st column = order of programs in appropriations bills

\*\* SE MN Nitrate Response to be combined in FY26-27 with Private Well Initiative

**FY26-27 Clean Water Fund Budget Options - August 2, 2024 BOC Meeting Report**  
**Prepared by Steve Christenson**

To foster discussion of budget options, the Clean Water Council’s Budget & Outcomes Committee utilized this framework to compare proposed budget cuts supported at the Clean Water Council’s July 15 meeting and in the Clean Water Fund Interagency Coordinating Team (ICT) recommendations dated July 24, 2024. Both proposals aimed at developing a budget recommendation that aligns with the **\$307M** forecasted revenues for FY26-27. All other programs would generally be held “flat” for FY26-27 compared to FY24-25, subject to inflation adjustments for various programs.

In sum, the cuts supported by BOC fell short of achieving a **\$307M** budget by **~\$9M**, which ICT and BOC will work to resolve next month. In the meantime, from a strategic perspective, a few issues warrant material feedback from the full Clean Water Council:

- Reducing funds for easement programs (**-\$10M+** from #41, 46, 49)
- Increasing investments in Watershed Based Implementation Funding (**+\$10M+** in #37)
- Implications of proposed CWF budget cuts on federal matching grant availability

Item #	Title	July 15 CWC Proposed Cut or Increase	July 24 ICT Proposed Cut or Increase	ICT FY26-27 Recom- mendation	August 2 BOC Feedback on ICT Proposal
3	AgBMP Loan Program	-\$3M from \$9.5M base (+\$3.4M supplemental appropriation)	-\$9M from \$12.9M total base (\$9.5M base + \$3.4M supplemental appropriation)	\$4M	Accept – flag for additional investment if available
8	Forever Green	In debate	-\$2M from \$6M base	\$4M	In debate – flag for additional investment if available. Do recent US EPA climate pollution reduction grants warrant

					reconsideration of appropriate CWF funding levels?
10	Conservation Equipment Assistance	~	~	\$3.5M	Do recent US EPA climate pollution reduction grants warrant reconsideration of appropriate CWF funding levels?
11	Expand MN Ag Weather Station Network	Reject cut	-\$0.5M from \$3M base	\$2.5M	Accept
12	Agricultural Research/Evaluation	~	-\$1.5M from \$1.5M base	0	Accept
14	Watershed Restoration & Protection Strategies (includes TMDL development)	~	+\$1.8M from \$12.7M base	\$14.5M	Accept
16	St. Louis River AOC	-\$1.5M from \$1.5M base	Project is done	0	Accept
18	Enhanced county Inspections/SSTS Corrective Actions	~	-\$1.9M from \$9.05M total base (\$7.1 base + \$1.95 supplemental appropriation)	\$7.081M	Accept - flag for additional investment if available
19	Chloride Reduction	~	-\$1M from \$2.3M total base (\$1.3M base + \$1M supplemental appropriation)	\$1.3M	Accept - flag for additional investment if available

20	Clean Water Council	+\$0.175M (per year) to support Strat Plan Vision #4: All Minnesotans value water and take actions to sustain and protect it, per Minn. Stat. 114D.35, subd. 3: “The Clean Water Council must develop strategies for informing, educating, and encouraging the participation of citizens, stakeholders, and others regarding this chapter.”	+\$0.247M from \$0.675M base to fund equivalent of 2 FTEs and consulting support for communications	\$922K	Accept
21	Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Protection Program	In debate	-\$2M from \$2M base	0	Compromise: Support \$0.5M cut for a \$1.5M net recommendation
29	Non-point Source Restoration & Implementation	Reject cut	+\$1.3M from \$3.2M base	\$4.5M	Accept
31	Buffer Map Maintenance	~	-\$50K from \$50K base	0	Accept
34	Water Storage	-\$1.0M from \$1M base	-\$1.0M from \$1M base	0	Accept

35	Culvert Replacement Cost Share	Reject cut	+\$1M from \$2M base	\$3M	Accept
36	Grants to Watersheds with Approved Comprehensive Watershed Plans (Watershed based Implementation Funding)	In debate	+\$11M from \$79M base	\$90M	Accept: Possible compromise up or down depending on available funds. Flag for additional investment if available
37	Surface & Drinking Water Protection/Restoration Grants (Projects & Practices)	-\$5M from \$17M base	-\$11M from \$17M base. Note: \$1.5M shifted to line item 52.	\$6M	Accept, with recommendation that BWSR allocate up to 50% of funds to drinking water programs. Flag for additional investment if available.
38	Accelerated Implementation	Reject cut	-\$2.3M from \$11M base	\$8.7M	Compromise: Support \$1.9M cut for a \$9.1M net investment
41	Working Lands Flodplain Easements (formerly Riparian Buffer-Permanent Conservation Easements)	~	-\$6.3M from \$8.343M total base (\$5M base + \$3.434 supplemental appropriation)	\$2M	Accept
44	Watershed Management Transition (1W1P)	-\$1.5M from \$3.5M base	-\$2.5M from \$3.5M base	\$1M	Accept

45	Conservation Drainage Management & Assistance	~	No change	\$2M	Do recent US EPA climate pollution reduction grants warrant reconsideration of appropriate CWF funding levels?
46	Critical Shoreland Protection-Permanent Conservation Easements	~	-\$6M from \$7M total base (\$3M base + \$4M supplemental appropriation)	\$1M	Compromise: Support \$4M cut for a \$3M net investment
49	Wetland Restoration Easements	-\$5M from \$10M base	-\$5M from \$10M base	\$5M	TBD: Do recent US EPA climate pollution reduction grants warrant reconsideration of appropriate CWF funding levels?
50	Enhancing Soil Health	~	-\$0.077	\$12M	TBD: Do recent US EPA climate pollution reduction grants warrant reconsideration of appropriate CWF funding levels?
52 - New BWSR Item	MN & IA Conservation Corps	~	+\$1.5M	\$1.5M	Accept - Funding previously woven into appropriations in line item 37 (reduced by \$1.5M accordingly)

56	Groundwater Restoration & Protection Strategies	~	+\$2M from \$1.5M base	\$3.5M	Accept
62	County Geologic Atlas Part A	Reject cut: Could ENRTF adjust multi-year funding practices to better fund this program?	-\$0.2M from \$1M base	\$0.8M	Accept
63	Stormwater Research & Tech Transfer Program	~	-\$1.4M from \$3M total base (\$2M base +\$1M supplemental appropriation)	\$1.6M	Reject. Support retention of \$2M base and flag for additional investment if available
66	Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program	~	-\$0.1M from \$0.2M base	\$100K	Accept
	Unspent appropriations for: BWSR Conservation Partners (\$86K), Perf Based Watershed (\$85K), SWCD Capacity (\$154K), MDH Water Reuse (\$22K); additional \$406,725 in unspent BWSR funds	\$348,506 - Support return of these unspent or cancelled funds to CWF + additional \$406,725 from unspent BWSR funds			



Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

As a local unit of government representing a watershed partnership that uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations.

Our watershed partnership, consisting of the Coon Creek Watershed District, Anoka Conservation District, and the Cities of Andover, Blaine, Coon Rapids, Fridley, Ham Lake, and Spring Lake Park counts on long-term, stable funding from the Clean Water Fund (CWF) to ensure that we are able to implement projects for clean water consistent with our Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

Over the past five years, our watershed partnership has implemented the following projects with CWFs via the Watershed Based Implementation Funding program:

- Pleasure Creek Biochar and Iron-Enhanced Sand Filter:  
<https://www.cooncreekwd.org/pcfilter/>
- Aurelia Park Pond: <https://www.cooncreekwd.org/aureliapond/>
- Coon Creek Watershed Districtwide Street Sweeping Study:  
[https://www.cooncreekwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CCWD\\_StreetSweeping\\_PhaseII\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.cooncreekwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CCWD_StreetSweeping_PhaseII_Report_Final.pdf)
- Ongoing planning and modeling efforts to identify cost effective water quality improvement practices to address impairments in high priority subwatersheds

We would like to invite the Council to visit our constructed projects to provide a better understanding of their importance and the role they play in clean water efforts. In the next biennium, we are planning to use CWFs to implement the enhanced street sweeping recommendations resulting from our Districtwide study.

Without long-term, stable funding from the CWF, none of these efforts would have been possible. We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Tim Kelly  
District Administrator



**Anoka Conservation District**  
1318 McKay Drive NE, Suite 300  
Ham Lake, Minnesota 55304  
Ph: 763-434-2030  
[www.AnokaSWCD.org](http://www.AnokaSWCD.org)

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Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

July 29, 2024

Mr. Gardner and the Clean Water Council,

The Anoka Conservation District uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations. We strongly encourage the Council to prioritize maintaining Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF).

We are members of the Lower St. Croix and Rum River Watershed Partnerships and participate in several metro watershed WBIF allocation areas. In each of these groups, many local units of governments collaborate to vet projects carefully to select the best across the watershed.

The predictability of WBIF funding improves the process in two ways: 1) members readily postpone their own projects in favor of moving ahead quickly on partner projects of equivalent return on investment without the fear of being left empty-handed, and 2) partners tend to invest more on project feasibility analysis, planning and design before submitting them for consideration.

Additionally, the best endeavors often come in the form of installing many small practices distributed across the landscape as opposed to single large-scale capital improvements. WBIF has been especially effective to install many smaller projects that would individually rank poorly in a competitive grant process due to scale, even though they provide an excellent return on investment.

WBIF has also been effective for shared services, such as agricultural conservation practice experts that serve multiple counties. Finally, we've found that WBIF is well suited for incentive programs spanning multiple counties such as shoreline stabilization or cover crop programs.

WBIF was developed to provide reliable, consistent funding to implement locally developed, state-approved watershed plans. It has become just that. We recognize the Council will be confronting difficult budget decisions, and encourage you to prioritize WBIF.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Lord", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chris Lord  
District Manager



July 24, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

As a local unit of government that uses both Clean Water Fund Competitive Grants (CWF) and Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) for implementation of efforts that address a broad variety of water resource issues, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations.


The Rice Creek Watershed District (RCWD) consists of 4 counties, 28 cities and townships, over 80 lakes, and a land mass of over 180 sq. miles. To address our water resource needs we rely on funding from both CWF and WBIF to accomplish our 2020-2029 Watershed Management Plan goals. These funding sources have been vital to the implementation of many impactful projects.

In recent years, the following projects have been completed in the RCWD with CWFs and WBIF:

- Centerville Lake Alum Treatment and Phosphorous Reduction Project- CWF
  - <https://www.ricecreek.org/project/centerville-lake-alum-treatment/>
- Johanna Creek Carp Barrier- WBIF
  - <https://www.ricecreek.org/project/johanna-creek-carp-barrier/>
- Lower Rice Creek Stabilization Project- CWF
  - <https://www.ricecreek.org/project/lower-rice-creek-stabilization/>
- Hansen Park Enhancement Project- CWF
  - <https://www.ricecreek.org/project/johanna-creek-carp-barrier/>
- Moore Lake Iron Enhanced Sand Filter- CWF
  - <https://www.ricecreek.org/project/moore-lake-iron-enhanced-sand-filter/>

In the next few years, we are planning to implement various stormwater management projects and stream stabilizations with CWFs. Without these funds these projects will not be possible. We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the WBIF and the CWF so that watershed districts can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of their communities and partners.

Sincerely,

  
Michael Bradley  
Rice Creek Watershed District Board President

4325 Pheasant Ridge Drive NE #611 | Blaine, MN 55449 | T: 763-398-3070 | F: 763-398-3088 | [www.ricecreek.org](http://www.ricecreek.org)

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704 Highway 75 South | Wheaton, MN 56296

To: Clean Water Council

From: Jamie Beyer, Bois de Sioux Watershed District

RE: Comments on the FY26-27 Clean Water Fund and Policy Recommendations Reports

Date: July 26, 2024

Thank you for requesting public comment in advance of the August 19th Council Meeting regarding Biennial Recommendations on the Use of Clean Water Fund for Fiscals years 2026-2027. Some of the comments included below are specific to the reference materials for this comment period; it is my hope that these comments can be used to influence the upcoming policy documents, if it is the intention of the Council to carry these programs and policies forward from FY24-25 to FY26-27.

FY24-25 Clean Water Fund and Policy Recommendations Report Page 4: *"Increase water storage."*

**Comment 1:** The Red River Valley, in partnership with the Minnesota DNR, is a clear leader to establish and coordinate coordinated, basinwide flood storage goals and projects, yet our projects have been systematically disqualified from Clean Water Funding in order to prioritize less organized areas of the state. The BWSR Storage Program has served to increase awareness of the tight connection between uncontrolled floods and degraded water quality, but it restricts grant opportunities to Minnesota and Mississippi River basins. We recommend that Clean Water Council communicate a clear priority to increase water storage capacity statewide.

FY24-25 Clean Water Fund and Policy Recommendations Report Page 5: *"Culvert replacement incentive program."*

**Comment 2:** Uncontrolled flooding is directly correlated to degrading water quality. Culvert sizing is an important tool to slow waterflow velocities, and force floodwaters to utilize temporary storage instead of adding to overwhelmed downstream watercourses. Incorrect and/or inconsistent culvert sizing can exacerbate erosion and damage public and private infrastructure (most directly, roads). *We strongly recommend that the Clean Water Council and DNR recognize the direct, competing interest inherent in his recommendation. This conflict should be acknowledge, and potential water quality damage should be minimized if culvert sizing projects are designed with an added, intentional consideration for flood control.*

FY24-25 Clean Water Fund and Policy Recommendations Report Page 10: *"The DNR, MDA, and MDH provide technical assistance to landowners and local governments to ensure project success."*

**Comment 3:** I cannot overemphasize how desperately this technical assistance is needed and how frequently it is found inadequate. Currently, there is little transparency for how a project can successfully achieve required permits, with the landowner or LGU on the hook for discovering in real-time, cumulatively over the course of many months or years, what might be necessary. A project design is required for permitting, but the permitting process ultimately changes the project design, making it impossible to predict how expensive permit conditions may be – and the permitting process itself is expensive (maybe that is the only known factor!). With application fees set to increase exponentially, more than ever, landowners and LGU's need to know in advance of a permit application what qualifications can lead to a successful project. Currently, these standards are not known, and we have not been successful in receiving discrete pre-permit technical assistance. *We strongly recommend that the Clean Water Council consider opportunities to encourage state agencies to collaboratively standardize and streamline government processes.*

FY24-25 Clean Water Fund and Policy Recommendations Report Page 12: *"The BWSR provides non-competitive grants to watersheds to fulfill priority activities in comprehensive watershed management plans (One watershed*



*One Plan*).

**Comment 4:** A distinction is being muddled between “watersheds” meaning a physical location with a corresponding boundary, and “watersheds” meaning a M.S. 103D.205 Watershed District local government unit. Non-competitive funds are not being sent to watersheds, the funds are being allocated by watershed and sent to a fiscal agent (which, because of their dominance in the program, is likely a soil and water conservation district). This phrase was repeated in dozens of instances throughout the document – and I wish it was true, that funding was sent to watersheds, and that watersheds did receive the non-competitive funding. Shockingly, for as much responsibility as we have for most of the activities described, M.S. 103D.205 Watershed Districts can only be found twice in the 39-page FY24-25 report – as a voting member and as a “local funding source.” [To accurately describe One watershed One plan, we recommend that “to watersheds” text be replaced with “by watershed” text.](#)

FY24-25 Clean Water Fund and Policy Recommendations Report Page 14: *Funding Recommendations*

**Comment 5:** Again, for as much responsibility as we have for most of the activities described, I sincerely hope that M.S. 103D.205 Watershed Districts/Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts, and, if not, [we recommend that watershed districts and the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts be solicited both for the next biennium.](#)

FY24-25 Clean Water Fund and Policy Recommendations Report Page 19 & 28: *Conservation Drainage Management and Assistance*

**Comment 6:** I believe this is the BWSR program “Multipurpose Drainage Management,” and M.S. 103D.205 Watershed Districts are also recipients. [Please update the text to include watershed districts.](#)

FY24-25 Funding Recommendations, Page 19: *“One Watershed, One Plan.”*

**Comment 7:** Currently, watershed based implementation funds cannot be used for flood control projects. Many of us will find it hard to forget this June visual reminder of the damage that can ensue when a floodwater event overwhelms infrastructure design/condition:



No amount of cover crop or no-till acres in the month of June can match the force of the precipitation experienced during this flood event. This picture demonstrates clearly the volume of sediment, and associated nutrients, that can be conveyed during one flood event.

The Red River Valley has experienced recent snowmelt floods in 2019, 2022, and 2023; two of these events were declared national disasters, one qualified for state disaster aid. In 2024, excess precipitation resulted in widespread planting interruptions, with a very rough estimate of 20% or more of untilled ground was not able to be planted with an agricultural crop in our District. Although flooding on our flatland isn't as attention-grabbing as the recent images we have seen from southern Minnesota, the destruction and environmental effects are similar. The failure of the Ripidan Dam demonstrates clearly the power of floodwater to transport sediment, nutrients, and pollutants; it also speaks to the scale of these events – Rapidan Dam's damaging rain event was part of an extremely large weather pattern that spanned and affected South Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. The generational environmental and biological changes (both at flood sites and downstream) that occurred within a 7-day timeframe in June 2024 are unimaginable; now aggregate this thought for our May 2024 flood event and past events.

In the waterworld, we think of events such as: a 3-year precipitation event; a 5-year precipitation event; a 10-year precipitation event; a 25-year precipitation event; a 100-year precipitation event; a 500-year precipitation event. There is an inordinate amount of time spent in local government units and state agencies planning and implementing small-scale, small-impact solutions, while the largest (and most impactful) projects wait undeveloped and unfunded. In both the Bois de Sioux River and Mustinka River watershed districts, we have implemented One Watershed One Plan. Despite prioritizing impactful, large-scale projects that can be designed to match future climatic conditions, there is little financial and permitting support to construct, improve, or repair public infrastructure. Statewide, plan participants and regulating state agencies continue to deny the effects of climate change *that state agencies say have been happening for several years*, instead promoting and implementing projects that deliver little or minor sediment reductions, whose benefits are intended for inconsequential precipitation events. For example, under the first grant to the Bois de Sioux River and Mustinka River Joint Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan:

Practice	Cost to reduce 1 lb Phosph/Yr	Cost to reduce 1 ton Sediment/Yr	Life Span
Cover Crop	\$488	\$285	3 years
Drainage Water Management	\$230	\$58	25 years minimum

Doubly, state agencies are amplifying their efforts to make construction of critical infrastructure needed more expensive, if not impossible, to permit and fund. We continue to be subject to new barriers to improve and repair current systems which include the proposed rapid expansion of state authorities over expanded public water and wetland definitions, and areas that only temporarily convey precipitation. These 2024 legislative changes mean that even the most rudimentary and private means of flood control will be subject to complete government control, permitting, questionable water quality standards, testing, and desktop bureaucratic activities. Efforts are made to block repairs to current systems. Environmental reviews seem to have an insatiable and endless appetite for model after model..... We know that Drainage Water Management projects can deliver permanent water quality improvements, yet they receive very little support administratively or via program funding. [We strongly recommend Clean Water Council members and staff evaluate their grant portfolio by problem scale, and purposefully incentivize projects that address a fuller diversity of climatic conditions.](#)

FINAL Clean Water council Strategic Plan for 2024-2028 Page 7: *“Action: Quantify water storage needs and opportunities within each HUC 8 watershed.”*

**Comment 8:** Some areas of the state have completed needs assessments, with their own funds. [We recommend this program offer dual purpose, to be used by LGU's to further to develop storage project designs following establishment of a needs assessment report.](#)



Portions of Marshall, Kittson, Polk, Pennington and Roseau Counties

# MIDDLE-SNAKE-TAMARAC RIVERS WATERSHED DISTRICT

OF-24-109  
July 23, 2024

453 N McKinley St  
Warren, MN 56762  
Phone 218-745-4741  
Fax 218-745-5300  
[info@mstrwd.org](mailto:info@mstrwd.org)  
[www.mstrwd.org](http://www.mstrwd.org)

Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Letter of Support on Watershed Based Implementation Funding

Dear Mr. Gardner,

Please accept my apologies for the length of this letter, but I believe it is important and worth sharing with the Council members.

As the Council works on the 2026-2027 budget and considering the proposed \$14 million cut to the CWF budget compared to 2024-2025, the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District (MSTRWD) would like to respectfully submit this letter in support of the Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) program.

Our Watershed District, located in the northwest of the state, serves over 1,400 square miles of primarily agricultural lands, as well as citizens in small yet valuable communities.

Our One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) program began in May 2020 in partnership with four other local government units. This plan was reviewed and approved by BWSR in August 2022.

Change is always challenging, particularly when it involves altering people's mindsets. This was one of our biggest challenges during the 1W1P planning process. Our strategy was to highlight the mutual benefits of the Clean Water Projects to address local concerns, primarily drainage and flooding issues, and to emphasize that this program would provide a more reliable funding source for implementation. For us in the Red River Valley, this was beneficial, as the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) has a similar program but with a limited budget

BILL PETERSEN  
MIDDLE RIVER  
PRESIDENT  
MARSHALL COUNTY

ROBERT KOVAR  
EAST GRAND FORKS  
VICE PRESIDENT  
POLK COUNTY

KEITH SZCZEPANSKI  
STEPHEN  
TREASURER  
MARSHALL COUNTY

BRADLEY BLAWAT  
VIKING  
SECRETARY  
MARSHALL COUNTY

LEIN SCHILLER  
ARGYLE  
AST SEC/TREASURER  
MARSHALL COUNTY

JOEY MCGREGOR  
WARREN  
MANAGER  
MARSHALL COUNTY

JARED SANDS  
ALVARADO  
MANAGER  
MARSHALL COUNTY



Portions of Marshall, Kittson, Polk, Pennington and Roseau Counties

# MIDDLE-SNAKE-TAMARAC RIVERS WATERSHED DISTRICT

derived from local taxes. The combination of these two funding sources has enabled us to implement larger-scale projects that had been on the waiting list for years.

Please refer to the following pages for the Clean Water projects report presented to the RRWMB in December 2023.

Like many other startup programs, 1W1P (essentially the WBIF) has gone through a steep part of it's curve, with significant time and resources invested by local governments. Any budget reduction will have a severe negative impact on our progress and, perhaps more importantly, on the social momentum and trust that has been built over the past few years.

Therefore, we encourage the Council to maintain the WBIF funding at the requested amount, allowing us, the front-liners, to deliver sustainable returns on Clean Water funds invested in our area, with increased GDP and immeasurable environmental benefits.

As always, the Council members and staff are welcome to visit and see firsthand our accomplishments using the Clean Water funds through the WBIF program.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards,

*Mori Maher*

Morteza Maher PMP, PE  
Administrator  
MSTRWD

BILL PETERSEN  
MIDDLE RIVER  
PRESIDENT  
MARSHALL COUNTY

ROBERT KOVAR  
EAST GRAND FORKS  
VICE PRESIDENT  
POLK COUNTY

KEITH SZCZEPANSKI  
STEPHEN  
TREASURER  
MARSHALL COUNTY

BRADLEY BLAWAT  
VIKING  
SECRETARY  
MARSHALL COUNTY

LEIN SCHILLER  
ARGYLE  
AST SEC/TREASURER  
MARSHALL COUNTY

JOEY MCGREGOR  
WARREN  
MANAGER  
MARSHALL COUNTY

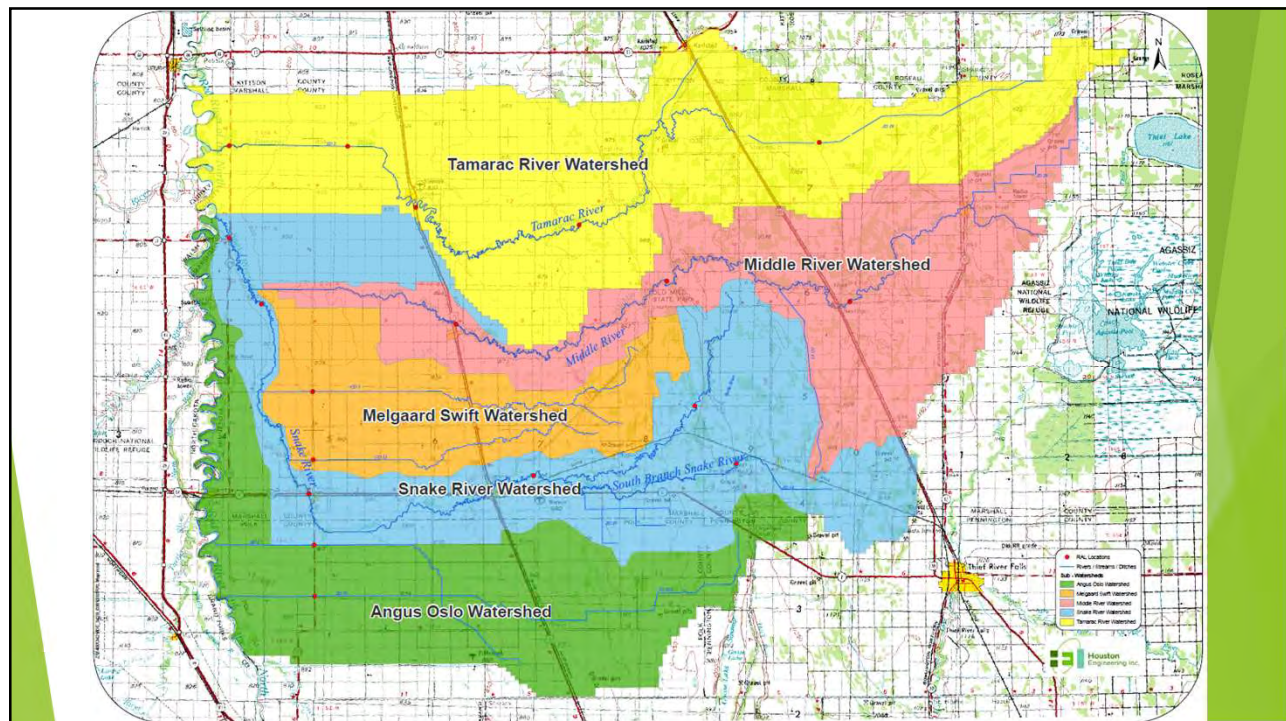
JARED SANDS  
ALVARADO  
MANAGER  
MARSHALL COUNTY



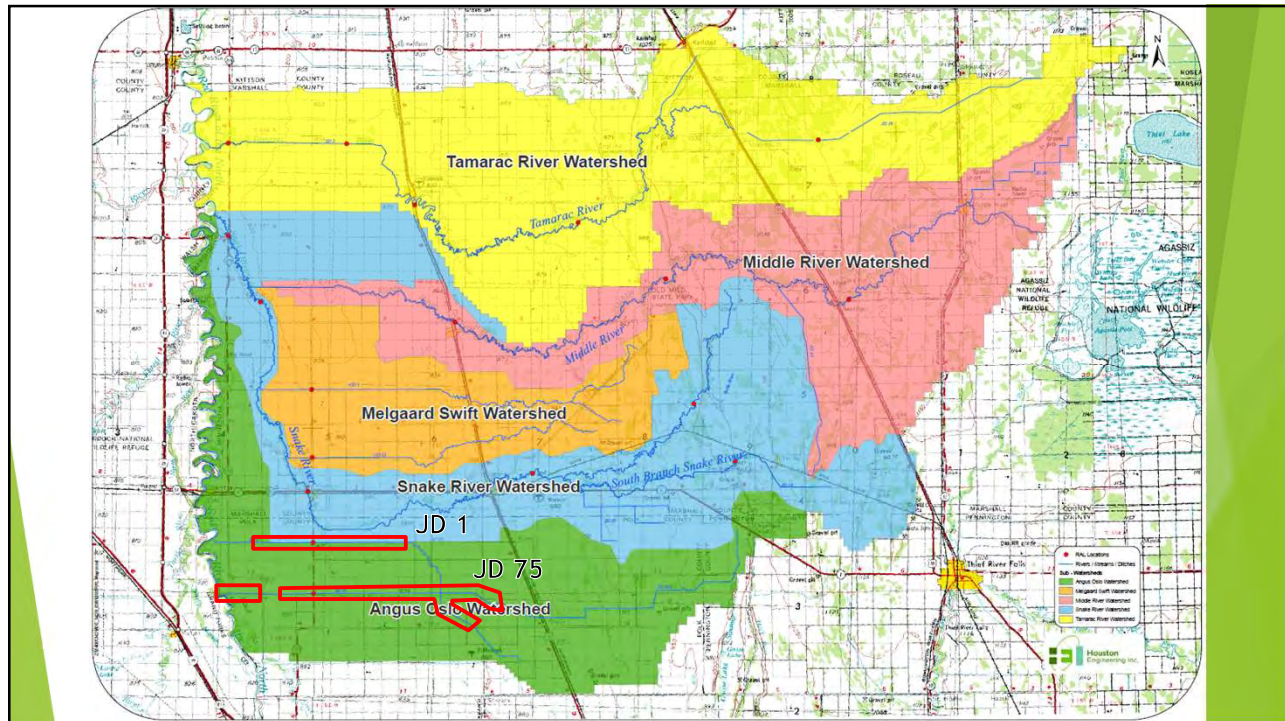
# Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District

RRWMB Clean Water Base/Competitive Funding - Project Update

1



2



3

## Clean Water Projects in the Sub-Watershed Prior to RRWMB Contributions

Year	Ditch System	Cost
2012	JD 75	\$ 170,378.40
2015	JD 75	\$ 140,886.60
2017	JD 75	\$ 227,351.40
2018	JD 1	\$ 205,867.40
2019	PCD 43	\$ 137,062.05

4





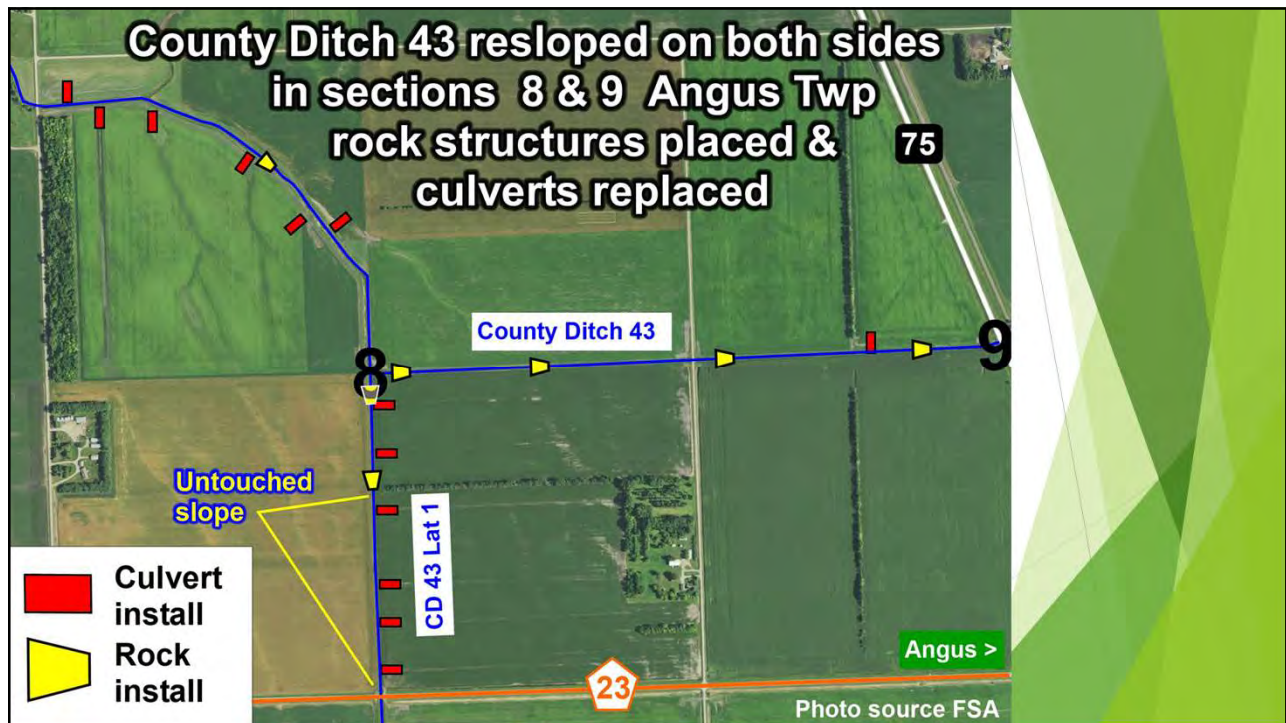
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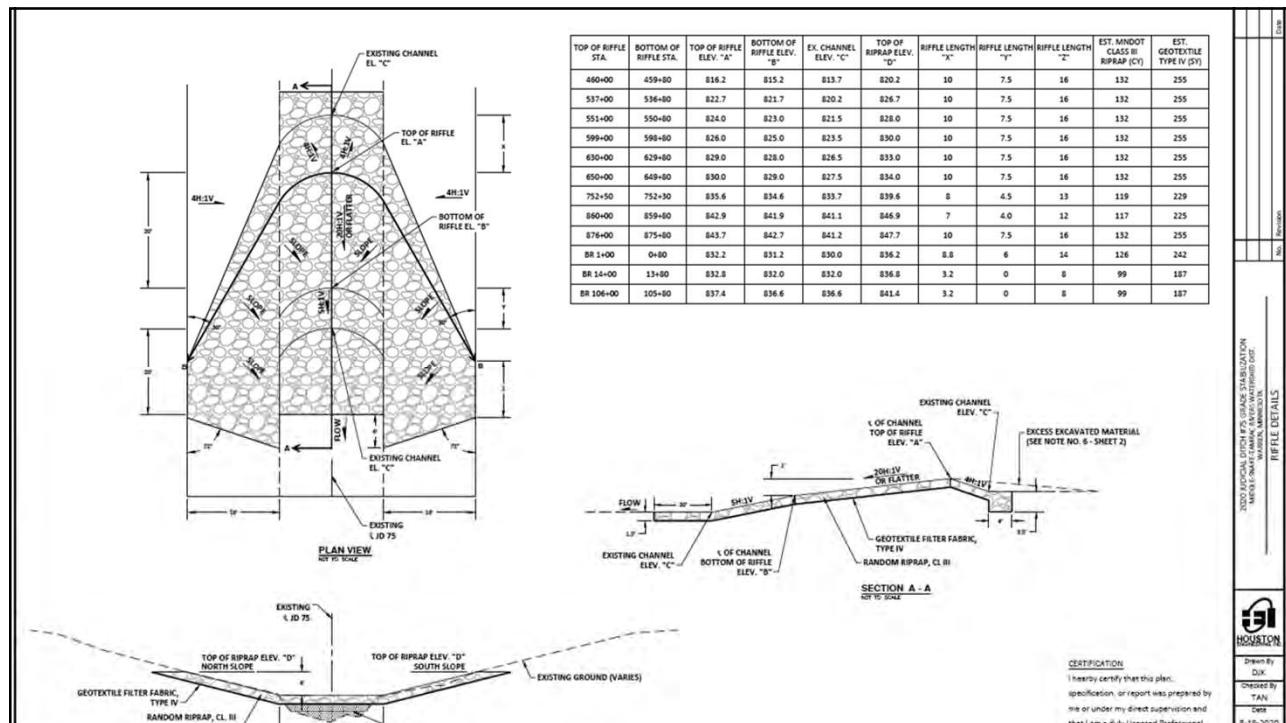
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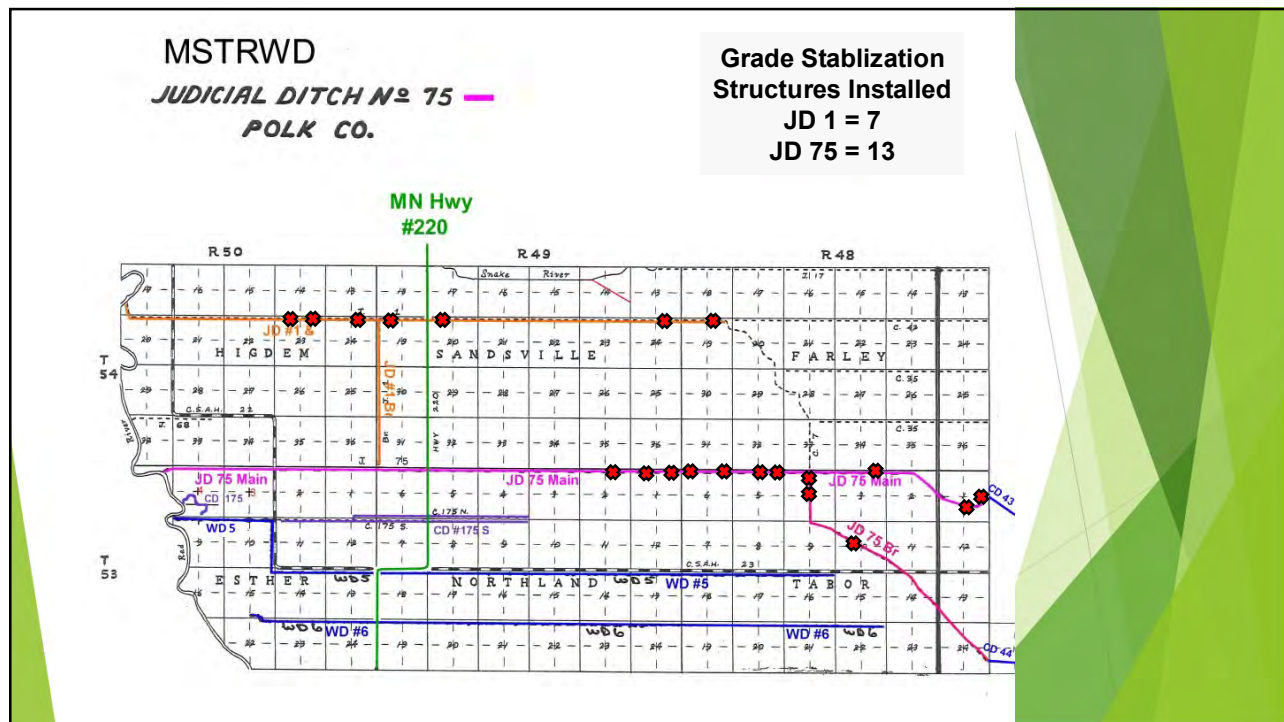
# 2020 - JD 1 and JD 75 Grade Stabilization

9



10





11



12



13



14





15

## 2023 -JD 75 Outlet Grade Stabilization

16





17



18



19

### 2020 and 2023 Grade Stabilization Funding Sources

BWSR - Stream Restoration (31%)	\$	258,700
RRWMB - Base/Comp (36.6%)	\$	306,700
Local Ditch fund (32.3%)	\$	270,907

20

## NOTE!!

1. These Projects **were not** Landowners' Petitioned,
2. Through these projects and according to BWSR's Calculator, we reduced :

**a. 377 tons of sediment per year = 15 - 18 SIDE DUMPS per YEAR**

**b. 377 lbs of Ph per year**

To the Red River of the North



21

No Questions?! ....

Thank you for the  
Funds and your Support!

22



## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Tom Lynch <tomjlynchr3535@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 25, 2024 8:55 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Subject:** Funding

You don't often get email from tomjlynchr3535@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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The state of Minnesota has progressed by 43 percent in attempting to reduce its plastic since 2010 we are not failing this state failed and every single year for more than a decade we have put 93 percent of plastics into our landfills while spending hundreds of millions of dollars we actually made the problem worse

This is not acceptable

This is criminal behavior by any means

Every single grant award is given to big corporations that don't want to take responsibility and now legislation has decided that a short term solution is to increase the size of our landfills further polluting our environment

No low income no new start ups ever get awarded a grant I've 35000 and wm gets millions to do nothing now the new start ups can't buy a piece of equipment with that kind of money being a tractor nowadays costs more than twice that

These grant laws are written specifically for the special interest they are intended to receive the money

I could do more to recycle plastic with 2 million dollars than this entire state has in more than a decade and they spent approximately a half billion

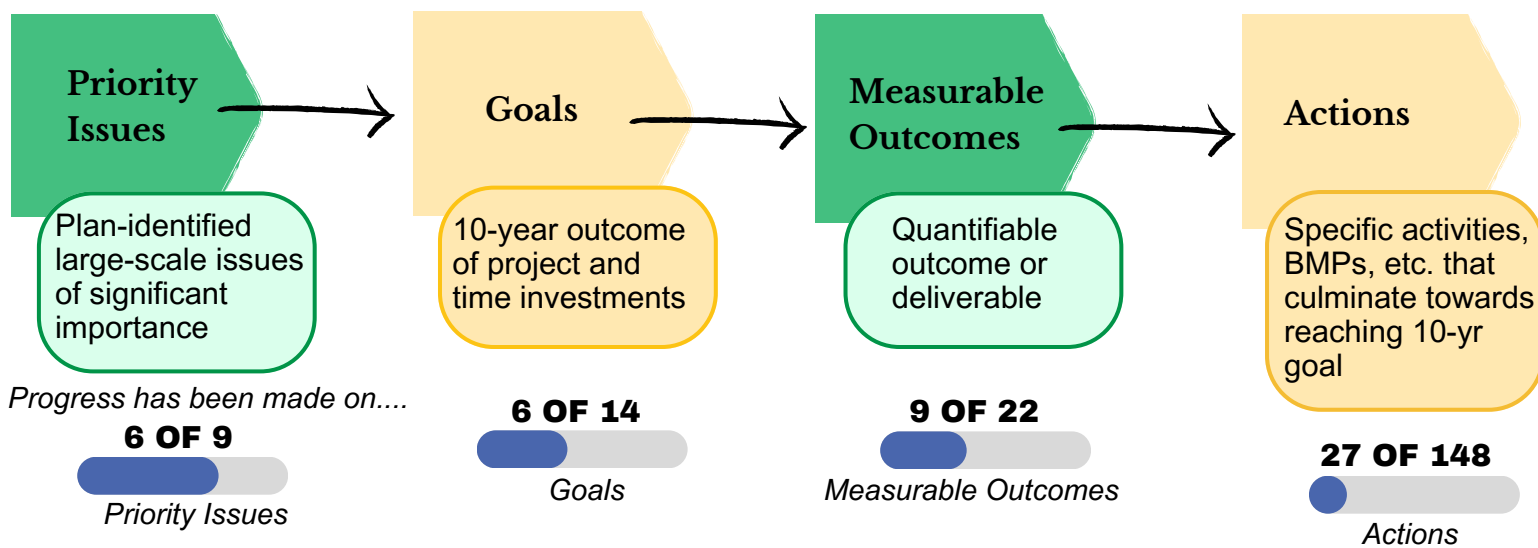
# 2023 Rum River Watershed Partnership Annual Report



The Rum River Watershed Partnership (RRWP) is a joint powers entity formed by 5 counties, 8 SWCDs, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. The group's purpose is to implement a state-approved Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. Any work partners complete using WBIF or other funding sources make progress towards plan goals. This report details all the progress made in 2023, which marks the first year of implementation!



## GOAL PROGRESS



## WE ARE ON TRACK

We are 10% into the life of the plan. We would like to see close to 10% of progress being made.

15% of Action IDs have at least 10% of progress made

8.8% of Action IDs are nearly complete.

Wells Sealed



Wetland Restorations



Conservation Easements



## POLLUTANT REDUCTIONS

PHOSPHORUS	NITROGEN	SEDIMENT	WATER STORAGE
817 lbs/yr <div><div></div></div> 33%	582 lb/yr	363.5 tons/yr	0.67 acre-feet <div><div></div></div> 1%

# Progress by Management Zone

MILACA		
TP	TN	SEDIMENT
24 lbs/yr	0 lb/yr	22 tons/yr

Activities have been done on Bogus Brook.

W. BRANCH RUM RIVER		
TP	TN	SEDIMENT
267 lbs/yr	476 lb/yr	147 tons/yr

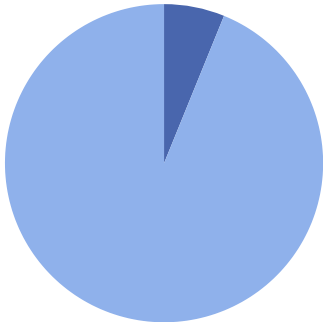
Activities have been done on Estes Brook and the West Branch of the Rum River.

## Funding

Funding is sourced from Watershed-Based Implementation Funds (WBIF) and other local, state, and federal funding sources. In 2023, the RRWP received \$1.1M of Watershed Based Implementation Funds (WBIF), sourced from the Clean Water Land & Legacy Amendment, to implement the plan.

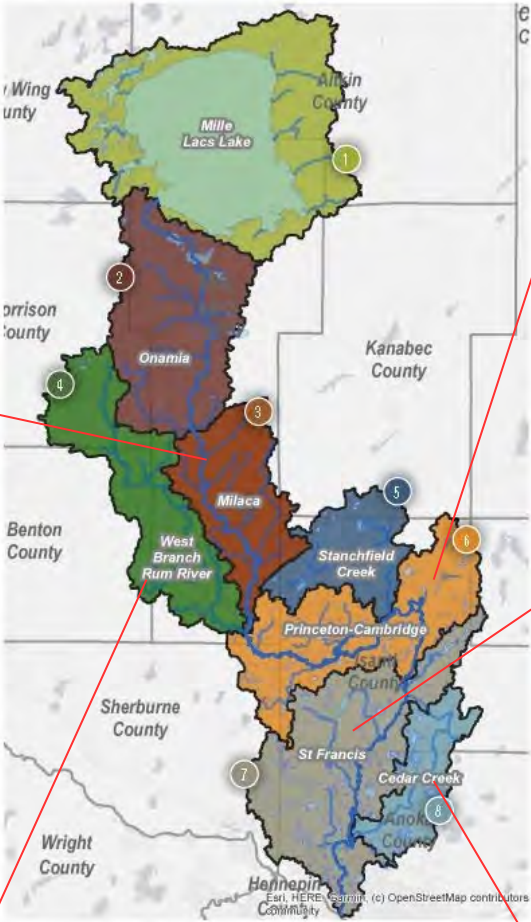
Project expenses from all sources have totaled....

**\$1,299,935**



4 project have been funded using WBIF

61 projects were funded form 19 other funding sources.



### PRINCETON-CAMBRIDGE

TP	TN	SEDIMENT
400 lbs/yr	0 lb/yr	60 tons/yr

Activities have been done on Blue Lake, Green Lake, and Spectacle Lake.

### ST. FRANCIS

TP	TN	SEDIMENT
121 lbs/yr	8.0 lb/yr	131 tons/yr

Activities have been done on George Lake and Skogman Lake.

### CEDAR CREEK

TP	TN	SEDIMENT
4.7 lbs/yr	98 lb/yr	3.0 tons/yr

Activities have been done on Cedar Creek.

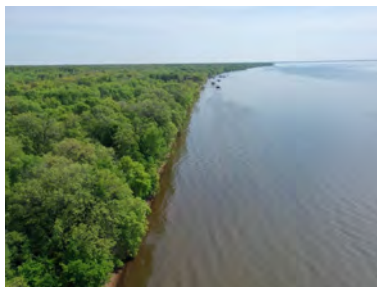


# Project Gallery

65 projects and activities were completed in the watershed in 2023. Here are a few examples of projects that were completed to accomplish plan goals.



Shoreline Restoration  
on Blue Lake  
Isanti SWCD



Drone Study of Mille  
Lacs Lake  
Aitkin SWCD



Prairie planting south  
of Princeton  
Sherburne SWCD



Riverbank stabilization  
on the Rum River  
Anoka CD



Well Sealing  
Mille Lacs SWCD

## Watershed Wide Outreach



Outreach activities are detailed in the FY23 RRWP Outreach Plan and led by staff at Isanti SWCD, Anoka SWCD, and Mille Lacs SWCD. This first year had a focus on increasing communication, collaboration, and utilizing resources among partners.

**COMPLETED**  
**IN PROGRESS**

**Goal:** 10 outreach efforts every biennium

**Goal:** 25 new groups engaged over 10 yrs



14/10



2/25

### Outreach completed includes:



Produced 8 handouts and template letters.



Increased partner communication by hosting monthly meetings and email updates



Hired Watershed Community Organizer



Promoted 4 field days hosted by partners  
A total of 220 attended



Added 31 educational materials to shared resources folder





Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

July 23, 2024

Mr. Gardner and the Clean Water Council,

As members of the Rum River Watershed Partnership which uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations. We strongly encourage the Council to prioritize maintaining Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF).

The Rum River Watershed Partnership consists of eight soil and water conservation districts, five counties, and the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. Together, we spent approximately three years developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) which was state-approved in 2022. In 2023 we formed a joint powers entity to implement the plan. Since that time we have implemented many projects using WBIF including wetland restorations, shoreline practices, agricultural practices, and urban stormwater treatment. Together, we have shared resources, completed multi-jurisdictional work, and vetted the best projects on a watershed scale.

WBIF has been our primary funding source. Members of our partnership have secured competitive Clean Water Fund grants for individual projects. The Partnership has served as a hub for WBIF funds. The predictability of WBIF and selection of projects by the watershed partnership is key to our success. Our local units of government have found this collaborative and comprehensive approach to watershed management to be highly effective.

We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments, in partnership, can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jake Janski".

Jake Janski  
Rum River Watershed Partnership Chair  
Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor

Add other signatures for all RRWP partners who are willing to sign. Then route it to all for DocuSign.



## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Strong, Vanessa <vstrong@co.scott.mn.us>  
**Sent:** Friday, July 19, 2024 6:15 PM  
**To:** Jan Voit  
**Cc:** MWeinandt; Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Barten, John; Richard Biske  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - CLEAN WATER FUND CALL TO ACTION

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Hi Jan,

Thank you for reaching out. Unfortunately Scott County and Scott WMO's experience with One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) has been quite disappointing. It has resulted in government redundancy and duplication, confusion in roles and responsibilities, misalignment of State Priorities within the County, and definitely resulted in wasteful government spending that does nothing to improve the water resources within the County or SWMO. My conversation with some of the other 1W1P WD/WMO and County staff within the Metro is that they have had similar experiences. In my 15 years working in MN water resource management from cities, WMOs, to the County, I have never seen such a poor program and terrible waste of State funds.

My personal recommendation would be to remove One Watershed One Plan programming and funding where it overlaps with the Metro. 1W1P funds should not be spent within the 7 County Metro. For example: within our 1W1P Lower MN River East Planning Area Clean Water Funds were allocated for the areas outside the Metro (Rice/LeSuer Counties), however, there are several 1W1P activities within the metro (Scott County) that use up a significant amount of those allocated funds. That is wasteful planning and spending. There are already effective and efficient WD and WMOs covering this jurisdiction far more efficiently and effectively than 1W1P. The Metro is also already eligible for its own WBIF funding which is put to much better targeted use than 1W1P funds.

The path I'm recommending could allow the CWF funds to be reduced, and all the remaining 1W1P funds to go towards greater MN 1W1P partnerships where it is needed most. It's a simple and easy solution. That's a win for the State, the people, and the waters of Minnesota.

Kind regards,  
Vanessa



**Vanessa Strong**  
*Administrator SWMO*  
*Scott County Water Resources Supervisor*  
200 4th Avenue W  
Shakopee, MN 55379  
952.496.8345  
vstrong@co.scott.mn.us



July 18, 2024



Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

As a local unit of government representing a watershed partnership that uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations.

The Roseau River Joint Powers Board, consisting of Roseau County, Roseau SWCD, and Roseau River Watershed District (RRWD), was one of the last plans completed in the state. Our Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) was approved in 2023. Now that the CWMP has been approved, we count on long-term, stable funding from the Clean Water Fund (CWF) to assure that we are able to implement projects for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Even though we've only received our initial allocation (plus supplemental funding), our watershed partnership is in the construction phase of our first major project and in the process of developing several others. We have formed a Project Team to work with landowners and regulatory agencies to address issues in our priority sub-watershed effectively and efficiently.

June of 2025 our watershed is hosting the Minnesota Watersheds Summer Tour. This would be an excellent opportunity for the Council visit these sites to provide a better understanding of their importance and the role they play in clean water efforts.

Without long-term, stable funding from the CWF, none of these efforts would be possible. We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

*Tracy Halstensgard*

Tracy Halstensgard  
Administrator

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Tuel, Warren (DOT)  
**Sent:** Monday, July 15, 2024 8:28 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Subject:** Clean Water Council Public Input

Good afternoon. My name is Warren Tuel and I am with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) – Office of Environmental Stewardship (Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Unit). I am also a member of the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council Advisory Board that reviews research projects that are funded in part by the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment Fund. I am also actively involved in research projects through MnDOT and the Local Road Research Board (LRRB). I would like to take the opportunity to express support for the Clean Water Councils research program and to emphasize the importance of stormwater research projects. I've seen the results of a number of projects that have benefited many individuals in both the public and private sectors on beneficial use of stormwater best management practices as well as new and emerging technologies. I'd also like to state that, in my role with the MSRC on the Advisory Board, we put a lot of effort into assessing the budgets of these projects and the potential return on investment in terms of improved water quality, improved environment and public health benefits. I look forward to continuing the mission of stormwater research in my part of the world and I also strongly support the work of the Minnesota Clean Water Council to provide interesting and beneficial research projects while also being good stewards of the Clean Water Fund. Thank you!

Warren Tuel, PSS

Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Office of Environmental Stewardship  
**Erosion and Stormwater Management Unit**  
395 John Ireland Blvd, Mail Stop 620  
St Paul, MN 55155  
Cell Phone: 952-378-5874  
[warren.tuel@state.mn.us](mailto:warren.tuel@state.mn.us)



July 10, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: **Biennial recommendations on use of the Clean Water Fund for fiscal years 2026-2027**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Dakota County staff provide the following recommendations on use of the Clean Water Fund for fiscal years 2026-2027:

- 1) Continue to prioritize use of the Clean Water Fund for drinking water source protection. Ensuring high-quality drinking water supplies for future generations is identified as priority in the [Dakota County Groundwater Plan](#) (Goal 1) and the [Dakota County Comprehensive Plan](#) (Goal 5.6). Currently, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and contamination from agricultural chemicals (such as nitrate and pesticides) are an ongoing concern in Dakota County. Dakota County has several municipal water systems impacted by elevated PFAS (City of South St. Paul and Hastings) and/or nitrates (City of Hastings and Rosemount); and multiple [drinking water studies](#) have identified elevated levels of these contaminants in private wells, especially in the south/southeastern portion of the county. The county's combination of porous, coarse textured soil and shallow, fractured bedrock (karst) make much of Dakota County vulnerable to groundwater contamination. Funding is needed to continue to address these groundwater/drinking water contamination sources through treatment, remediation, and continued voluntary actions and best management practices in collaboration with the community.
- 2) Request the Clean Water Council consider utilizing the Clean Water Fund to support water conservation and sustainability projects. Sufficient and sustainable water resources and drinking water supplies for both ecological and human health are identified as priorities in the [Dakota County Groundwater Plan](#) (Goal 2) and the [Dakota County Comprehensive Plan](#) (Goal 5.5 and 5.6). Increasing population growth, continued development, and unpredictable climate patterns are all contributing factors impacting our water resources. In order to combat unpredictable weather patterns and increasing water demand, cities and communities are starting to look for water conservation and reuse opportunities. However, there are multiple barriers to water

### **Physical Development Division**

conservation implementation, including funding. While there is a Metropolitan Council grant program focused on improved [water efficiency](#) (i.e., installation of products or technologies that reduce or optimize water use), there are limited grant opportunities for water [quantity](#) focused capital projects. Funding is needed to help remove barriers to water reuse, including capital improvement grants and development of comprehensive statewide policies or guidelines. Additionally, funding focused on programs that incentivize the water-efficient design, installation, operation, and maintenance of irrigation systems will be critical to working toward groundwater sustainability. Findings from locally-conducted irrigation system audits indicate the bulk of irrigation systems on the landscape are not designed, installed, operated, or maintained in a manner that would be considered water-efficient.

Thank you for your consideration. Dakota County supports these efforts as these align with short- and long-term strategies identified in the [2020-2030 Dakota County Groundwater Plan](#).

For additional information, please contact Valerie Neppl, Groundwater Protection Unit Supervisor, at [valerie.neppl@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:valerie.neppl@co.dakota.mn.us) or 952-891-7019.

Sincerely,



**Georg T. Fischer**  
Director  
Physical Development Department  
P: 952-891-7007  
E: [Georg.Fischer@CO.DAKOTA.MN.US](mailto:Georg.Fischer@CO.DAKOTA.MN.US)

cc: Tom Novak, Interim Dakota County Manager  
Nikki Stewart, Environmental Resources Department Director  
Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency

### **Physical Development Division**



July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Clean Water Council Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Clean Water Council (CWC) project recommendations from the Clean Water Fund (CWF). MCGA advocates for nearly 7,000 corn farmer-members and works closely with the Minnesota Corn Research and Promotion Council and all of Minnesota's 24,000 corn farmers to implement best management practices for water quality and soil health.

MCGA first wants to thank the Council for their work last fall on the supplemental recommendations to the Legislature, which ultimately passed as a part of the Legacy bill. MCGA has made clear our commitment to the shared goal of protecting drinking water through partnerships, research, farm practices and policy. The proactive approach by the Council to respond to the EPA drinking water petition for southeast Minnesota will allow the agencies to implement their workplan in a timely manner and is greatly appreciated by MCGA's members, many of whom live in southeast Minnesota.

MCGA also wants to thank the Council for its continued direction of increasing recommendations for on the ground projects. As the Council considers funding recommendations for the FY 26-27 biennium, MCGA would support prioritization, and in some cases expansion, of the following projects because of the focus on implementation and are consistent with the CWC strategic plan priorities.

**Conservation Equipment Assistance (MDA)** - We greatly appreciate the Council adding this program recommendation two years ago. Since then, farmer interest in soil health practice implementation on has been proven out by the tremendous popularity of this program. Last year, MDA received over \$8.4 million in funding requests vs the \$2.3 million available. Total available funding included general funds. We expect a similar response from Minnesota farmers later this summer when the new round of funding becomes available.

MCGA would like to comment on questions that have been raised regarding the use of equipment by farmers to do "custom work" whereby they use their own equipment and are hired by fellow farmers - often neighbors - to do conservation tillage or cover crop applications on cropland that otherwise would not have been done because that farmer does not have the equipment to do so. Renting or trading labor

for use of equipment is a common practice among farmers, not just for conservation tillage systems or other conservation practices but is also done for other farming practices such as planting or harvesting. The ability of an individual farmer to do custom work for other farmers is an opportunity to keep farmers on the farm rather than having to look for off-farm work.

As the CWC considers its recommendations, MCGA would strongly encourage the Council to evaluate current funding for various programs that are designed to incentivize farmers to adopt soil health practices like strip-till, no-till, precision agriculture, nutrient management and cover crops where appropriate. The best way to expand adoption of these practices is by farmers owning their own equipment and working with other farmers to do custom work. The upfront cost of retrofitting or buying new equipment is often the biggest barrier to farmers as they look at ways to implement different tillage or cover cropping systems on their farms as well as the broader suite of practices that can enhance soil health and improve water quality. Prior to this program the only options available to farmers who were interested in trying a new practice and offsetting some of the risk, was either through a cost-share program and/or renting equipment through their local SWCD. These programs may have had farmer interest, but they were not designed for large scale adoption. A challenge with scaling-up the SWCD equipment rental model is the equipment may not be available to rent from their SWCD, due to high demand at a time of year when time is of the essence. Given the strong response to this program we would encourage the Council to look at funding this program at \$7 million for the FY 26-27 recommendations.

**AgBMP Loan Program (MDA)** - Expanding the AgBMP Loan Program complements the Conservation Equipment Assistance Program as well as multiple other programs that will allow Minnesota farmers to take advantage of low interest loans to implement soil health practices and other conservation measures to benefit clean water. MCGA has several members who have taken advantage of the AgBMP Loan Program to make conservation improvements to their own operations and have appreciated the financing option offered through low interest loans.

**Technical Assistance (MDA)** – We appreciate the Council’s long-term support for on-farm demonstrations like Discovery Farms that increase education and promotion of best management practices on the farm. MDA technical assistance funds help to support on-farm demonstrations in agricultural production areas to evaluate various conservation practices, implement edge-of-field monitoring and build peer-to-peer learning among farmer, local governments, and private service providers.

**Nitrate in Groundwater (MDA)** - We appreciate the Council recommending an additional \$1 million as a part of its supplemental recommendations last year. AS MDA continues to implement the Groundwater Protection Rule and as it works with MPCA and MDH to address the EPA petition related to nitrates in Southeast Minnesota, continued funding of this program is greatly needed as the state moves forward to address nitrates in vulnerable areas.

**MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MDA)** – Enrollment in the program continues to increase and it has been an effective program to leverage federal conservation program funding resources

for implementation. We think there are opportunities to further utilize the program as a conduit to implement soil health and water quality practices on farms by utilizing CWF dollars to help farmers implement practices as a part of the program.

**Expanding the Ag Weather Station Network (MDA)**- Continued expansion of these weather stations will give farmers the local information they need to make the best possible agronomic decisions regarding planting dates, crop protection timing, and more. This detailed local information will create opportunities to reduce chemical applications. Information on when weather conditions are favorable for effective crop protectant application means less unusable applications which has a benefit for water quality in Minnesota.

**Conservation Drainage Management and Assistance (BWSR)**-These grants are directed toward drainage authorities to target critical areas to reduce erosion and sedimentation, reduce peak flows and flooding, and improve water quality, while protecting drainage system efficiency and reducing drainage system maintenance.

Thank you for considering our input on the Clean Water Fund project recommendations and funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dana Allen-Tully". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dana Allen-Tully  
President  
Minnesota Corn Growers Association



July 11, 2024

Dear Members of the Minnesota Clean Water Council,

I am writing to express our support for the Minnesota Clean Water Council's goals and objectives, particularly in promoting sustainable agricultural practices that protect our state's invaluable water resources.

As stakeholders in the agricultural sector, we recognize the critical importance of balancing agricultural productivity with environmental stewardship. Therefore, we commend the Council's efforts to advance initiatives that enhance water quality and sustainability throughout Minnesota.

In line with your mission, we propose implementing a targeted financial incentive program. This program aims to assist agricultural retailers and cooperatives in adopting and promoting evidence-based 4R nutrient management strategies. Similar to electric rate decoupling initiatives incentivizing sustainability, this program would incentivize the adoption of precision agriculture techniques and sound nutrient management practices. By providing financial payment per acre to ag retailers, coupled with bonus payments for collaborating with Certified Crop Advisors, we can promote the widespread adoption of 4R practices across Minnesota's agricultural landscape.

This approach not only supports our agricultural community by optimizing resource use and reducing environmental impact but also aligns with the Council's vision of ensuring clean and sustainable water resources for all Minnesotans. It leverages proven strategies to mitigate nutrient runoff, enhance water quality, and promote long-term agricultural sustainability.

We believe that by working collaboratively with the Minnesota Clean Water Council on this initiative, we can achieve significant progress toward our shared goals. We are committed to contributing to the success of this program and to the broader efforts to safeguard Minnesota's water resources for future generations.

Thank you for your dedication to this vital cause. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and to contribute to a more sustainable future for Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Lee Helgen, Executive Director  
Minnesota Crop Production Retailers  
763-235-6472  
[lee@mcpr-cca.org](mailto:lee@mcpr-cca.org)



*Protecting, restoring and enhancing the metro  
Mississippi River and its watershed since 1993.*

106 W. Water St., Ste. 600 | St. Paul MN 55107-2032  
(651) 222-2193 | [fmr.org](http://fmr.org) | [info@fmr.org](mailto:info@fmr.org)

July 12th, 2024

**To:** The Minnesota Clean Water Council

**Re:** Support for the University of Minnesota Forever Green Initiative

Dear members,

Friends of the Mississippi River respectfully requests that the Clean Water Council recommend \$10 million in funding for the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative in your FY26-27 Clean Water Fund recommendations. We believe that this is the single most impactful investment the Clean Water Council can make to achieve Minnesota's long-term clean water goals.

### **The Forever Green Initiative**

The University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative is a nationally respected research effort designed to develop new, economically viable 'Continuous Living Cover' (CLC) cropping systems.

Integrating perennial and winter-annual crops into existing farming systems holds soil in place and stops pollutants from leaching into ground and surface water, while providing producers with new revenue streams that can bolster our agricultural economy through the development of high-value, commercially marketable food, feed and fuel products.

Specifically, Forever Green crops can:

- Improve water quality in surface waters and groundwater;
- Protect drinking water and improve public health;
- Enhance soil health and climate resilience;
- Enhance habitat for wildlife and pollinators;
- Provide ultra-low carbon feedstocks for sustainable fuels;
- Foster new economic opportunities for Minnesota family farmers;
- Diversify crop rotations and farm income streams;
- Attract new investment and employment in emerging agricultural industries; and
- Attract high-quality talent to the University of Minnesota to meet the future state workforce needs of the agriculture, food, energy and natural resource industries.

The recently published [Putting Down Roots](#) report, prepared by FMR and the University of Minnesota, found that under a moderate adoption scenario, Forever Green CLC cropping systems could reduce nitrogen loss by 23% and soil erosion by 35% in Minnesota by 2050 while enhancing on-farm profits by 20%. This is a win-win for all Minnesotans.

### **Addressing nitrate contamination in groundwater**

As you know, Minnesota needs new solutions to groundwater nitrate pollution, especially in [vulnerable areas](#) such as coarse-textured soils or karst topography. When it comes to protecting groundwater, few strategies are as effective or scalable as CLC cropping systems. For example:

- Kernza, a pioneering perennial grain, can reduce soil water nitrate concentration by up to 97% compared to corn.<sup>1</sup>
- Winter annual oilseeds crops like camelina and pennycress can reduce nitrate concentrations by up to 97% compared to no cover (standard practice).<sup>2</sup>
- Perennial crops can reduce nitrate losses through tile lines by over 95%.<sup>3</sup>

### **A five-to-one return**

State investment in Forever Green has historically been leveraged many times over in federal grants and other funding that supports this increasingly high-profile effort. Historically, for every one dollar of Clean Water Fund support, Forever Green has secured an additional five dollars in complementary funds.<sup>4</sup>

### **An emerging Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) market opportunity**

Winter annual oilseed are particularly well-positioned as a low-carbon aviation fuel feedstock. The emergence of the Minnesota SAF Hub, industrywide low-carbon fuel commitments and federal SAF production incentives have opened the door to rapid commercialization. Cargill hopes to [expand its pilot acreage](#) from 2,000 to 20,000 acres next year. With robust public investment, researchers estimate that statewide acreage could exceed [one million acres](#) within 10 years.

### **A deserving investment**

While we have strongly supported Clean Water Fund investments to date, we feel that the time has come for the Clean Water Council to take bold action in transforming Minnesota's approach to clean water. Traditional farmer education and BMP cost-share programs are important, but we must acknowledge that traditional BMPs can't do the job alone.

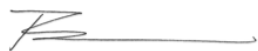
Getting to clean water is not just about 'how we grow' our crops. It is also about 'what we grow'. We must find ways to keep the soil covered year-round through economically viable CLC cropping systems that work for farmers and the environment.

As our friend Dr. Don Wyse liked to say: *"If you want to change the landscape, get farmers and economic opportunity to change the landscape."*

When fully funded, the Forever Green Initiative will make Minnesota the unquestioned leader in developing sustainable, profitable and diversified cropping systems that improve habitat, water quality, climate and soil health while boosting farm prosperity and rural economic development.

We urge you to support full funding of \$10M/biennium for Forever Green in your FY 26-27 Clean Water Fund recommendations.

Sincerely,



Trevor Russell  
Water Program Director  
Friends of the Mississippi River

---

<sup>1</sup> Jungers et al. 2019. Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment.

<sup>2</sup> Weyers et al. 2019. Journal of Environmental Quality.

<sup>3</sup> Randall et al. 1997. Journal of Environmental Quality.

<sup>4</sup> Since 2016, FGI has received \$16.8M from the CWF and \$97.6M from other sources (federal, foundation, company, and other state funding).



**KOOCHICHING COUNTY  
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

Courthouse  
715 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
International Falls, MN 56649

Telephone: (218) 283-1157 Fax: (218) 283-1159

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Honorable Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

June 25, 2024

Dear Chair Barten, Executive Director Gardner, and Clean Water Council Members,

I write to you on behalf of Koochiching County in support of the National Park Water Quality Protection Program and the Voyageur's National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board's (VNPCWJPB) \$4 million dollar funding request within that program. This program and past funding to the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water project have had a very positive impact on the waters of Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

As you are no doubt aware, Voyageurs National Park is the nation's only water based national park, and it is proudly acclaimed for its beauty and pristine nature. More than 13 years ago, counties, townships, and unorganized areas adjacent to the park came together and locally formed Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project Joint Powers Board. In coordination with the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, U.S. National Park Service, St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, and the Minnesota Clean Water Council, this board has directed efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to take action on clean water initiatives that improve water quality throughout the watershed.

The board has had great success, establishing sanitary sewer districts and projects in three of the four main entrances to the park. They have worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Minnesota Clean Water Council, and many others to bring funding to this effort.

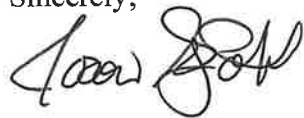
The Clean Water Council has been an important partner in providing the necessary funding to continue these clean water initiatives that improve and maintain water quality within the park. Your funding has helped leverage millions of dollars in other funding to further these efforts.

Your support in approving the \$4 million request from the Voyageur's National Park Joint Powers Board would allow us to continue this project.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Let us protect these treasured waters, together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Sjoblom". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jason" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Sjoblom".

Jason Sjoblom  
Koochiching County  
Board of Commissioners, Chair

CC: State Senator Grant Hauschild  
State Representative Roger Skraba  
St. Louis County Board  
Governor Tim Walz  
Commissioner Katrina Kessler



The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota,  
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August 14, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Paul Gardner, Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Clean Water Council Funding Recommendations

Dear Chair Barten and Administrator Gardner:

We appreciate the opportunity for The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to again provide input as the Clean Water Council (CWC) develops Clean Water Fund (CWF) recommendations to the legislature for FY26-27. At this critical juncture marking 15 years of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment and with roughly 10 years remaining of this dedicated fund, TNC encourages the Council to reflect on the opportunities that remain to make the best use of these limited funds to deliver on outcomes Minnesotans expect and need to maintain healthy water resources in the state.

As the Council considers the advice of the CWC Budget Outcomes Committee and input from state agencies and other invested parties to arrive at a recommendation package for the coming biennium, we understand additional decisions may need to be made across previously-funded programs to reflect potentially less available funding than the prior biennium. However, we especially want to highlight the importance of existing and new programs that have demonstrated durable outcomes for protecting, restoring and enhancing clean water for people and nature. Programs should measurably contribute to Council priorities and advance the strategic plan that was developed with significant stakeholder input.

In particular, we recommend continuing investments in easement programs which provide permanent protection. As the state faces dual challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss, both of which affect and result from the health and viability of our water resources, we cannot lose the durability of these programs at this critical time. Additionally, continuing to invest in innovation and outreach to communities will aid in addressing water challenges from new fronts as the obstacles to clean water evolve and worsen.

It is with this in mind we offer the following recommendations for your consideration because they reflect not only freshwater resilience priorities identified by TNC, but also clean water priorities for Minnesota as identified in the Clean Water Council's Strategic Plan:

*Strategic Plan Goal: Protect and restore surface waters to achieve 70% swimmable and 67% fishable waters by 2034 through statewide, regional, or issue-specific programs that help meet water quality goals but are not necessarily prioritized and targeted according to geography.*

Programs that help to meet this goal include:

- **Critical Shoreland Protection Easements (BWSR):** This proven program is worthy of continued investment. It is unique among easement programs for the precision protection it provides in addition to many benefits including protecting drinking water, habitat, carbon sequestration in critical watersheds at risk of degradation, and ultimately preventing costlier cleanup if these waters were to become impaired. Because this program has a good return on investment for the CWF, we encourage the council not to lose momentum in this special program. The Critical Shoreland Protection Easements also fit within the CWC goal to ensure that users of public water systems have safe, sufficient, and equitable drinking water.
- **Mussel Restoration (DNR):** This is a good example of innovation in the CWF space that can provide new and additive strategies to advance clean water outcomes while also benefitting biodiversity.

*Strategic Plan Goal: Protect groundwater from degradation and support effective measures to restore degraded groundwater.*

Programs that help to meet this goal include:

- **Working Lands Floodplain Easements (BWSR):** These easements give landowners in sensitive areas like floodplains, and who may be opposed to land retirement, an option to ensure land uses that are compatible with water resource protection. This program has great potential in areas of Minnesota like the southeast where there are serious resource concerns and where protection potential has not been included in previous Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) programs. Because areas like southeastern Minnesota have not had RIM support, it will take time to build momentum so ongoing investment is needed.
- **Non-point Source Restoration and Implementation (DNR):** This program should be expanded as it serves multiple benefits for downstream aquatic habitat, water quality, and flood mitigation, and the need has only increased since the program was created.
- **Culvert Replacement (DNR):** We are encouraged by continued Council discussion around this program and the benefits it can provide for both people and nature by reducing flooding in the face of increased precipitation events.
- **Chloride Reduction (MPCA):** Chloride is an increasing and irreversible threat to water and aquatic systems. This program has demonstrated results through innovation and adaptation to protect and restore surface and groundwater. The efficacy of the program is commendable and makes an outsized impact.
- **Technical Assistance (MDA):** The ongoing funding of this program has allowed for robust, meaningful water quality data gathering through projects supported by this program. Continued on-the-ground monitoring is important to build a full-scale picture of the health and vitality of our waters, especially those in high-risk areas.





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*Strategic Plan Goal: Build capacity of local communities to protect and sustain water resources.*

Programs that help to meet this goal include:

- Watershed Partners Legacy Grant Program (BWSR): As a pilot program to foster community-driven innovation for clean water outcomes, this has shown great promise, and the applications in the pilot have also demonstrated a high need. We recommend significantly increasing support for this program to continue to foster innovation and engagement in new communities. We also recommend the CWC and BWSR increase outreach and engagement efforts to Tribal Nations to encourage and support their participation in the program. Now is not a time to scale back this innovative program.
- Increased Clean Water Council Capacity (MPCA): The CWC is better-served when interested parties and rights holders are informed of CWF supported efforts and participate in the process to ensure the outcomes from CWF investments that Minnesotans expect. We support funding additional capacity to focus on communication and community engagement to allow current staff to focus on council and council committee administration.

We hope the recommendation process will result in continued conversation about the outcomes for all CWF investments, especially the important work that happens in Watershed Based Implementation. All programs and projects receiving CWF should meet or exceed the constitutional requirements to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater and drinking water from degradation. To demonstrate this, projects and programs should include measurable outcomes, beyond the stated activities, and report back to the CWC on those outcomes (per Minn. Statutes 114D.50).

We also encourage the Council and agency partners to seek to understand and determine efficiencies within and between programs, limiting duplication. The Nature Conservancy continues to remain concerned about the rate of progress toward state water priorities since the CWF was first created; however, the above-mentioned programs are a meaningful step toward advancing the pace and scale of the beneficial impact Clean Water Funds can have. The urgency and opportunity to invest in implementation is clear.

Thank you again for considering our input. Please let us know if you would like more information on why The Nature Conservancy feels strongly that these programs advance clean water for Minnesota. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council in your recommendation development process and beyond.

Sincerely,

Ann Mulholland, Chapter Director  
The Nature Conservancy, MN-ND-SD



critical watersheds at risk of degradation, and ultimately preventing costlier cleanup if these waters were to become impaired. This program has a good return on investment for the Clean Water Fund.

- **Watershed Partners Legacy Grant Program:** As a pilot program to foster community-driven innovation for clean water outcomes, this has shown great promise, and the applications in the pilot have also demonstrated a high need. We recommend significantly increasing support for this program to continue to foster innovation and engagement in new communities. We also recommend the Clean Water Council and BWSR increase outreach and engagement efforts to Tribal Nations to encourage and support their participation in the program.

**Department of Natural Resources:**

- Water Storage
- Culvert Replacement
- Mussel Restoration
- Non-point Source Restoration and Implementation

With the exception of Non-point Source Restoration and Implementation, these DNR programs were new when included in the FY24-25 biennial recommendations from the Council. We commend the Council for including these previously to help get these programs off the ground, and the DNR for considering water storage opportunities on state lands. We recommend these programs be further considered for additional investment so they can continue to expand as these programs have multiple benefits for downstream aquatic habitat, water quality, and flood mitigation.

**Pollution Control Agency:**

- **Chloride Reduction:** Chloride is an increasing and irreversible threat to water and aquatic systems. This program has demonstrated results through innovation and adaptation to protect and restore surface and groundwater. The efficacy of the program is commendable and makes an outsized impact.
- **Clean Water Council Communication and Engagement Capacity:** The Clean Water Council is better served when interested parties and rights holders are informed of Clean Water Fund supported efforts and participate in the process and ensure the outcomes from CWF investments that Minnesotans expect. We support funding an additional staff person to focus on communication and community engagement to allow current staff to focus on council and council committee administration.

We offer additional reflections to inform Council deliberation on all programs being considered: In addition to emphasizing the importance of strong funding in the above programs, we also hope the



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recommendation process will result in continued conversation about the outcomes for all Clean Water Fund investments, especially the important work that happens in Watershed Based Implementation. We also encourage the Council and agency partners to seek to understand and determine efficiencies within and between programs, limiting duplication.

All programs and projects receiving Clean Water Funding should meet or exceed the constitutional requirements to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater and drinking water from degradation. To demonstrate this, projects and programs should include measurable outcomes, beyond the stated activities, and report back to the Council on those accomplishments (per Minnesota Statutes 114D.50).

The Nature Conservancy continues to remain concerned about the rate of progress toward state water priorities since the Clean Water Fund was first created; however, the above-mentioned programs are a meaningful step toward advancing the pace and scale of the beneficial impact Clean Water Funds can have. While the Council faces difficult decisions in arriving at final recommendations this year, the urgency and opportunity to invest in implementation is clear.

Thank you again for considering our input. Please let us know if you would like more information on why The Nature Conservancy feels strongly that these programs advance clean water for Minnesota. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council in your recommendation development process and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ann Mulholland", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Ann Mulholland, Chapter Director

The Nature Conservancy, MN-ND-SD

**CRANE LAKE WATER & SANITARY DISTRICT**  
**P.O. BOX 306**  
**CRANE LAKE, MN 55725**  
**Phone: 218/993-1303 Email: [info@clwsd.org](mailto:info@clwsd.org)**

Robert Scott, Chair  
Bonnie Caughey, Vice-Chair

Mark Anderson, Manager  
Deena Congdon, Manager  
Darrell Scott, Manager

July 8, 2024

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Honorable Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Dear Chair Barten, Executive Director Gardner, and Clean Water Council Members,

I write to you on behalf of the Crane Lake Water & Sanitary District in support of the National Park Water Quality Protection Program and the Voyageur's National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board's (VNPCWJPB) \$4 million dollar funding request within that program. This program and past funding to the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water project have had a very positive impact on the waters of Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

As you are no doubt aware, Voyageurs National Park is the nation's only water based national park, and it is proudly acclaimed for its beauty and pristine nature. More than 13 years ago, counties, townships, and unorganized areas adjacent to the park came together and locally formed Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project Joint Powers Board. In coordination with the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, U.S. National Park Service, St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, and the Minnesota Clean Water Council, this board has directed efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to clean up and protect the waters of the park at the four main public access points to the park.

The board has had great success, establishing sanitary sewer districts and projects in three of the four main entrances to the park. They have worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Minnesota Clean Water Council, and many others to bring funding to this effort.

The Clean Water Council has been an important partner in providing the necessary funding to continue these efforts to protect the park. Your funding has helped leverage millions of dollars in other funding to further these efforts.

Your support in approving the \$4 million request from the Voyageur's National Park Joint Powers Board would allow us to continue this project.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Let us protect these treasured waters, together.

Sincerely,

Robert Scott,  
Chairman

CC: State Senator Grant Hauschild  
State Representative Roger Skraba  
St. Louis County Board  
Koochiching County Board  
Governor Tim Walz  
Commissioner Katrina Kessler

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Axtell, Kyle <kyle.axtell@woodburymn.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, July 3, 2024 1:51 PM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Subject:** Input on Clean Water Council FY26-27 Funding Recommendation

You don't often get email from kyle.axtell@woodburymn.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Greetings Paul,

As a new member of the MN Stormwater Research Council (MSRC) Advisory Board, I encourage the Clean Water Council to continue its strong financial support for the important work of the MSRC by maintaining or increasing existing funding levels. Research funded by the MSRC has helped to position Minnesota as a national leader in stormwater quality and quantity management while providing meaningful research to improve the effectiveness of practices and programs used by partners every year across the state. Funding allocations to MSRC have been effectively and efficiently managed by UMN Water Resources Center staff with direction from the Advisory Board – composed of a diverse team of researchers and practitioners from across the stormwater management industry, both private and public sector. State funding allocations to the MSRC also help to leverage continued contributions from local agencies and other partners to add value to the State's investment in stormwater research.

Continuing to support the research and technology transfer initiatives of the MSRC should be one of the easiest decisions the Clean Water Council can make. I look forward to serving on the MSRC Advisory Board in the future and helping to provide guidance as we support stormwater management and water resource improvement efforts on behalf of the State of Minnesota.

Thank you for your time,

**Kyle Axtell**

*Watershed Project Manager*

**South Washington Watershed District**

2302 Tower Drive, Woodbury MN 55125

(651) 714-3718

[www.swwdmn.org](http://www.swwdmn.org)



SOUTH WASHINGTON  
WATERSHED DISTRICT

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Honorable Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

July X, 2024

Dear Chair Barten, Executive Director Gardner, and Clean Water Council Members,

I write to you on behalf of Aish River Sewer District in support of the National Park Water Quality Protection Program and the Voyageur's National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board's (VNPCWJPB) \$4 million dollar funding request within that program. This program and past funding to the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water project have had a very positive impact on the waters of Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

As you are no doubt aware, Voyageurs National Park is the nation's only water based national park, and it is proudly acclaimed for its beauty and pristine nature. More than 13 years ago, counties, townships, and unorganized areas adjacent to the park came together and locally formed Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project Joint Powers Board. In coordination with the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, U.S. National Park Service, St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, and the Minnesota Clean Water Council, this board has directed efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to clean up and protect the waters of the park at the four main public access points to the park.


The board has had great success, establishing sanitary sewer districts and projects in three of the four main entrances to the park. They have worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Minnesota Clean Water Council, and many others to bring funding to this effort.

The Clean Water Council has been an important partner in providing the necessary funding to continue these efforts to protect the park. Your funding has helped leverage millions of dollars in other funding to further these efforts.

Your support in approving the \$4 million request from the Voyageur's National Park Joint Powers Board would allow us to continue this project.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Let us protect these treasured waters, together.

Sincerely, 

Name Debra Sanders

Title 1<sup>st</sup> Chair ARSD

CC: State Senator Grant Hauschild  
State Representative Roger Skraba  
St. Louis County Board  
Koochiching County Board  
Governor Tim Walz  
Commissioner Katrina Kessler

SENATOR JENNIFER A. MCEWEN  
SENATE LABOR CHAIR  
DULUTH, District 08



*June 2, 2024*

Chair **John Barten**,  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Honorable **Paul Gardner**,  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Barten, Executive Director Gardner, and Clean Water Council Members,

I write to you in support of the Minnesota Clean Water Council's National Park Water Quality Protection Program and the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board's (VNPCWJPB) \$4 million dollar funding request within that program. This program and past funding to the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water project have had a very positive impact on the waters of Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

**As you are no doubt aware, Voyageurs National Park is the nation's only water based national park, and it is proudly acclaimed for its beauty and pristine nature.** More than 13 years ago, counties, townships, and unorganized areas adjacent to the park came together and locally formed Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project Joint Powers Board. In coordination with the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, U.S. National Park Service, St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, and the Minnesota Clean Water Council, this board has directed efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to clean up and protect the waters of the park at the four main public access points to the park.

The board has had great success, establishing sanitary sewer districts and projects in three of the four main entrances to the park. They have worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Minnesota Clean Water Council, and many others to bring funding to this effort.

The Clean Water Council has been an important partner in providing the necessary funding to continue these efforts to protect the park. Your funding has helped leverage millions of dollars in other funding to further these efforts.

Your support in approving the \$4 million request from the Voyageur's National Park Joint Powers Board would allow us to continue this project.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support. **Let us protect these treasured waters, together.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jennifer A. McEwen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jennifer" being the most prominent part.

Senator Jennifer A. McEwen  
*Chair, Labor Committee*  
*Senate District 08—Duluth*

CC:

*Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board*  
*St. Louis County Board*  
*Koochiching County Board*  
*Commissioner Katrina Kessler*  
*Governor Tim Walz*



## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Kathy <simpleharvestfarmorganics@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 27, 2024 8:50 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Cc:** Kathy  
**Subject:** Input for MN Clean Water Council

You don't often get email from simpleharvestfarmorganics@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Paul - thanks for asking for input - I do have some.

My background: I am a former supervisor for the Rice County SWCD Board; and a farmer of all HE land, which is all in pasture to prevent soil & water erosion, so I graze livestock. Because of the way I solved my land's erosion problems that previous land owners created, I automatically received 3 of 4 endorsements in MDA's Ag Water Quality Certification program, without any tax incentives to accomplish that.

What I see missing from all the money being invested in commodity farmers to get them to reduce their water & soil problems, is any follow up to measure the efficacy of the public investment. While on the SWCD Board, I asked how many farmers continued to plant cover crops after their 3-year grant was over; in other words, did the grant money develop a behavior change in those farmers so they continued the cover crop practice after the grant money ran out. The answer: no one had any idea - because there was zero follow up.

As a MAWQCP farm, there were no measurements taken on my farm to assess the water entering my farm, nor exiting my farm; no measurements of soil erosion; no benchmark values to be able to compare with future tests. This year, I was "re-certified" by a phone call, but again, no measurements taken for water quality or soil erosion. I do hear of reports about the benefits of the MAWQCP program - but I am unsure if those benefits are based on actual tests / measurements, or extrapolations of a theoretical model, because as a MAWQCP farm - no measurements happened here.

My recommendation to the Council would be to invest in some continuous benchmark testing and then after-action investigation / testing to assess if the money being invested is actually truly accomplishing anything. And when water tests are done, to include testing for antibiotics in heavy livestock areas, and chemicals / pesticides in non-organic areas, plus generic e coli (using the FSMA PSR protocol). Just testing for N and sometimes P is inadequate.

Thanks for listening; hope this helps.

---

Always pastured, always organic.

Kathy Zeman  
She, her, hers  
Simple Harvest Farm Organics  
9800 155th Street East  
Nerstrand MN 55053  
(507) 664-9446  
[simpleharvestfarmorganics@gmail.com](mailto:simpleharvestfarmorganics@gmail.com)

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** David Craig <dcraig13322@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 27, 2024 9:50 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Subject:** clean water

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I think all lakes should be tested for chemicals and contaminants. Those should then be removed. Also, testing along different points of rivers and streams should be done and hunt down where chemicals and contaminants are getting into the water. Then the sources of those should be stopped and fined. I think I've suggested this before and I was told this was up to the DNR, which sounds stupid. Agencies should work together on this.

I think it would be good if a business was giving state help to dispose of harmful chemicals paid for by tax payers if they don't make more than a million dollars in profit a year.

Thanks,  
David Craig

**Senator Grant Hauschild**

Senate District 3

Minnesota Senate Building  
95 University Ave West  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Phone: 651-296-1789

Email: [sen.grant.hauschild@senate.mn](mailto:sen.grant.hauschild@senate.mn)



**Senate**

**State of Minnesota**

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Honorable Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

Dear Chair Barten, Executive Director Gardner, and Clean Water Council Members,

I write to you in support of the Minnesota Clean Water Council's National Park Water Quality Protection Program and the Voyageur's National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board's (VNPCWJPB) \$4 million dollar funding request within that program. This program and past funding to the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water project have had a very positive impact on the waters of Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in my Legislative District in Northern Minnesota.

As you are no doubt aware, Voyageurs National Park is the nation's only water based national park, and it is proudly acclaimed for its beauty and pristine nature. More than 13 years ago, counties, townships, and unorganized areas adjacent to the park came together and locally formed Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project Joint Powers Board. In coordination with the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, U.S. National Park Service, St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, and the Minnesota Clean Water Council, this board has directed efforts to develop a comprehensive plan to clean up and protect the waters of the park at the four main public access points to the park.

The board has had great success, establishing sanitary sewer districts and projects in three of the four main entrances to the park. They have worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Minnesota Clean Water Council, and many others to bring funding to this effort.

The Clean Water Council has been an important partner in providing the necessary funding to continue these efforts to protect the park. Your funding has helped leverage

millions of dollars in other funding to further these efforts.

Your support in approving the \$4 million request from the Voyageur's National Park Joint Powers Board would allow us to continue this project.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Let us protect these treasured waters, together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grant Hauschild". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "H" and a long, trailing flourish at the end.

Grant Hauschild  
Senator – District 3

CC: Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board  
St. Louis County Board  
Koochiching County Board  
Governor Tim Walz  
Commissioner Katrina Kessler



**Kabetogama Township**  
**9707 Gamma Rd.**  
**Kabetogama, MN 56669**  
**[www.kabtowship.com](http://www.kabtowship.com)**

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Honorable Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

July 25, 2024

Dear Chair Barten, Executive Director Gardner, and Clean Water Council Members,

I write to you on behalf of Kabetogama Township in support of the National Park Water Quality Protection Program and the Voyageur's National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board's (VNPCWJPB) \$4 million dollar funding request within that program. This program and past funding to the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water project have had a very positive impact on the waters of Voyageurs National Park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Kabetogama Township is a recreation-based community with over 200 shoreland properties including 24 resorts, the Kabetogama Voyageurs National Park Visitor Center and Woodenfrog State Forest Campground. The waters of Voyageurs National Park are among our most prized resources, both economically and existentially. As a community, we recognized the need to replace the many failing and non-compliant individual sewer treatment systems on our lakeshore properties. Because of limitations such as lot size, soil and depth to the water table or rock, maintaining or constructing new individual treatment systems which meet county requirements is problematic or impossible for most shoreline property owners. The Township recognized that the development of community sewer systems was the only viable option to provide a solution to our long-term sewer infrastructure needs. Shoreland property owners have organized and petitioned The Township Board to form subordinate service districts for the purpose of constructing and managing community sewer systems. 70% said yes to clean water. Kabetogama Township's objective is to have the majority of our 9 miles of developed shoreline served by managed community sewer systems. Our goal is to do our part in enhancing and preserving our clean water legacy.

Under the comprehensive umbrella of the VNPCWJPB and significant funding from the Clean Water Council, we completed our first community sewer project serving 8 resorts and 11 private residences in 2017. In 2020-22, we formed 2 more subordinate service districts and with funding from the Clean Water Council in 2022, we completed work on



**Kabetogama Township**  
**9707 Gamma Rd.**  
**Kabetogama, MN 56669**  
**[www.kabtowship.com](http://www.kabtowship.com)**

Facility Plans and started design work for 2 more community sewer projects which will serve 8 resorts and 140 private residences.

The Joint Powers Board has had great success, establishing sanitary sewer districts and projects in three of the four main entrances to the park. They have worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, the Minnesota Clean Water Council, and many others to bring funding to this effort.

The Clean Water Council has been an important partner in providing the necessary funding to continue these efforts to protect the park. Your funding has helped leverage millions of dollars in other funding to further these efforts.

Your support in approving the \$4 million request from the Voyageur's National Park Joint Powers Board would allow us to continue this project.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Let us protect these treasured waters, together.

Sincerely,

John Stegmeir  
Representative of the Kabetogama Township Board

CC: State Senator Grant Hauschild  
State Representative Roger Skraba  
St. Louis County Board  
Koochiching County Board  
Governor Tim Walz  
Commissioner Katrina Kessler



## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Mary Thompson <mary.thompson@co.rock.mn.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 10, 2024 5:52 PM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Wagner, Margaret (MDA)  
**Cc:** Gruenes, Richard (MDA)  
**Subject:** Ag BMP

You don't often get email from mary.thompson@co.rock.mn.us. [Learn why this is important](#)

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---

Hello Paul and Margaret –

I wanted to touch base with both of you regarding the Ag BMP program. Unfortunately, we do not have actual outcomes at this time but I thought I would at least share how much the Ag BMP program is used here in Rock County and continues to have a need for further funding.

We have been able to fund 13 loans thus far in 2024 with 9 of them being for Ag Waste, 1 Conservation Tillage, 1 Septic and 1 new well totaling \$1,054,065.00.

We currently have allocated funds for 10 more projects totaling \$590,000.00 and have a wait list of 12 that have applied for funding totaling \$740,000.00.

Needless to say, the high interest rates have driven the demand for funding in this program to an all time high in the 18 years I have worked with it.

This program is important to our producers in making upgrades to feedlots, manure management and conservation tillage more affordable with the 3% interest rate and we continue to receive more requests.

We did have a producer purchase a late season nitrogen application sprayer to help manage nitrogen applied on fields in the wellheads. They have also used this sprayer to custom apply for other producers wanting to better manage their nitrogen application.

Thank you for all your work with and for the Clean Water Funds – we appreciate it out here at the local level and the fact that it allows us to help our producers improve not only their operations but improve water quality for everyone in the process!!

Mary Thompson  
Rock SWCD

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

**From:** Anita M. Cauwels <AnitaCauwels@co.lyon.mn.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 10, 2024 1:03 PM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Wagner, Margaret (MDA)  
**Cc:** Gruenes, Richard (MDA)  
**Subject:** Ag BMP Loan Program Funding Opportunity

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Good Afternoon!!

My name is Anita Cauwels and I work for the Lyon Soil and Water Conservation District and Lyon County Planning and Zoning Offices. I currently administer the Ag BMP Loan Program at our Local level. We work closely with area applicants and lenders to enhance their productivity and improve the land with their purchases. Typically some of our biggest purchases are for Ag Water Management and Conservation Tillage Equipment.

Since 2021, we have helped fund \$2,819,183.55 in purchases with the Ag BMP Loans. Many of the applicants that I have spoken with have begun doing reduced or no till acres, to improve their soil and preserve drinking water and reduce ground water contaminants. Most have noticed above average yields, surprisingly with the drought/excessive heat in the last few years, so we know their practices are working.

There is currently \$2,352,637.50 on our waiting list. Three projects this spring will potentially be funded, but the other 17 applicants on the list will be waiting for loan repayments. With these delays/lack of funding for the program, they either do not purchase the equipment or choose not to do certain practices as the interest rates for an average bank loan are too high. We are beginning to incorporate One Watershed One Plans in our county and are seeing nutrient reductions with the practices that are funded. Collaborating with Ag BMP Loans and others Cost Share opportunities, we are seeing more reductions than in years past. We are also starting to see an increase in continuous living cover.

Below is a measurable breakdown of all of our conservation tillage funds(Calculated using MPCA Watershed Pollutant Load Reduction Calculator).

Applicant	Conservation Tillage Acres	Year Purchased/Completed	N (lbs./yr) reductions achieved	P (lbs./yr) reductions achieved	TSS(tons/yr) reductions achieved
BP	210	2021	72.71	12.42	3.576
DL	1100	2021	1147	304.5	3.327
CS	400	2021	370.7	53.61	5.293
CS	1900	2021	1761	254.6	25.14
BT	680	2022	560.9	155.5	4.789
DW	1600	2022	1320	365.9	11.27
TW	1800	2022	3508	647.6	52.91
BF	1250 (Cover Crops)	2023	3831	91.27	34.61
JL	800	2023	446.1	88.86	6.699
VB	1800	2023	1764	245.8	34.99

As you can see by the table above, there is definitely a huge reduction factor on the practices that are being done. With the Ag BMP Loan program, securing funds for equipment and other practices, we will continue to see the program grow and flourish for years to come.

Thank you!

Anita Cauwels



Anita Cauwels  
Lyon Soil and Water Conservation District  
Lyon County Planning and Zoning  
Technical Assistant  
507-532-8207 x 3  
[anitacauwels@co.lyon.mn.us](mailto:anitacauwels@co.lyon.mn.us)

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Kennedy, Beau <bkennedy@goodhueswcd.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 10, 2024 11:51 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Wagner, Margaret (MDA); MN\_MDA\_ Ag BMP Loans  
**Cc:** Delane Krier; Ed McNamara; Mark Comstock; Don Schliep; John Beck; Christopher Hinck; cvrangus@yahoo.com  
**Subject:** RE: AgBMP Loan Program Funding Opportunity - Goodhue

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Good Morning Richard

A note for public input on the AgBMP Loan Program for the Clean Water Council....

Over the past 13 years, the Goodhue SWCD has assisted over 120 landowners with funding through the MDA's AgBMP Loan Program. The primary use of these funds in Goodhue County have been used for assisting landowners with AgWaste and Septic improvement projects; both reduce the amount of Nitrogen leaching to our groundwater.

Goodhue SWCD AgBMP Loans (2011-2024)			
Project Type	Loans		Total Amt.
AgWaste	48	\$	5,297,980.91
Septic	30	\$	447,223.00

Bruce Waugh owns and operates the Canon Valley Ranch just west of Goodhue. They market top grade angus beef products to local markets and restaurants. <https://www.cannonvalleyranch.com/>  
The Waugh's have utilized various conservation programs with the USDA/SWCD in the past to help their grazing operation become more sustainable and environmental friendly. Bruce utilized the AgBMP Loan Program to help with their manure handling systems. He mentioned the AgBMP loan process was easy to use and a great way to make equipment, such as a manure spreader, more attainable for his operation at the time. Bruce is willing to chat with Clean Water Council folks if they are interested in his experience with the program. (cc'd to the email/#507-381-1570)

The Goodhue SWCD is likely not alone when stating that our county has a continual list of landowners interested in AgBMP Loan funds. We have wait periods from several months to years depending on the landowner's funding request. When funded at an adequate level, this program can help landowners implement the conservation practices that the we've been preaching for years at the federal, state and local levels. With increased awareness of Nitrates in SE MN additional funding for this program in NEEDED. Specifically, funding directed towards assisting with manure handling and septic system replacements which play a significant role in mitigating nitrate pollution in SE MN

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Beau Kennedy  
**Goodhue SWCD**  
651-923-5286

---

**From:** MN\_MDA\_ Ag BMP Loans <[AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us](mailto:AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us)>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 8, 2024 11:32 AM  
**To:** MN\_MDA\_ Ag BMP Loans <[AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us](mailto:AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** FW: AgBMP Loan Program Funding Opportunity



April 9, 2024

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155-4194

Dear Paul Gardner and Margaret Wagner,

On behalf of the Carver County Public Services Division, I would like to express Carver County's support for the continuance of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Best Management Practices (AgBMP) Loan Program, funded by the Clean Water Council.

With the rising costs of septic system construction, the replacement of a septic system can cost as much as \$30,000. Carver County is committed to providing grants and affordable financing options to homeowners faced with this financial burden of upgrading or replacing their septic system. Since 2019, Carver County has provided 49 AgBMP loans for septic system replacement, totaling more than \$869,000.

The continued funding of this program by the Clean Water Council will ensure many more residents can afford the replacement costs for their non-compliant septic systems, while improving and protecting our water resources for future generations.

Please contact me at (952) 361-1805 if you have any questions about the support for this program.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Hanzel".

Brad Hanzel  
Environmental Services Interim Department Manager

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Cody Fox <cody@mowerdistrict.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 8, 2024 2:10 PM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Wagner, Margaret (MDA)  
**Cc:** Gruenes, Richard (MDA)  
**Subject:** Ag Bmp

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Paul and Margaret-

Richard Gruenes (cc'ed) asked any of us to follow up with you if we have farmers who are planning or have reduced their nitrogen usage due to the bmp funding.

We recently funded a strip till rig in Mower County. I'm very proud of this one because it took 3,000+ acres of conventional tillage and is now strip tilled. On top of that, I know they are reducing or will reduce their nitrogen application due to the banding.

I think these funds have a great place and can be a major benefit to surface and groundwater as we move ahead.

Thanks for your time.

--

Cody Fox  
Mower SWCD & Cedar River WD  
Direct #: 507-460-4582  
Cell: 507-276-8475

Check out the progress on our CIP for water quality improvement and flood reduction below!  
<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/news-and-stories/how-climate-resilience-grants-prevent-flooding>



## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** James Vrchota <jvrchota@oakwoodbank.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 5, 2024 10:48 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Wagner, Margaret (MDA)  
**Subject:** FW: AgBMP Loan Program Funding Opportunity

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Dear Paul & Margaret,

I'm responding to your e-mail to encourage you to push for additional funding for the AgBMP program. I know down here in Winona County, our funds went fast, and some of the projects that were badly needed to fund projects that had to do with improving water quality were not funded. These customers are now waiting for the next funding availability, and their failing manure handling systems continue to impact water quality here in Winona County. Getting these projects funded is very important to the quality of life out here in rural Winona County.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to this request.

Best Regards,

Jim Vrchota



**Jim Vrchota | Market President**

Oakwood Bank

P.O. Box 125

140 Main Street

Rollingstone, MN 55969

Ph: 507-410-2220

Cell: 763-377-2658

Fax: 507-410-2525

E-mail: [jvrchota@oakwoodbank.net](mailto:jvrchota@oakwoodbank.net)

NMLS #1369212

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**From:** MN\_MDA\_ Ag BMP Loans <[AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us](mailto:AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us)>

**Sent:** Friday, April 5, 2024 9:21 AM

**To:** MN\_MDA\_ Ag BMP Loans <[AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us](mailto:AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us)>

**Subject:** AgBMP Loan Program Funding Opportunity

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Scott Anderson <Scott.Anderson@AgCountry.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 5, 2024 9:58 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Subject:** AgBMP Public Input

You don't often get email from scott.anderson@agcountry.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Paul,

I want to give you success stories and request to increase funding to the AgBMP revolving fund from the Clean Water Council for the next Biennium.

I am a loan officer for AgCountry Farm Credit Services in the Marshall office. I have been very active promoting and utilizing the AgBMP loan program in my 20 year career.

I have utilized the program to replace old hog facilities on open lots with poor manure management to upgrading to a pit barn which provides better manure management, erosion, and overall improved water management.

I have utilized the program to assist a farmer in purchase a piece of vertical tillage equipment for better crop residue management, less soil disturbance, improved soil health, and improved water management with less runoff and better filtration.

Other projects include sprayers with reduced drift nozzles and automatic shutoffs, planters with trash whippers allowing for reduced tillage, feedlot cement/monoslope barn for water management and manure management, strip till machines, manure spreaders, hoop barns for manure management and storage, berms and erosion control land projects, and many more.

I have done hundreds of AgBMP loans in my career, but lack of funding has limited my ability to promote the programs leaving many farmers unable to make changes in their operation that would greatly improve water quality in my area. If adequate funding were available, I would be sending requests to the local soil and water district office weekly. I believe in the program, promote the program, and have used the program myself as a farmer.

This is a very important program, and the limited funds have turned away many projects. I hope more funds become available so projects can be done and purchases made to benefit water quality today and far into the future.

Thank you for your time.

**Scott D. Anderson**

**VP Loan Officer**

302 O'Connell St, Marshall, MN 56258

**Phone:** 507-532-5751 | **Mobile:** 507-828-1971

**Email:** [scott.anderson@agcountry.com](mailto:scott.anderson@agcountry.com)

**Web:** [www.AgCountry.com](http://www.AgCountry.com)

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Mason Bucher <mbucher@oakwoodbank.net>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 5, 2024 12:20 PM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Wagner, Margaret (MDA)  
**Subject:** AgBMP Loan Program Funding Opportunity

Some people who received this message don't often get email from mbucher@oakwoodbank.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Good afternoon,

I am emailing you today because I would like to see the AgBMP program get the funding it needs and deserves. Here at Oakwood Bank we service a multitude of agricultural customers in the southeastern section of Minnesota. With that area being an active karst region we feel strongly that this program is needed to provide affordable financing that helps maintain clean water and quality soils. Please consider this email as my support and call for the continued funding of the Ag BMP Loan Program.

Thank you,



**Mason Bucher | Loan Processor**

**Oakwood Bank**

2901 Mall Drive

Eau Claire, WI 54701

715.514.2327 Ext. 405

[mbucher@oakwoodbank.net](mailto:mbucher@oakwoodbank.net)

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## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

**From:** Josh Rud <josh.rud@mykindofbank.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 5, 2024 5:03 PM  
**To:** MN\_MDA\_ Ag BMP Loans; Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Subject:** RE: AgBMP Loan Program Funding Opportunity

You don't often get email from josh.rud@mykindofbank.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hi Paul, Just wanted to state we have used the program many times for new septic and wells and also a few runoff programs for farms and other scenarios. We love the program at the banking level. Gives good rate and terms to borrowers that we can offer with some security in the loans. We need this program and hope to see it continue in the future.

Thanks,



**JOSH RUD**

MARKET PRESIDENT

NMLS #697484

Evansville

Address: 303 Kron St. • PO Box 100 • Evansville, MN 56326

Office: (320) 834.4659 • (218) 948.2259

Direct: (320) 391.0038

APPLY TODAY

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1<sup>ST</sup> NATIONAL  
BANK

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**From:** MN\_MDA\_ Ag BMP Loans <AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 5, 2024 9:17 AM  
**To:** MN\_MDA\_ Ag BMP Loans <AgBMP.Loans@state.mn.us>  
**Subject:** AgBMP Loan Program Funding Opportunity

**[EXTERNAL EMAIL]** DO NOT CLICK links or attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

As the AgBMP Loan Program is planning for the next Biennium we are requesting additional program funding for all AgBMP Loan Budgets across the state through the [Clean Water Council](#) this year for funding for 2025 and 2026. The AgBMP Loan Program is currently estimating an additional need for funding for the next biennium in the amount of \$73.3 million. Clean Water Funding is reviewed by the Clean Water Council and then our state legislators. The Clean

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

---

**From:** Ilena Hansel <ilena.hansel@co.cook.mn.us>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 8, 2024 8:06 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Wagner, Margaret (MDA)  
**Cc:** braidy.powers@co.cook.mn.us; stanley tull  
**Subject:** AgBMP Loan Budgets

Some people who received this message don't often get email from ilena.hansel@co.cook.mn.us. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello,

Cook County SWCD is in support of the additional funding for the AgBMP Loan Program. The program is beneficial to Cook County in assisting landowners with upgrading failing septic systems. Maintaining septic systems is identified in both the Lake Superior North Watershed Plan and Rainy River/Vermillion Watershed Plan, both adopted by the County and the SWCD.

Septic systems that are not in compliance are a threat to both surface and ground water. Due to a lack of resources for septic system materials, along with other factors, septic system costs have increased drastically over time, some reaching over \$40,000/system. The costs of the systems make it difficult for many landowners to fix their systems. The loan offers the landowners an option to improve their system and protect water quality. To reach the same number of current landowners and additional landowners, additional funding will be needed in the future.

Thank you for considering the need to increase funding for the AgBMP Loan Program.

I can be reached at 218-387-3648 if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

Ilena Hansel

*District Manager*

Cook SWCD

411 West 2nd Street

Grand Marais, MN 55604

218-387-3648

March 21, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

1. Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
2. Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

In 2022, the City of Bayport received \$8,000 from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation program. This program exists to increase water efficiency through the purchase of SMART irrigation controllers. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of the estimated 1,000,000 gallons saved through the program.

Many communities in the east Metro have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,



Matt Kline  
City Administrator  
294 3<sup>rd</sup> St No  
Bayport MN 55003

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council



March 29, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

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1. Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
2. Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

In 2022, the City of Chanhassen received \$34,440 from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation program. This program exists to increase water efficiency by creating an incentive for residents to seek out and purchase devices that are either Water Sense Certified or Energy Star Certified. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of the estimated 1,067,700 gallons saved so far through the program.

Many communities, including Chanhassen, have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,

Jamie Marsh  
7700 Market Blvd.  
Chanhassen, MN 55317

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council

March 26, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

1. Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
2. Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

In 2022, the City of Eden Prairie received \$44,000 from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation program. This program exists to increase water efficiency through smart irrigation practices. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of the estimated 2 million gallons saved through the program.

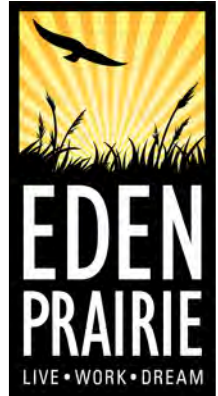
Many communities, including ours, have benefitted from these programs. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,

*Jennifer Fierce*

Jennifer Fierce  
Sustainability Coordinator

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council



OFC 952 949 8300  
TDD 952 949 8399

8080 Mitchell Road  
Eden Prairie, MN  
55344-4485

[edenprairie.org](http://edenprairie.org)

March 26, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

1. Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
2. Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

In 2022, the City of Lake Elmo received \$50,000 from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation program. This program exists to increase water efficiency in our city to conserve precious ground water. Due to the White Bear Lake lawsuit and PFAS contamination, we need to conserve every drop of clean water we have. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of the estimated 1,000,000 gallons saved through the program.

Many communities, including Lake Elmo, have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,

Clark Schroeder, Interim City Administrator.  
City of Lake Elmo MN.

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency, Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council



14600 Minnetonka Blvd. | Minnetonka, MN 55345 | 952-939-8200 | minnetonkamn.gov

March 25, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

1. Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
2. Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

Since 2012 the city of Minnetonka's population has increased by 3,850 residents (7.5%) while total annual water use has declined by 400 million gallons (-14.5%). The reduction in per-capita water use is the result of the programs and activities made possible by Clean Water Funds.

These programs have fostered partnerships between organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, the Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

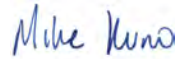
In 2019 and 2022, the City of Minnetonka received a total of \$52,000 from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation program. This program exists to increase water efficiency through replacement of broken or inefficient water devices with new WaterSense certified devices.

Many communities, including Minnetonka, have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,



Will Manchester  
Public Works Director  
City of Minnetonka  
11522 Minnetonka Blvd  
Minnetonka, MN 55305



Mike Kuno  
Utility Operations Engineer  
City of Minnetonka  
11522 Minnetonka Blvd  
Minnetonka, MN 55305

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council





## Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request

March 22, 2024

**John Barten, Chair**

Clean Water Council

520 Lafayette Road North

St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

1. Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
2. Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

In 2016, the City of New Brighton received \$50,000 from the Metropolitan Council's Water Efficiency Grant Program. The program allowed us to replace 202 inefficient toilets with US EPA Water Sense Compliant units and minor faucet repairs in naturally occurring affordable multi-family rental properties. In 2022, the City of New Brighton received \$28,000 from the Metropolitan Council's Water Efficiency Grant Program allowing us to replace an additional 90 toilets. The water savings has been tremendous. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of an estimated **40,720,470** gallons saved through the program.

Many communities including New Brighton have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,

  
Craig Schlichting  
**Director of Community Assets and Development**  
651.638.2056

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council

March 21, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

1. Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
2. Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

In 2023 the City of North St. Paul received \$27,000 from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation program. This program exists to increase water efficiency rebates for toilets, dishwashers and wash machines. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of the estimated 366,075 gallons saved through the program.

Many communities, including North St. Paul have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely, Barb Huelsman

City of North St. Paul, Utility Billing Coordinator  
2400 Margaret St. No  
North St. Paul, MN 55109

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council



17073 Adelman Street SE  
Prior Lake, MN 55372

---

March 21, 2024

Mr. John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our regional community relies on water—commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture. Over the past 14 years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

- Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
- Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities in implementing projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats, providing cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leveraging inter-jurisdictional coordination, supporting local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and preventing degradation of groundwater resources in the region. These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, the Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

Over the past two years, the City of Prior Lake was awarded \$19,600 from the Metropolitan Council's Water Efficiency Grant Program. This program exists to increase water efficiency by encouraging residents to replace old, inefficient appliances with more efficient models. Without the grant support, the city would not be able to accelerate the achievement of the estimated 500,000+ gallons that may be saved through the program.

Many communities in the metro area have benefited from these programs and will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the

region. The City of Prior Lake recommends the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew J. Brotzler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andrew" being more prominent than the last name "Brotzler".

Andrew J. Brotzler, PE  
Director of Public Works/City Engineer

cc:

Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council



## City of Robbinsdale

4100 Lakeview Avenue North  
Robbinsdale Minnesota • 55422-2280  
Phone: (763) 537-4534  
Fax: (763) 537-7344  
Website [www.robbinsdalemn.com](http://www.robbinsdalemn.com)

March 28, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

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Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

The City of Robbinsdale has participated in two rounds of the Water Efficiency Grant Program, receiving a total of \$15,520.00 in grant funds.

Within our City, these grant funds have leveraged a total of \$ 70,200 expenditure to date of eligible improved efficiency fixtures by our water utility customers and has achieved estimated water savings of over 750,000 gallons per year.

Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate this achievement.

**Continued .../2**

Many communities, including ours, have benefitted from these programs, and will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 📞 763-531-1260 or by email at [rmccoy@ci.robbinsdale.mn.us](mailto:rmccoy@ci.robbinsdale.mn.us)

Yours sincerely,



Richard McCoy, P.E.

**Public Works Director / City Engineer**

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council





4600 VICTORIA STREET NORTH  
SHOREVIEW, MINNESOTA 55126  
651.490.4600 | shoreviewmn.gov

March 29, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

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These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

In 2020, the City of Shoreview awarded approximately \$10,000 in rebates to residents from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation program. This program exists to increase water efficiency through upgrading irrigation systems to use a smart controller. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of the estimated 1.5 million gallons per year saved through the program.

Many communities, including ours, have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,



Tom Wesolowski  
Public Works Director  
4600 Victoria St N  
Shoreview, MN 55126

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council

March 21, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

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- Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

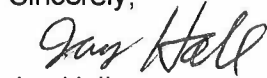
Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

In 2022, the City of St Louis Park received \$35,000 from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation program. This program exists to increase water efficiency through funding utility credit rebates for qualified WaterSense and Energy Star products. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of the estimated 500,000 gallons saved through the program.

Many communities including ours have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,



Jay Hall  
7305 Oxford Street  
St. Louis Park, MN 55426

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council





8301 Valley Creek Road • Woodbury, MN 55125-3330 • woodburymn.gov  
651-714-3500 • TYY 651-714-3568 • FAX 651-714-3501

March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024

John Barten, Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

**RE: Support for Metropolitan Council's 2026-2027 Clean Water Fund Request**

Dear Mr. Barten and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Water is fundamental to the prosperity and quality of life of our Twin Cities region. Every sector of our community's development relies on water – commerce, manufacturing, construction, health care, recreation, and agriculture.

Over the past fourteen (14) years, the Metropolitan Council has received funding from Clean Water Fund (CWF) to support two programs that target water supply sustainability in the Twin Cities metro area:

1. Metropolitan area water supply sustainability support program
2. Water demand reduction (efficiency) grant program

Through these two programs, the Clean Water Fund supports communities to implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats. The programs provide cost-effective regional solutions and tools, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of water supply reliability projects, and help prevent degradation of groundwater resources in the region.

These programs have fostered partnerships between and within organizations and shed additional light on greater water resource issues. Working together, Metropolitan Council and metro area cities are moving toward meeting our long-term goal of sustainable water supplies for current and future generations.

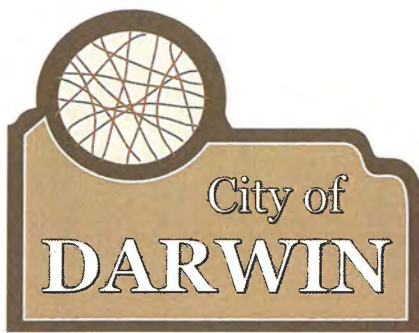
The City of Woodbury has been a recipient of the Metropolitan Council Water Efficiency Grant for the last three grant cycles. In the 2020 and 2022 grant cycles, the City of Woodbury received \$50,300 and \$60,000 from the Metropolitan Council's water demand reduction grant program to expand the city's water conservation programming. This program exists to increase water efficiency through replacing old toilets with EPA WaterSense low-flow toilets. Without the grant support, the city would not have been able to accelerate the achievement of an estimated 11.6 million gallons of water saved annually through the program.

Many communities, including the City of Woodbury, have benefitted from these programs. And we will continue to benefit from the expansion of these programs, as we strive to use water more efficiently in the region. I respectfully request that the Clean Water Council fully support the Metropolitan Council's FY 26-27 funding request.

Sincerely,

Chris Hartzell, PE  
Engineering Director, City of Woodbury

Cc: Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator, MN Pollution Control Agency  
Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, Metropolitan Council



*Home of the World's Largest Ball of Twine Made By One Man*

305 East Curran Street • PO Box 67 • Darwin, MN 55324 • Phone & Fax 320-693-2928 • clerk@darwinmn.com

August 5, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The **Source Water Protection Program** supports our work at the City of Darwin to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for current and future generations.

With the assistance of MRWA, the City of Darwin applied for and received a Source Water Protection Plan Implementation Grant from MDH for construction of a 2" monitoring well to measure static aquifer levels. The observation well has mitigated monitoring concerns related to potential well interference from area irrigators. The insight provided from the observation well has allowed us to manage our water treatment facility (switching between wells if needed, as one pump is lower), and provides us the data that would be necessary to work with the DNR to enforce a change in area irrigation practices if drinking water is ever put at risk (has not been needed to this point). The project was completed and received funding in 2021. It was unlikely to be completed without the assistance and funding that was provided and the city is likely to continue to utilize resources that are available in the future to complete projects that further protect the drinking water for our residents.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments in your funding recommendations.

Sincerely,

Josh R. Johnson  
Mayor  
City of Darwin

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# ***CITY of GIBBON***

P.O. Box 106  
985 First Avenue  
Gibbon, MN 55335

Phone 507-834-6566

Email [cityofgibbon@gmail.com](mailto:cityofgibbon@gmail.com)

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August 8, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at City of Gibbon to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

## **Source Water Protection**

City of Gibbon Public Water System has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2019. Recently, the Sourcewater Grant Program has assisted with funds to purchase and install well monitoring equipment.

City of Gibbon is grateful to work with the Sourcewater Protection Program. This program allows us to target and prioritize threats to our drinking water source without the burdens of all the expenses. Through the grant program, it has also created funding opportunities for us to partner with local organizations on projects that benefit our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dana Lietzau  
City of Gibbon Administrator



City Office Building  
119 2nd Ave S.W.  
Pipestone, MN 56164  
(507) 825-3324  
(VOICE & TDD)  
Fax (507) 825-5353

8/9/2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Clean Water Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) supports our work at the City of Pipestone to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that their priority in funding recommendations reflect our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

#### **Source Water Protection**

Through the Wellhead Protection Plan implemented in 2015 there has been multiple strategies utilized to maintain the integrity of our source water. The need for source water protection is a growing need and the funds secured in the past years are crucial in maintaining the valuable resource.

As part of our efforts to protecting drinking water, the city conducted an inventory of septic systems in the vulnerable Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) to work with homeowners to fix failed septic systems that were pumping sewage onto the ground surface. Through source water protection grants, the city provided financial assistance to homeowners to help them connect to city sewer services, and are working on replacing leaking clay sewer lines, which will eliminate potential sources of contamination to the drinking water. We have also installed a new monitoring well to collect and analyze data that helps investigate water quality and sustainability

The City of Pipestone has applied for multiple source water protection grants and any reduction in grant funding would limit important drinking water protection projects for not only our community but others around the state. The initiatives that we have been able to accomplish would not have been possible if it were not for the funds allotted through the source water protection grants. More information about the work we have been able to accomplish with the grant funds can be found at this website.

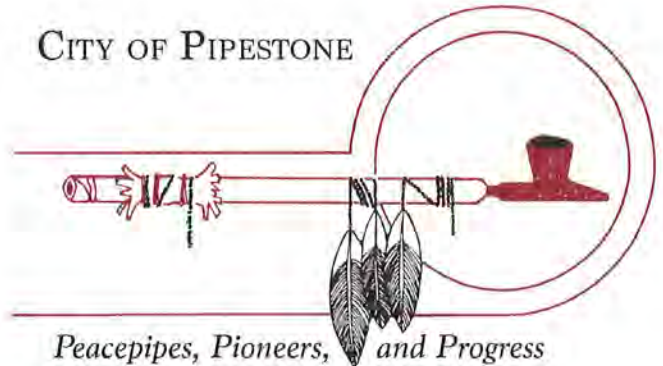
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/swp/pipestone.html>

Sincerely,



Joel Adelman  
Water/Wastewater Supervisor  
City of Pipestone

CITY OF PIPESTONE





August 9, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Saint Hilaire to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

**Source Water Protection**

The city developed a wellhead protection plan in 2003 and then 2013 with assistance from the Minnesota Department of Health's Source Water Protection staff. The city does not have the technical knowledge or capacity to complete this work without source water protection program staff taking on the bulk of the work for the city. The Minnesota Department of Health in 2022 helped the city successfully navigate through the federal and state requirements to obtain an extension for our 10-year plan which provided a welcomed relief to city costs to time as well as budget.

Besides reliance on the regulatory and technical assistance provided by Minnesota Department of Health's Source Water Protection Unit, the city counts on the financial resources offered through grant programs administered through that program. Our protection activities to date have been managed through city budgets but knowing that there are other options for the unanticipated events or opportunities to improve our water system resilience for growth and future generations is assuring.

As the Council considers funding recommendations, know that continued support of the source water protection programs for the City of Saint Hilaire and neighboring communities in the northwest area of the state is valued and should remain a priority.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Margaret Peterson  
City Clerk/Treasurer  
City of Saint Hilaire

8/8/2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Clean Water Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) supports our work at the City of Mankato to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that their priority in funding recommendations reflect our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

### **Source Water Protection**

Through the WHPP implemented in 2014 there has been multiple strategies utilized to maintain the integrity of our source water. We also adopted a Surface Water Intake Protection Plan in 2022. The nature of these programs and cost fluctuations make it difficult for budgeting. There are more projects than funds available. The need for source water protection is a growing need and the funds secured the past years are crucial in maintaining the valuable resource.

The City of Mankato utilizes both groundwater wells and wells under the direct influence of surface water (Ranney wells). Mankato strives to offer the highest quality drinking water and meet the community's expanding water needs in the most environmentally sensitive, cost-effective way for residents.

We have applied for multiple Source Water Protection Grants and have used them to obtain laboratory accreditation for nitrate analysis, develop a nitrate monitoring program, and to seal numerous wells. Our work to seal very deep and old municipal wells (up to \$80,000 for one well) and our work to stabilize the riverbank around the Ranney well \$1,000,000.00 goes well beyond what the current grants can offer. We have a critical need for resources to address the drinking water issues our community faces. Any reduction in grant funding would limit important drinking water protection projects for not only our community but others around the state.

The City of Mankato has worked closely with MDH to keep the water of the Mankato residents as a number one priority. The initiatives that we have been able to accomplish would not have been possibly if it were not for the funds allotted through the Source Water Protection Grants. We have worked closely with the Source Water Protection program on the adoption and implementation of our Wellhead Protection Plan and Surface Water Intake Protection Plan. The Minnesota Department of Health grants program is an important tool for implementing these plans.

Sincerely,

Kyle Hinrichs  
Superintendent  
City of Mankato

8/09/2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Onamia to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

**Source Water Protection**

The City of Onamia has worked extensively with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2014. We have worked closely with local and MDH staff to implement several of the high priority activities in our plan.

The Source Water Protection Grant has been incredibly important to the implementation of Onamia's Wellhead Protection Plan. The grants we have been able to procure have allowed the City to connect a private well to city water services eliminating that well as a potential contaminant source; perform exploratory boring and water quality sampling for a new well; purchase of a natural gas generator; purchase and installation of an automatic generator switchover system; and sealing of an old creamery municipal well.

Working with the Source Water Protection program has allowed us the City of Onamia to target and prioritize threats to our drinking water source. Through the grants program, it has also created funding opportunities for us to address these potential threats.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gene Falconer  
Maintenance Department Supervisor  
City of Onamia

Cc: Kylie Jacobsen ([kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us](mailto:kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us)) and Chad Anderson ([chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us](mailto:chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us)), Minnesota Department of Health

## POPE SOIL & WATER



1680 Franklin St N  
Glenwood, MN 56334-2011  
(320) 634-5327  
Fax: (320) 634-4278

August 6, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155



Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations FY26-FY27

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Clean Water Council (CWC) considers proposals for funding recommendations. The Watershed Based Implementation Fund (WBIF) supports our work at Pope Soil and Water Conservation District (Pope SWCD) along with the 16 other partners in the Chippewa River Watershed Association (CRWA).

I am writing today on behalf of the Pope SWCD and CRWA partners to ask the CWC for your support by fully funding the WBIF. The CRWA is currently finishing our Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP). The WBIF program through the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is a vital program to our targeted and prioritized implementation of projects and practices in the watershed. This is your boots on the ground and the implementation of projects that are at risk of being reduced.

We will be starting our first WBIF grant in the next few months. Currently our members are discussing projects and we have nearly double the financial request amount for projects than what is currently available to the partnership this funding cycle. Many of these projects are shovel ready. They are in our priority areas and will help us in improvements to our resources in this watershed. We would not be able to make this large-scale progress without the WBIF funds. Our partners are motivated, and our landowners are ready to implement. We are just waiting on funding.

## POPE SOIL & WATER



CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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1680 Franklin St N  
Glenwood, MN 56334-2011  
(320) 634-5327  
Fax: (320) 634-4278

Without long-term, stable funding from the Clean Water Fund, none of these efforts would be possible. We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

We ask that you continue to support this important program as it leads to implementation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Holly Kovarik  
Manager  
Pope Soil and Water Conservation District  
Interim Coordinator  
Chippewa River Watershed Association

## POPE SOIL & WATER



1680 Franklin St N  
Glenwood, MN 56334-2011  
(320) 634-5327  
Fax: (320) 634-4278

---

August 6, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following programs support our work at Pope Soil and Water Conservation District and our partners involved in the implementation of the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans to preserve and improve the quality of groundwater resources, and we suggest that their priority in funding recommendations reflect our shared priority that groundwater is clean and available to all in Minnesota.

### **Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies**

I have been a part of three Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan processes. In each of these plans the Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS) program has been valuable information. This information has guided our prioritizing and targeting of projects. This also has presented an opportunity for us to educate our community members about the importance of drinking water protection. As an example in the North Fork of the Crow River Watershed, we have completed outreach activities to landowners in high priority sensitive areas that are vulnerable to groundwater contamination. This has led to implementation of projects. We are repeating this in our other watershed planning efforts. The GRAPS information was extremely helpful for this.

Working with the GRAPS program has allowed us to target and prioritize threats to groundwater in the region. Through the grants program, it has also created funding opportunities for us to partner with public water systems and community leaders on projects that benefit our community. The Pope SWCD has also recently partnered with Horizon Public Health and were part of a 5-county partnership that received funding to

## POPE SOIL & WATER



CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1680 Franklin St N  
Glenwood, MN 56334-2011  
(320) 634-5327  
Fax: (320) 634-4278

do more extensive water testing programs for private citizens. The GRAPS information has been helpful in that process.

We ask that you continue to support this important program as it leads to implementation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Holly Kovarik  
Manager  
Pope Soil and Water Conservation District





704 Highway 75 South | Wheaton, MN 56296

To: Clean Water Council

From: Jamie Beyer, Bois de Sioux Watershed District

RE: Comments on the FY26-27 Clean Water Fund and Policy Recommendations Reports

Date: August 1, 2024

It has been communicated to me that the Minnesota Management and Budget is predicting a decrease in the overall CWF for FY26-27 and the Watershed-based Implementation Funds (WBIF) are at risk of being reduced or moved to other programs. I appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations specifically with regard to the Watershed-based Implementation Funds (WBIF).

The Bois de Sioux & Mustinka River Joint Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan is administered by an informal partnership responsible for two watersheds (we are two watersheds, one plan, one funding allocation). Partners include six counties, six soil and water conservation districts and one watershed. We have been working on this effort since 2016. Staff meet monthly (at a minimum) and our Policy Committee members meet 2 – 3 times per year.

Biennial grants from the Clean Water Fund are a vital component to our work for implementation of our joint watershed plan. Clean Water Funding for this program should be prioritized and protected for several important reasons:

1. **These are leveraged dollars.** We leverage our Watershed-based Implementation Funds with other funding opportunities. The grant funds are used to leverage additional dollars, including those from landowner cost share, and assessment districts. The grant-funded portion of dollars is often a small portion of the overall project cost – the grant funds are a limited incentive that can often times be the catalyst that decides between project completion or project abandonment.
2. **Qualifying uses are diverse.** I call this Watershed-based Implementation Fund grant the Mother of All Grants, because as long as the funds are used on Clean Water Fund eligible projects that are prioritized and targeted, we can determine an optimum mix of activities in our BWSR approved grant workplans. If a project is delayed or cancelled, we can reallocate the funds to a workplan activity with efficiency.
3. **This grants provide flexibility; there is no other grant program like it.** The Watershed-based Implementation Grant Fund itself provides a level of consistent flexibility not available in any other program. Our projects involve a large number of uncontrollable factors that impact the timing of implementation – projects can be hung up on local and state permitting, landowner availability and support, and completion of legal/bureaucratic/statutory processes. Other grant programs require very strict project descriptions at the point of application, and tightly prescribed timelines for grant expenditure. We have trying to develop projects in preparation for a wide array of funding opportunities, but then have to be prepared to modify project design in response to funding commitment limitations – this loop is extremely difficult to manage, and we can lose landowner support or grantor support and subsequently lose the project altogether in the development. Because Watershed-based Funds are consistently offered every two years, and can be applied to prioritized plan activities with BWSR approval, staff can be confident that time spent on development is an investment in construction for a project that can be funded in either a current or future Watershed-based Implementation Grant cycle. No other grant program provides long-term water quality project

**funding opportunities paired with the accountability of short-term grant agreements and reconciliations.**

4. **The size of grants encourages large-scale projects.** Often times, individual grant awards are too small for any one project, and so we often: manage multiple funding timelines that may or may not overlap, phase projects without assurances that they will be completed, or – more often than not – shy away from the largest, most impactful, projects. At least with the Watershed-based Implementation Fund framework, local decision can be made on the extent to which large allocations can be offered for prioritized and targeted projects.
5. **We provide grant reporting and measureable outcomes.** BWSR requires grant recipients to provide a great deal of information about how grants are used, and indicators for water quality improvements. The more funding spent, the more data is reported across the state, in a standard format, that can be used to demonstrate program efficacy. A decrease to this grant program will result in both a decrease in effort and a decrease in reporting.

Development of our plan was a time and resource intensive process – locally, we expended an estimated \$200,000 across our organizations to develop our joint watershed plan. **It is important to note that state agency representatives have also a significant investment in the 10year plan for my two watersheds – we had SIX state employees participate in meetings and supply comments to influence our plan both watersheds, with final approval from BWSR.** Without the Clean Water Fund sponsorship of this plan or implementation, the pace of water quality improvement across Minnesota will be noticeably slowed.



## Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

August 12, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Gardner,

The Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) is a joint powers unit of government consisting of all or parts of nine cities in Hennepin County. As a watershed organization that uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations.

The BCWMC works diligently and in close collaboration with its member cities and other partners to improve and protect water quality in lakes and streams, and reduce flood risk to structures, infrastructure, and properties. As the BCWMC's work improves local waters and communities, the impact of its work reaches well beyond its borders as the creek is a tributary to the Mississippi River.

Clean Water Funds, including competitive project and practices grants and Watershed Based Implementation Funding, has helped the BCWMC implement multiple projects over the last several years resulting in significant improvements to water quality. Clean Water Funds have allowed us to leverage local match dollars and expand the scope of these projects for greater impact.

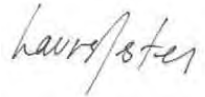
These projects include:

[Wirth Lake Outlet Structure Modification](#), Golden Valley (resulted in delisting the lake for nutrients)  
[Main Stem Lagoon Dredging Project](#), Golden Valley  
[Bryn Mawr Meadows Water Quality Improvement Project](#), Minneapolis  
[Medley Park Stormwater Treatment Facility](#), Golden Valley  
[Plymouth Creek Restoration Project: Annapolis Lane to Plymouth Creek Park](#), Plymouth  
[Bassett Creek Main Stem Restoration Project: Golden Valley Road to Irving Avenue North](#), Minneapolis  
[Northwood Lake Water Quality Improvement Project](#), New Hope  
[Bassett Creek Main Stem Restoration Project: Golden Valley-Crystal to Regent Avenue](#), Golden Valley  
[Plymouth Creek Restoration Project: Medicine Lake to 26th Avenue](#), Plymouth

We are happy to showcase any of these projects through a site tour or by providing additional information, if the Council is interested.

We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the projects and practices competitive grants and Watershed Based Implementation Fund so that local governments like the BCWMC can continue to effectively and impactfully carry out clean water implementation on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Laura Jester".

Laura Jester  
Administrator

CC: Catherine Cesnik, BCWMC Chair  
Jan Voit, Minnesota Watersheds

8/9/2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at City of Goodhue to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

#### **Source Water Protection**

**The City of Goodhue has worked with the Source Water Protection program since I accepted the position of Public Works director in 2022. We also worked with the Source Water Protection program, Mn Rural Water, and MDH to draft our new well head protection. We also applied for a Source Water Protection Implementation Grant and received it in the spring of 2023. We used the funds to host a nitrate and public informational clinic to inform the city and private landowners.**

**The City of Goodhue used the funds received for this grant to come together and work with MN Rural Water, Goodhue County soil and water, and MDH to host a nitrate clinic and private landowner outreach clinic to bring awareness to the rising nitrate levels in our DWSMA. We had over one hundred participants. We also used funds from this grant to help support local farmers to plant nitrogen reducing cover crops and or adopt tillage practices to help reduce nitrogen levels within our DWSMA. The local farmers planted over sixty percent of the DWSMA acres in nitrogen reducing crops or tillage practices.**

**This work has helped educate the city council and local citizens on the importance of clean water. We are currently working on ways to lower our nitrate levels in our DWSMA. We also hope to identify other areas of potential contamination sources and address those areas.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jason Mandelkow  
Public Works Director  
City Of Goodhue



# CITY OF LE CENTER

*Heart of Le Sueur County*

10 West Tyrone St. • Le Center, MN 56057 • 507-357-4450

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8/8/2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Le Center to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting water in Minnesota for future generations.

## **Source Water Protection**

Le Centers Public Water System has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we revised and updated our first Wellhead Protection Plan. We have implemented 80% of the activities in our plan and have partnered with MDH, MRWA, City Staff and our local County and SWCD on many different activities. These activities including developing ordinances to protect groundwater. Locating abandoned and unused municipal wells, develop and distribute information to the community about unused unsealed wells. Providing partnerships and guidance to ultimately find and seal wells.

Le Centers municipal wells are considered confined and safe from contamination from the surface. Possible pathways of contaminants in confining aquifer's include deep unused and unsealed wells. With the help of SWP staff and city partners, on June 27, 2024, we were able to finish the process of properly sealing an old 1923 well. The entire project from researching to drilling and sealing took over four years. With the help of our partners and the Source Water Protection Program, the city can maintain compliance with its Wellhead Protection Plan. By sealing this large deep well, Le Center residents and visitors have drinking water that is safe and protected.

Working with the Source Water Protection program has allowed us to target and prioritize threats to our drinking water source. Through the grants program, it has also created funding opportunities for us to partner with local organizations on large very expensive projects that benefit our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patrick Kaderlik  
Chief Facilities Operator  
City of Le Center

August 12, 2024

RE: Ag BMP Loan Program

I am writing this letter on behalf of First Farmers & Merchants Bank, Cannon Falls Charter bank in regards to the Ag BMP loan program and it's benefits to the bank and our customers. I have been in the White Rock office since September 2, 1997 and we have been doing Ag BMP loans since 1998. White Rock Bank started doing ISTS Well loans in conjunction with Goodhue County in 1998 and had great experience with those. Sometime after the year 2000 we were able to also get into doing the AG BMP loans for all other uses, as well as, the well and septic loans.

Over the years our Goodhue, White Rock and Cannon Falls locations have done many Ag BMP approved loans for multiple hundreds of thousands of dollars, which have helped our customers buy, build or remodel structures to help soil erosion and improve water quality for our area. The problem we have run into over the last several years is the availability of funds for this program. I recently heard Goodhue County has a backlog into 2027 before any new funds would be available.

We are asking, why can't funds from other counties be allocated to counties that use the funds and have a backlog. Since water quality is a huge topic, why aren't there more funds allocated to the program from the legislature? I would guess between now and the end of the year just our bank could generate multiple loans to equal multiple hundreds of thousands of dollars of new money to help fund areas to promote better water quality.

We hope our voices will be heard when it comes to additional money being allocated to this wonderful program and to look at reallocating unused funds to area's that use these funds to the fullest potential.

Sincerely,

Paul J. Drackley  
President – FFM Bank, White Rock



## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

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**From:** Len kremer <lenkremer@msn.com>  
**Sent:** Saturday, August 10, 2024 9:49 AM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Subject:** Comments on 2024 Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan-Ted Suss, Minnesota River Collaborative

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### Minnesota River Watershed Drainage Collaborative's Comments on Proposed 2024 Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan-Ted Suss

The Collaborative appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources Proposed Draft 2024 Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan (NPFP) as it relates to the Minnesota River Watershed. The Collaborative began several years ago to review proposals for new drainage projects in the Minnesota River Watershed and to evaluate their impact on flooding, surface water and groundwater quality and quantity, sedimentation and wildlife habitat in downstream areas. Throughout the years the Collaborative has worked with farmers, landowners, interested citizens and organizations, local and state regulatory authorities, and legislators to avoid and reduce the cumulative effects of drainage projects on the environment and on areas downstream of the watershed.

A significant change in the hydrology of the Minnesota River began in the late eighties-early nineties when agricultural land use began to change to the production of corn and soybeans from small grains and hay coupled with an increase in annual rainfall amounts and intensity due to climate change. According to the November 2022, ***Lower Minnesota River Watershed, Evaluation of Hydrologic Change*** prepared by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources the annual precipitation for the watershed has increased by 15% since the early 90's, the annual discharge has increased by 122%, the percentage of rainfall that runs off increased by 97 %, channel forming flows increased by 123% and the base flow increased by 126%. The report indicates that the average base flow for the last five years, 2015-2019, has been about 10,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) and the average base flow, before the hydrologic change started was just over 2700 cfs.

These hydrologic changes have resulted in extensive erosion of the bed and banks of the Minnesota River and its tributaries and significant impacts on the water quality of lakes and rivers in the watershed. Rivers are wider, homes and property along the rivers have been damaged or destroyed, private and public facilities have required relocation or protection, roads and highways have been flooded and damaged more frequently, navigation channels have required more frequent dredging or reduced shipping loads, marinas and navigation facilities have required more frequent dredging, wildlife areas and wetlands have been damaged and destroyed and high turbidity has reduced fisheries habitat. According to research conducted as part of the ***Sediment Reduction Strategy for the Minnesota River and South Metro Mississippi River***, MPCA, January 2015, Lake Pepin will be filled with sediment in 340 years.

The Minnesota River total suspended solids load has more than doubled in the period 2008-2019 to more than 1,300,000 tons principally due to the continued change in the hydrology of the watershed outlined above. According to the **2020 Clean Water Fund Performance Report**, best management practices to reduce sediment, funded by the Clean Water Fund reduced the 2020 Minnesota River sediment load by an estimated 40,021 tons in 2020, a small fraction of the total load and less than half of the average annual increase for the period 2008 -2019. The focus of the 2014 NPFP has been to restore impaired waters that are close to meeting water quality standards and protecting high-quality waters at risk of becoming impaired. The 2024 NPFP proposes to continue that focus.

If the 2014 NPFP focus continues in the 2024 NPFP residents in the Minnesota River Watershed can expect more frequent increased flooding due to high peak flows caused by rainfall events, continued erosion of the bed and banks of the rivers in the watershed due to increasing base flows and channel forming flows and continued damage and frequent flooding of properties and wildlife habitat along rivers in the watershed. Areas downstream of the watershed such as the Mississippi River navigation channel navigation channel between the confluence of the Minnesota River and Lake Pepin will require more frequent dredging because sediment loads will increase. High nutrient loads to Lake Pepin will continue to result in prolific algae growth and fish kills.

**The Collaborative requests that the 2024 Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan include the funding of efforts to minimize or eliminate the hydrologic changes that are currently occurring in the Minnesota River Watershed because of the change in land use in the watershed and the agricultural drainage associated with the change.**

Other water quality issues facing residents and regulatory agencies in the Minnesota River Watershed include unsafe bacteria levels in most streams and the failure of many streams to meet standards for supporting fish and other aquatic life. About half of the lakes in the watershed are impaired for nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen) and many have elevated levels of the chemical pollutant PFOS.



642 Lincoln Road, Sauk Centre, MN 56378; [srwd@srwdmn.org](mailto:srwd@srwdmn.org) ; Phone: 320-352-2231

---

August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Gardner and the Clean Water Council,

On behalf of the Sauk River Watershed Collaborative (SRWC) Implementation Team, I am writing to encourage continued funding for the Watershed Based Implementation Fund by the Clean Water Council. The SRWC Policy Committee did not have time to meet prior to the deadline for comment.

The SRWC is now moving into their second biennium of implementation of the Sauk River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (SRCWMP) and the funds made available through the Watershed Based Implementation Fund program have been extremely useful to further the goals of our plan. Although it is not enough to do everything we would like to do, it is very useful with implementation of projects and practices in our watershed.

Current funding has been used to implement many projects including shoreline restorations, agricultural best management practices, significant public outreach and education, and even provide a non-federal match for a US Army Corps of Engineers Planning Assistance to States and Tribal Governments grant, bringing \$240K of federal dollars into our watershed. Without the WBIF funds, progress on implementation of our CWMP would be extremely limited if not impossible.

Therefore, we respectfully request the Clean Water Council to fully fund the Watershed Based Implementation Fund, so we, and other local governments and their partners, can continue to protect and improve the waters of our great State of Minnesota. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Jon Roeschlein, SRWC Plan Coordinator

Collaborative Members

Stearns County, Stearns SWCD, Pope County, Pope SWCD, Douglas County, Douglas SWCD, Todd County, Todd SWCD, Sauk River Watershed District



## CITY OF MORA MORA MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

101 Lake Street South  
Mora, MN 55051-1588  
[ci.mora.mn.us](http://ci.mora.mn.us)



320.679.1511

Fax 320.679.3862

320.679.1451

August 9, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Mora to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

### **Source Water Protection**

The City of Mora has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2009. We have implemented approximately 60% of the activities in our plan and have partnered with city staff, our local SWCD, and other state agencies on different activities. These include extensive work in monitoring and evaluating a contaminant plume in our Drinking Water Supply Management Area and the proactive installation of dirt berms to prevent electrical transformer fluids from reaching one of the wells. Recently, the City of Mora secured a Source Water Protection Grant to assist us in installing a back-up generator, along with the wiring and automatic switchgear.

Working with the Source Water Protection program has allowed us to target and prioritize threats to our drinking water source, and through the grants program, we have built in resiliency into our system, allow us to ensure seamless delivery of safe drinking water in the face of power outages.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Natasha Segelstrom

Administrative Services Director  
City of Mora

Cc: Kylie Jacobsen ([kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us](mailto:kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us)) and Chad Anderson  
([chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us](mailto:chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us)), Minnesota Department of Health



DEDICATED TO A STRONG GREATER MINNESOTA

August 13, 2024

Dear members of the Clean Water Council,

I am writing on behalf of the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC), an organization of more than 115 cities located outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Our cities play an essential role in protecting, enhancing, and restoring water quality in Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and streams through our wastewater and stormwater systems. We want to emphasize our strong support for three specific projects that have been proposed for funding through the Clean Water Fund: the Point Source Implementation Grant program, Chloride Reduction Efforts, and Wastewater/Stormwater Implementation. All these programs will help make demonstrable improvements in the state's water quality.

### **Point Source Implementation Grants**

Few programs have as direct an impact on cleaning up Minnesota's waters as the Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) program. The PSIG program provides grants to local governments for water and wastewater projects so that they can achieve waste load reductions under Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plans, as well as reduce phosphorus, nitrogen, and other pollutant discharge that would otherwise flow into Minnesota's waters. Without this program, communities may have to delay construction or scale back their plans for reducing pollution because the costs may be prohibitive.

As more cities look to upgrade their facilities and inflation continues to drive up the cost, the demand far exceeds the funds available for the PSIG program, which lacks a dedicated funding source. Although general obligation bonds have supplemented the program in the past, the amount has rarely met the stated need for the program. The Legislature's failure to pass a bonding bill in 2024 has compounded the continuous underfunding of this program, making it even more critical that the Clean Water Fund continue to help underwrite this program.

When the initial term of the Legacy Act expires, we all want to look back and point to the demonstrable impacts we have made on Minnesota's water quality. By helping construct facilities and systems that remove pollutants from our waters through the PSIG program, you can make visible, tangible improvements to our state's impaired waters. We urge you to fully fund the Public Facilities Authority's (PFA) request for \$16.5 million for the PSIG program.

### **Chloride Reduction Grants**

Although salt, a.k.a. sodium chloride, may be essential to human life, too much of it is toxic to aquatic plants and animals. Minnesota has a growing chloride pollution problem, with more waters near or at impairment. Battling chloride pollution is a challenge. However, once it is in our waters, it is often not technologically and economically feasible nor environmentally responsible to remove. Therefore, reducing chloride at the source is essential to prevent further degradation of our waters.

Still, source reduction is not easy, which is why programs such as the MPCA's chloride reduction efforts are needed. We support dedicating \$1.3 million to continue these efforts.

### **Wastewater/Stormwater TMDL Implementation**

To clean up and protect Minnesota's waters, we will need to do more in addition to constructing new stormwater and wastewater systems. Local governments and the MPCA must work together to innovate as we implement TMDLs for stormwater and wastewater through pollutant trading programs and other tools to reduce pollutant loads.

Again, we urge support for the MPCA's request for \$3 million to fund wastewater and stormwater point source implementation. This funding will allow the agency to better work with our communities to develop and implement the steps needed to accelerate lake and stream protection.

Local governments may not be direct recipients of Clean Water Funds, but our role in protecting and enhancing Minnesota's waters cannot be understated. These three programs will help not only the requesting agencies but also the efforts of our communities across the state. We urge that you recommend full funding for all three of these programs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Shelly Carlson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Shelly" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Carlson".

Shelly Carlson, Mayor of Moorhead  
President, Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities





August 13, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[paul.gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:paul.gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

The Source Water Protection grant program through the Minnesota Department of Health has allowed the City of Glenwood to install security items at our wells, purchase a GPS unit for accurately locating wells and septic systems, Nitrate testing equipment, and a generator hookup on one of our wells, all action items in our Wellhead Plan. Without this grant funding we may not be able to fulfill our wellhead needs.

The work and assistance of MDH gives small cities a great benefit to their communities. Sampling, testing and advice on Manganese limits and control, which are all parts of our wellhead protection plan.

Glenwood supports MDH and the Grant Program for all their work. Please continue funding and state support of this program.

Public Works Director, Glenwood

Andrew Jergenson



[8/9/2024]

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at Rock County Rural Water to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

#### **Source Water Protection**

Rock County Rural Water has utilized the source water protection grants numerous times in the past years. These grants have allowed us to do projects we would not normally have done due to budget constraints. We have used these grants for cover crops, testing updates to ensure accurate results in testing for nitrates. We did utilize a grant a few years ago to drill a test well to search for a new clean water source in our area which turned out to be successful. We have since drilled a production well because of the test well which has helped us greatly with blending out nitrates in our system. The Partner Protection Grant also allowed us to do push/pull testing in our area to see what is happening underground in our DWSMA.

Clean Water Funds have allowed landowners within our Drinking Water Supply Management Area to place lands in groundwater friendly land uses via the Partner Protection Grant. Clean Water Funds have also allowed us to conduct geo-probing to better understand the origin and path nitrates are using to enter our aquifer. Funding via the Clean Water Council has allowed us to subsidize farmers to implement conservation practices such as cover crops and split application of nitrogen. We are seeing a switch where farmers are starting to plant cover crops more and more on their own.

Another benefit of the funding provided by the Clean Water Council is the drilling and installation of a deep well. Finding water, let alone a deep aquifer in SW MN is a big deal and has greatly changed our daily operations. The addition of a deep well allows us blend out the higher nitrate water from our shallow wells with the deep aquifer, low nitrate water. All of the above activities have allowed us to experience a significant decrease in nitrates in our drinking water.

The Source water grants have helped greatly with implementing BMP's in our area to help reduce nitrate loading. They have also helped us find new sources of drinking water and helped us have good reliable results with the purchase of high quality nitrate meter and helped lower nitrate concentrations in our aquifer.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ryan Holtz  
Manager  
Rock County Rural Water

August 13, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Little Falls to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

**Source Water Protection**

The City of Little Falls has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2004. We have currently implemented 67% of the activities in our current wellhead protection plan which is in year 4 of the plan. We work closely with Minnesota Rural Water Association to implement our wellhead protection activities.

The City of Little Falls has received multiple grants throughout the years and have used the grants to identify unsealed wells and undocumented municipal wells, seal wells, upgrade the security and sprinkler system for the water treatment plant, installation of raw water lines from the new well field to the water treatment plant. Little Falls has also used the grants to fill in annular space on wells such as the ones pictured below.



Working with the Source Water Protection program has allowed us to address and prioritize threats to our drinking water source before it becomes a contaminant in our water. The grants program has allowed Little Falls to keep moving forward on their wellhead protection efforts. The grants also encourage us to continuously look ahead at our wellhead protection plan and how we can get grant assistance to achieve these measures.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Dwayne Heinen*

Dwayne Heinen  
Water Superintendent  
City of Little Falls



Anoka Conservation District  
Brown's Creek WD  
Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix WD  
Chisago County  
Chisago SWCD  
Comfort Lake-Forest Lake WD  
Isanti County  
Isanti SWCD

Middle St. Croix WMO  
Pine County  
Pine SWCD  
South Washington WD  
Valley Branch WD  
Washington County  
Washington Conservation District

To the members of the Clean Water Council –

Greetings from east-central Minnesota! Our partnership, the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership (LSCWP), appreciates the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-27 budget recommendations.

Our partnership consists of 15 local government units across metro and non-metro counties, including 4 counties, 5 SWCDs, and 6 WD/WMOs. Our comprehensive planning process began in 2017 and with approval of our plan in October 2020, we began implementation in 2021. The long-term, stable funding from the Clean Water Fund (CWF) has played a crucial role in funding projects that have led to very successful outcomes for our watershed.

**Over the past 3 years, our partnership has been able to reduce phosphorus pollution across our watershed by 9,306 lbs/year.** While this effort includes projects funded through a variety of sources, Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) and CWF have contributed a significant share, including:

- **Trout Brook Stream Restoration Project:** Trout Brook is a direct tributary of the St. Croix River and provides important cold-water habitat for trout. A ravine stabilization and a stream re-meandering project has led to a 177 lb/yr phosphorus reduction to Lake St. Croix.
- **Sunrise River Wetland Restoration:** Restoration of a 22-acre wetland complex diverts flow from an existing ditch system and reduces phosphorus pollution by 89 lbs/yr to the Sunrise River, a major tributary of the St. Croix River.
- **Basin-wide non-structural ag program:** Our WBIF-funded shared agronomist worked with partner staff to develop a non-structural incentive program for basin farmers, which has led to the enrollment of over 12,000 acres in soil health practices like no-till, reduced till, and cover crops. In the past two years, this has led to a phosphorus reduction of 1,964 lbs/year from WBIF funding with an additional 3,471 lbs/yr reduction coming from a CWF soil health grant administered basin-wide.
- **Structural practices in urban and agricultural landscapes:** Installations of Water and Sediment Control Basins (WASCOBS), cattle exclusion fencing, bioretention basins, and a ravine stabilization have also reduced phosphorus pollution across the watershed upwards of 274 lbs/yr.
- **Creation of Enhanced Street Sweeping Program:** We have utilized WBIF funding to support evaluation of street sweeping programs across 16 communities in our watershed, with several communities signing up for enhanced street sweeping with incentive reimbursements. Last year, one community was able to reduce phosphorus pollution 17.9 lbs/yr with 3 enhanced street sweepings.

As we finalize our FY25 workplan in the coming months, the LSCWP continues to work collaboratively to make sure funding is utilized for the best possible pollution reduction and CWMP outcomes. We have iteratively devised a project vetting and approval process to ensure any project brought forward addresses pollution in priority locations, and monthly steering committee meetings comprised of partner staff and quarterly meetings of our policy committee ensures that frequent and open communication keeps us focused on achieving our CWMP goals.

One Watershed One Plan organizations, the new regional approach to watershed management, are just getting started. While our LSCWP has had the opportunity to quickly mobilize since plan adoption, with ready projects in the queue for implementation, many watersheds are only now finalizing their plans and starting implementation. Reducing funding at this point would sidetrack and derail their momentum. It is critical to maintain access to these funds for the success of this new initiative.

Additionally, member partners rely on the CWF for local projects and programs, with each one contributing to the march toward clean water for Minnesota. We strongly encourage the Council to support both One Watershed One Plan partnerships and CWF programs with stable, consistent funding.

Thank you for your ongoing leadership and consideration!

Sincerely,

The Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership

**Please see attached individual organization support letters following this letter.**



Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Mr. Gardner,

As a local unit of government representing a watershed partnership that uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations.

Brown's Creek Watershed District is a partner in the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership. One of the first actions under the approved comprehensive watershed management plan for our partnership was to fill an identified void in critical education and outreach with the general public, our public officials, lake and homeowner associations, the business and agricultural communities. The stable Watershed-based Implementation Fund funding allows us to attract and retain two amazing staff that have significantly increased both landowner and partner project implementation in the Lower St. Croix Watershed.

Without long-term, stable funding, none of these efforts would be possible. We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Karen Kill", is written above the printed name.

Karen Kill  
BCWD Administrator





# Chisago Soil & Water Conservation District

38814 Third Avenue, North Branch, MN 55056

Phone: 651/674-2333 | [www.chisagoswcd.org](http://www.chisagoswcd.org)

Date: August 6, 2024

To: Minnesota Clean Water Council

Re: Continued Stable Funding for the WBIF and CWF Programs

The Chisago Soil and Water Conservation District is one of the partners in the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership and currently serves as the fiscal agent for the fifteen-member joint powers collaborative. We offer our voice and support of continuing consistent funding of the Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) offered through the One Watershed One Plan initiative.

While we have had the opportunity and privilege of being awarded \$5M dollars in BWSR Clean Water Fund grants since 2011, we have realized many significant gains utilizing the WBIF grant funds award to the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership. This includes:

- Shared Staff
  - Our WBIF-supported agronomist lead the development of our non-structural ag program, promoting a variety of soil health practices to area farmers, and was instrumental in securing an additional \$200,000 through a FY22 CWF Soil Health grant for the five SWCD members of the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership.
  - Our WBIF-supported shared water resources educator has enabled us to increase outreach to our communities and residents, promoting programs and opportunities that have helped increase the number and type of projects implemented that are in our Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. Outreach has included workshops, requested presentations, tabling community events, helping us become members of the Adopt-a-Drain program, and building stronger relationships across our communities and partners.
- Funding to
  - Develop a subwatershed assessment for portions of the Goose Creek watershed.
  - Implement soil health practices such as cover crop and strip tillage.
  - Develop and implement enhanced street sweeping studies for the Cities of North Branch, Rush City and Wyoming.
  - Implement structural Ag BMPs in both the Rush Lake and Goose Lake watersheds.
  - Complete a wetland restoration in the Goose Creek watershed.

As the Lower St. Croix Partnership reaches year 5 in implementation, there is a building momentum and synergy in our county and between our group of local government partners. We sincerely hope the Clean Water Council will continue to provide broad support and funding through the WBIF to help us achieve our goals. Please contact me at 651-674-2333 or [craig.mell@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:craig.mell@mn.nacdnet.net) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Craig Mell  
District Administrator

*"Bringing Conservation to Chisago County"*



Chisago County Water Resources  
Department of Environmental Services / Zoning  
313 North Main Street  
Center City, Minnesota 55012  
651-213-8380 [susanna.wilson@chisagocountymn.us](mailto:susanna.wilson@chisagocountymn.us)

**Date:** August 12, 2024  
**To:** Minnesota Clean Water Council Members  
**From:** Susanna Wilson Witkowski, Chisago County Water Resource Manager  
**Re:** Letter of Support for FY26-27 Budget Recommendations

Dear Clean Water Council Members,

I am writing to express our strong support for the Clean Water Fund (CWF) project funding and Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) for FY26-27.

On November 18, 2020, the Chisago County Board of Commissioners approved the Lower St. Croix Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (LCS CWMP) and Chisago County Local Priorities Appendix, replacing the previous county local water management plan. Since that time, the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership and Chisago County has benefited from CWF funding, including WBIF funding.

Chisago County has benefited primarily from CWF and WBIF funding through the shared services education partnership. Barbara Heitkamp, the WBIF funded Shared Services Educator, has provided innumerable services from working with local county governments including, but not limited to, adopting MIDS ordinance changes, educating residents and encouraging them to join the Adopt-a-Drain program, and conducting and presenting at St. Croix Workshops on the Water events, and holding workshops to encourage lakeshore residents to restore their shorelines.

As the County Water Resources Manager for Chisago County, I work cooperatively with the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership. The Shared Services Educator position is crucial for providing education and outreach activities in Chisago County and reaching out to residents, including lakeshore owners, as there is limited county funding for such activities to meet the goals of the LSC CWMP and Chisago County Appendix.

We appreciate the continued support and funding for the One Watershed One Plan partnerships WBIF Funding and CWF programs, and especially for shared education services, for the FY26-27 budget recommendations.

Sincerely,

Susanna Wilson Witkowski  
Chisago County Water Resource Manager



**CLFLWD**  
WATERSHED DISTRICT

**Addendum to Lower St Croix Partnership  
Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District  
Clean Water Grant Fund Projects for Water Quality  
Improvement and Watershed Sustainability**

**8/12/2024**

<b>Fiscal Year, Program</b>	<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Grant Award</b>	<b>Phosphorus Reductions</b>	<b>Total Suspended Solids Reductions</b>
2012, P&P	Greening the Big Box & Streets	\$246,466	9 lb/yr	
2012, AIG	Tools for Targeting Drained Wetlands	\$30,200	(Targeting plan completed)	
2014, P&P	Bixby Park Wetland Improvement	\$360,750	206 lb/yr	177,000 lb/yr
2016, P&P	Moody Lake Wetland Rehabilitation	\$429,284	445 lb/yr	457,000 lb/yr
2016, P&P	Forest Lake Wetland Treatment Basin	\$162,000	56 lb/yr	1,700 lb/yr
2017, P&P	Bone Lake Southeast Wetland Restorations	\$88,000	35 lb/yr	325,000 lb/yr
2017, P&P	Shields Lake Stormwater Reuse & Alum Treatment	\$824,000	1,000 lb/yr	
2017, AIG	Forest Lake Enhanced Street Sweeping Study	\$30,600	(Sweeping plan completed)	
2018, P&P	Moody Lake Alum Treatment	\$135,000	324 lb/yr	
2018, P&P	City of Forest Lake Enhanced Street Sweeping Implementation	\$220,000	167 lb/yr P	137,000 lb/yr
2019, P&P	Bone Lake Agricultural BMPs	\$144,000	147 lb/yr	314,000 lb/yr
2020, P&P	Sunrise River Wetland Restoration	\$492,000	89 lb/yr	52,000 lb/yr
2020, P&P	County Road 50 Iron Enhanced Sand Filter	\$747,400	97 lb/yr	6,000 lb/yr
2021, P&P	Bone Lake Northeast Wetland Restoration	\$171,200	15 lb/yr	
2022, P&P	Moody Lake Capstone Projects	\$239,500	58 lb/yr	9,000 lb/yr
2022, P&P	WJD-6 Wetland Enhancement	\$386,000	20 lb/yr	3,200 lb/yr
2023, P&P	Forest Lake Alum Treatment	\$533,600	527 lb/yr	
2024, P&P	July Ave Feedlot	\$90,000	61 lb/yr	178,000 lb/yr
<b>Totals</b>		<b>\$5,330,000</b>	<b>3,256*</b>	<b>1,675,200</b>

\*3,256 lbs of P reduction stops 1,628,000 lbs of algae from growing each year!

Acronyms: Projects & Practices (P&P), Accelerated Implementation Grant (AIG), Phosphorus (P), Total Suspended Solids (TSS)



**We could not have achieved these outcomes without access to the Clean Water Grants!**

Board of Managers

Steve Schmaltz, President · Christopher Loth, Vice President  
Jackie Anderson, Treasurer · Douglas Toavs, Assistant Treasurer · Dave Bakke, Secretary





## Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District

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11660 Myeron Rd North • Stillwater, MN 55082 • Tel 651-275-7451

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July 31, 2024

Minnesota Clean Water Council

RE: Continued Stable Funding for the WBIF and CWF programs

Dear Council Members,

Like many other local units of government in east-central Minnesota the Carnelian Marine on St. Croix Watershed District's (CMSCWD) 31 lakes, 21 streams, and 18 miles of the St. Croix River have benefited from strong partnerships and stable and consistent funding from the State of Minnesota.

While the District is rich in water resources utilized by residents around the state, our tax base is small, so Clean Water Funds have been a critical supplement to local funding. These supplemental funds have come from both competitive clean water fund grants and more recently the consistent funding from the Watershed Based Implementation Funding.

The promise of consistent and stable funding was also a catalyst for formation of the Lower St. Croix Partnership through One Watershed One Plan. Together we are collaboratively prioritizing targeted projects and engaging landowners through education and technical assistance to implement practices and get real results.

Through these partnerships and supporting funding from the Clean Water Fund the CMSCWD has completed the following projects:

- Marine on St. Croix Town Center Stormwater Retrofits (Mill Stream and St. Croix River)
- Goose Lake (Scandia) Iron Enhance Sand Filter
- Goose Lake (Scandia) Wetland Restoration
- Big Marine Lake (Scandia) East Boat Launch Water Quality Improvement Project
- Oak Street (Marine on St. Croix) Bioretention Basins (St. Croix River)
- Scandia and Marine on St. Croix Enhanced Street Sweeping Plans (Big Marine Lake and St. Croix River)

The projects are helping us make progress toward the following goals over the next seven years:

### **MANAGERS:**

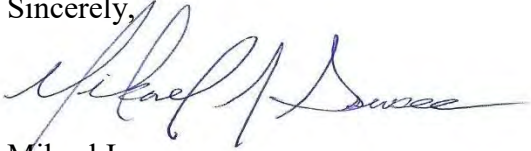
Tori Dupre, Manager  
Pat Gleason, Manager  
Paul Richert, Secretary  
Fred Rozumalski, Manager

Kristin Tuenge, Treasurer  
Ann Warner, Manager  
Mike White, Manager

- Delisting Goose Lake from the Impaired Waters List- a popular fishing and duck hunting lake in Scandia
- Avoiding an Impairment Listing for Big Carnelian Lake- a popular recreational lake with a public launch in May Township
- Avoiding an Impairment Listing for Big Marine Lake- a popular recreational lake with three public launches and a beach in Scandia
- Reduce phosphorus discharges to the St. Croix River by over 100 lbs./yr.

We hope the Clean Water Council will continue to provide stable funding through Watershed Based Implementation Funds to help us achieve these goals. Please contact me at 612-839-6492 or [mike.isensee@cmscwg.org](mailto:mike.isensee@cmscwg.org) if I can answer any questions about our support.

Sincerely,



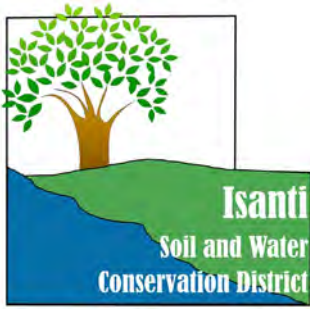
Mikael Isensee

Administrator, Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed District

#### **MANAGERS:**

Tori Dupre, Manager  
 Pat Gleason, Manager  
 Paul Richert, Secretary  
 Fred Rozumalski, Manager

Kristin Tuenge, Treasurer  
 Ann Warner, Manager  
 Mike White, Manager



**ISANTI SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT**  
**110 Buchanan Street South**  
**Cambridge, MN 55008**  
**763-689-3271**

The Isanti Soil and Water Conservation District is happy to voice our support for continued and consistent funding of the Watershed Based Implementation Funds offered through the One Watershed One Plan initiative. Isanti SWCD is a member of two watershed-based partnerships, The Rum River Watershed (80% of our land area) and the Lower St. Croix Watershed (13% of our land area). We rely on the reliability of the WBIF funds in both watersheds. A separate letter of WBIF support was sent for the Rum River Watershed via the Rum River Watershed Partnership. This letter speaks specifically to the value of WBIF funds in the Lower St. Croix Watershed.

Here's how we have utilized funding in the Lower St. Croix Watershed:

- **Shared Staff:**
  - **WBIF shared agronomist** was vital in developing our non-structural Soil Health program and supporting new staff in implementing it. We have leveraged \$10,000 of WBIF funds and \$15,000 of Lower St. Croix Shared Clean Water Funds for Soil Health. Furthermore, Isanti SWCD has built our non-structural Soil Health program to the point where we have a waiting list of producers (County-wide).
  - **WBIF shared Water Resources Educator** has played an essential role in communicating the importance of the Oxford Township Natural Environment lakes to the public, Town Board members, County staff, and Commissioners. Specifically, the WRE has developed two educational videos highlighting the Oxford Township Lakes and secured a consultant to support the County in updating its Shoreline Ordinances to be more restrictive for NE lakes within the Lower St. Croix Watershed.

To prepare ourselves for the FY25 WBIF funding round, the SWCD sent nearly 200 letters to farmers in the Sunrise River Watershed and is taking calls and arranging site visits. We aim to list projects needing funding by fall/winter 2025!

We sincerely hope the Clean Water Council will continue to provide broad support and funding through the WBIF to help us achieve our goals. These funds are essential to the success of the Soil and Water Conservation District!

Please contact me at 763-689-3271 or [tiffany.determan@mn.nacdnet.net](mailto:tiffany.determan@mn.nacdnet.net) if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Tiffany Determan  
District Manger  
Isanti SWCD



July 31, 2024

Dear members of the Clean Water Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you a few of the successes that Pine County and the Pine Soil and Water Conservation District have had working cooperatively in the Lower St. Croix Watershed.

- Pine County, with the assistance of Pine County Soil & Water staff, carried out a subwater analysis of Rock Lake to better identify the types of conservation efforts that might be needed. This helps us better identify high priority areas that are in more critical need of conservation work. By identifying these areas, we are able to use watershed funds more efficiently with greater environmental benefits.
- Pine SWCD was able to partner with the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program to help a producer install a livestock exclusion fence on Rock Lake, and install a native shoreline buffer. These efforts reduce shoreline erosion, reduce the likelihood of bacteria impairments in the lake, and create critical habitat for wildlife that are utilizing the lake.
- We created multiple water and sediment control basins to help process water coming off fields in a more environmentally-friendly way. This helps reduce erosion, and benefits both the environment and the producer. Less sediment entering our waterways reduces pollution, and by maintaining top soil on farm fields can increase field productivity in the long run for the farmer.
- Pine SWCD was able to provide funding for two wetland restorations. Wetlands act as a natural water filtration system, and they also play a critical role in water storage.
- Cover crops are of great interest in the agricultural areas of our county. With watershed-based implementation funds and other clean water funds, we have been able to assist producers in implementing this practice that can help build healthier soils, and protect field from water and wind erosion.

We agree wholeheartedly with the other members of our partnership that sustained funding from the Clean Water Fund has been key to carrying out projects in our watershed that have made a significant difference to water quality in our area. These funds have also allowed the County and the SWCD to have a much more cooperative relationship, working together to make it possible to complete initiatives that may not have been successful otherwise.

Thank you for all your efforts to preserve and improve Minnesota's waters for this and future generations. We strongly encourage the Council to support both One Watershed One Plan partnerships and CWF programs with stable, consistent funding.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Gainor".

Mike Gainor  
Land and Resources Manager  
Pine County

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul Swanson".

Paul Swanson  
District Manager  
Pine County Soil & Water Conservation District





# SOUTH WASHINGTON WATERSHED DISTRICT

August 2, 2024

To: Clean Water Council

The South Washington Watershed District (SWWD) appreciates the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-27 budget recommendations. In particular, SWWD wishes to outline its support for continued strong financial support of the Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) grant program of the Clean Water Fund.

SWWD is a unique watershed district in Minnesota in that we drain to two major riverine resources, the Mississippi River and the St. Croix River. Thus, we find our jurisdiction separated into two WBIF allocations areas. An eastern portion of our jurisdiction is included within the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership, while the remaining western portion of SWWD draining to the Mississippi River receives a separate WBIF allocation. Maintaining access to these project implementation funding sources is critical to achieving our goals.

SWWD generates much of its project implementation revenue through stormwater utility fees collected from three distinct management units within the watershed. The Lower St. Croix and East Mississippi management units, on their own, do not generate enough fees through this mechanism to support the scale of project implementation necessary to address the resource concerns and goals of our watershed plan. The WBIF grant program has provided a welcome and necessary funding source recently, helping us to complete the following projects:

## **SWWD South Washington Metro WBIF Projects**

WBIF funding has been consistently utilized to provide stormwater treatment in environmental justice areas of the watershed along the Mississippi River. Extremely shallow bedrock and aging development and infrastructure combine to create a situation where providing any form of stormwater treatment in this area is both difficult and costly.

***FY19: 15th & Cedar BMP (\$78,760 grant, \$168,650 match)*** – SWWD installed an underground stormwater filter system in Newport which will treat otherwise untreated stormwater from the existing Newport stormwater system. The filter is expected to remove 3.65 tons/yr TSS and 13.5 lbs/yr TP that would otherwise be discharged directly to the Mississippi River.

***FY21: Nuevas Fronteras BMP (\$93,042 grant, 215,667 match)*** – SWWD installed an underground stormwater filter system at Nuevas Fronteras which will treat otherwise untreated stormwater from the existing St. Paul Park stormwater system. The filter is expected to remove 5 tons/yr TSS and 25 lbs/yr TP that would otherwise be discharged directly to the Mississippi River.

***FY23: 16th & Cedar BMP (\$163,947 grant, \$234,046 match)*** – SWWD installed an underground stormwater filter system in Newport which will treat otherwise untreated stormwater from the existing Newport stormwater system. The filter is expected to remove 22 tons/yr TSS and 31 lbs/yr TP that would otherwise be discharged directly to the Mississippi River.

***FY25: St. Paul Park Public Works BMP (\$228,539 grant, \$75,029 match)*** – SWWD is poised to install an underground stormwater filter system this fall near the St. Paul Park public works facility which will treat otherwise untreated stormwater from the existing St. Paul Park stormwater system. The filter is expected to remove 4.11 tons/yr TSS and 5.3 lbs/yr TP that would otherwise be discharged directly to the Mississippi River.

### **SWWD Lower St. Croix Metro WBIF Projects**

WBIF funding made available through the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership has helped SWWD undertake some major stabilization and restoration work in this area in recent years.

***2022: McQuade Ravine Stabilization (\$93,407 grant, \$81,823 match)*** – SWWD worked with private landowners to stabilize a ravine directly tributary to Lake St. Croix that had been delivering an estimated 250 tons/yr TSS to the lake.

***2024: Trout Brook Restoration Phase III (\$350,000 grant, \$706,010 other funds)*** – SWWD is currently completing the final phase of in-stream restoration of Trout Brook, located in Afton State Park and Afton Alps Ski Area. Work includes replacement of the remaining perched culverts within the Ski Area, 700 feet of floodplain reconnection within the upper portion of Afton State Park, 1,000 feet of new channel remeandering in the lower portion of Afton State Park, and 2,000 feet of stream stabilization in the existing straightened channel within the Ski Area. We expect this work to provide pollution reduction benefits of 115 lbs/yr TP and 263 tons/yr TSS in addition to greatly improving trout habitat and fish passage connectivity.

SWWD strongly encourages the Clean Water Council to support robust funding to this vital program as it prepares its FY26-27 Clean Water Fund budget recommendations.

Sincerely,



Kyle Axtell  
Watershed Project Manager  
South Washington Watershed District  
Phone: (651) 714-3718  
Email: kyle.axtell@woodburymn.gov

cc: SWWD Board of Managers



## PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

David Brummel, Director  
Jill Timm, Deputy Director

August 9, 2024

To the members of the Clean Water Council,

Washington County (county) is submitting an addendum to the Lower St Croix (LSC) Partnership's letter, in support of continued levels for Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF).

The LSC Partnership is an entity that has worked together to protect and preserve water resources in cooperation with 15 local governments. The letter highlights several efforts funded by WBIF including built water quality projects, as well as broader basin wide activities. This work would not have been able to be completed without funds from WBIF.

In addition to the LSC partnership, the county has been fortunate to receive Metro WBIF in the past to implement projects in support of our Groundwater Plan. These include:

- FY 2019 Metro WBIF (county based)
  - Created an educational video on chlorides, in partnership with East Metro Water Resources Education Program.
  - Contracted with a consultant to expand a stormwater reuse methodology to the entire county, that was originally developed just for the Rice Creek Watershed District.
  - Analyzed data from Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Geological Survey to identify potentially unsealed wells and conducted outreach to properties on well sealing.
  - Hosted targeted education for realtors and homeowners on Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems (SSTS), wells and groundwater and proper disposal of hazardous waste.
  - Offered 100% reimbursement in grant money to seal abandoned wells in targeted areas (known areas of contamination, Special Well Construction Areas and Drinkwater Water Supply Management Areas). Thirty wells were sealed with this grant.
- FY 2021 Metro WBIF – Mississippi East Watershed
  - Offered SSTS fix-up grants to low-income systems that failed compliance inspections within the East Mississippi Watershed. One system was replaced.
  - Offered jointly with Dakota County, Smart Salting Classes, once per year for three years, to Property Managers, Road Maintenance personnel, and businesses. Total participants over three years was 115.
  - Offered 100% reimbursement in grant money to seal abandoned wells in targeted areas (known areas of contamination, Special Well Construction Areas and Drinkwater Water Supply Management Areas). Ten wells were sealed with this grant.

More recent distributions of WBIF have moved to watershed planning area, but the county continues to participate with partners in discussions on projects and programs to implement with those funds.

WBIF are integral to implementing efficient and effective water protection projects and providing education. These projects would not have been implemented without these funds. Please consider continued funding of WBIF.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Brummel".

David Brummel, Director  
Washington County Public Health & Environment



August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

To the members of the Clean Water Council:

The Washington Conservation District (WCD) welcomes the opportunity to share some of the successes that we have experienced working cooperatively with the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership, our partners in our One Watershed One Plan.

Since 2010 we've been fortunate to receive over \$1.1 million in BWSR Clean Water Fund grants, which has led to significant progress to reducing and preventing pollution of our water resources in Washington county. Since implementation started in 2021, Watershed-Based Implementation Funds (WBIF) have also served to help us achieve cleaner water. This includes:

**Shared staff services:** WCD has served as the office 'home' for two shared staff supported by WBIF funding.

- Our agronomist played a pivotal role in launching our non-structural agricultural program, which encourages local farmers to adopt soil health practices. She spearheaded the effort to secure an additional \$200,000 through a FY22 CWF Soil Health grant, benefiting the five SWCD members of the Lower St. Croix Watershed Partnership.
- Our water resources educator has enabled us to expand the reach and impact of our highly successful East Metro Water Resources Education Program. The increased engagement has led to an increase in the site visit requests to our office (over 350 for 2023) and project implementation that aligns with the goals in our Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan, including a targeted enhanced street sweeping program for a dozen Washington county communities.

**Projects:** WBIF has supported subwatershed analyses and prioritization plans in our county, helping highlight pollution hot spots and potential pollution reduction projects. WCD has also worked collaboratively with our watersheds as they have utilized WBIF funding to achieve CWMP goals.

Highlights include:

- Supporting South Washington Watershed District (SWWD) in a ravine stabilization project whose drainage directly flows to the St. Croix River, as well as a stream restoration project on a St. Croix River tributary that reduces pollution and increases aquatic habitat
- Providing support for installation of bioretention basins in the Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District
- Working with the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District in their wetland restoration project that increases water storage capacity and reduces pollution to downstream priority waters

We encourage the Clean Water Council to continue strong, consistent funding for WBIF and related CWF programs to help us achieve our goals of cleaner water. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay Riggs", is positioned above the printed name.

Jay Riggs  
District Administrator



Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

August 8, 2024

Mr. Gardner and the Clean Water Council,

As members of the North Fork Crow River Watershed Partnership which uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations. We strongly encourage the Council to prioritize maintaining Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF).

The North Fork Crow River Watershed Partnership consists of six soil and water conservation districts, six counties, and two watershed districts. Together, we spent approximately three years developing a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) which was state-approved and locally adopted in 2018. In 2018 we formed a joint powers collaborative to implement the plan. Since that time we have implemented many projects using WBIF including wetland restorations, shoreline practices, agricultural practices, and urban stormwater treatment. Together, we have shared resources, completed multi-jurisdictional work, and vetted the best projects on a watershed scale.

WBIF has been our primary funding source. Members of our partnership have secured competitive Clean Water Fund grants for individual projects. The Partnership has served as a hub for WBIF funds. The predictability of WBIF and selection of projects by the watershed partnership is key to our success. These reliable funds have allowed partners within the watershed to secure three Section 319 Small Watershed grants that will leverage up to \$3 million of federal funding for water quality improvements. Our local units of government have found this collaborative and comprehensive approach to watershed management to be highly effective.

We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments, in partnership, can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tina Diedrick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "D".

Tina Diedrick  
Wright County Commissioner, District 1  
North Fork Crow River Watershed Partnership Policy Committee, Chair

August 13, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN, 55155

Re: Prioritizing Forever Green in FY26-27 CWF recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner and Members of the Council,

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully request that the Clean Water Council prioritize the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative in your FY26-27 Clean Water Fund recommendations.

In addition to including at least \$6 million for Forever Green in your upcoming September recommendations, we ask that you consider prioritizing Forever Green for any additional Clean Water Fund dollars that may be available following future FY26-27 Clean Water Fund forecasts. We believe this is the single most impactful investment the Clean Water Council can make to achieve Minnesota's long-term clean water goals.

### **The Forever Green Initiative**

As you know, the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative is a nationally respected research effort designed to develop new, economically viable 'Continuous Living Cover' (CLC) cropping systems.

Integrating perennial and winter-annual crops into existing farming systems holds soil in place and stops pollutants from leaching into ground and surface water. By providing producers with new revenue streams from high-value, commercially marketable food, feed and fuel products, this approach also harnesses market forces to achieve the scale necessary to transform our landscapes.

Specifically, Forever Green crops can:

- Improve water quality in surface waters and groundwater;
- Protect drinking water and improve public health;
- Enhance soil health and climate resilience;
- Enhance habitat for wildlife and pollinators;
- Provide ultra-low carbon feedstocks for sustainable fuels;
- Foster new economic opportunities for Minnesota family farmers;
- Diversify crop rotations and farm income streams;



- Attract new investment and employment in emerging agricultural industries; and
- Attract high-quality talent to the University of Minnesota to meet the future state workforce needs of the agriculture, food, energy and natural resource industries.

The recently published [Putting Down Roots](#) report, prepared by Friends of the Mississippi River and the University of Minnesota, found that under a moderate adoption scenario, Forever Green CLC cropping systems could reduce nitrogen loss by 23% and soil erosion by 35% in Minnesota by 2050 while enhancing on-farm profits by 20%. This is a win-win for all Minnesotans.

### **Addressing nitrate contamination in groundwater**

As you know, Minnesota needs new solutions to groundwater nitrate pollution, especially in [vulnerable areas](#) such as coarse-textured soils or karst topography. When it comes to protecting groundwater, CLC cropping systems are very effective and highly scalable. For example:

- Kernza perennial grain can reduce soil water nitrate concentration by up to 97% compared to corn.
- Winter annual oilseeds crops like camelina and pennycress can reduce nitrate concentrations by up to 97% compared to no cover (standard practice).

### **A five-to-one return**

State investment in Forever Green has historically been leveraged many times over in federal grants and other funding that supports this increasingly high-profile effort. Historically, for every one dollar of Clean Water Fund support, Forever Green has secured an additional five dollars in complementary funds.

### **A deserving investment**

While we have strongly supported Clean Water Fund investments to date, we feel that the time has come for the Council to take bolder action in transforming Minnesota's approach to clean water. Traditional farmer education and BMP cost-share programs are important, but we must acknowledge that traditional BMPs can't do the job alone – and invest accordingly.

Getting to clean water is not just about *how* we grow our crops. It is also about *what* we grow. We must find ways to keep the soil covered year-round through economically viable CLC cropping systems – perennials and winter annuals – that work for farmers and the environment.

***As our friend Dr. Don Wyse liked to say: “If you want to change the landscape, get farmers and economic opportunity to change the landscape.”***

When fully funded, the Forever Green Initiative will make Minnesota the unquestioned leader in developing sustainable, profitable and diversified cropping systems that improve habitat, water quality, climate and soil health while boosting farm prosperity and rural economic development.

We urge you to support full funding of \$6M/biennium for Forever Green in your FY26-27 Clean Water Fund recommendations and prioritize Forever Green for any additional Clean Water Fund dollars that may be available following future FY26-27 Clean Water Fund forecasts.

Sincerely,

Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance  
SUN Consulting / Gertens  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
Minnesota Environmental Partnership  
Bang Brewing  
MN Farmers Union  
Alliance for Sustainability  
Minnesota Division, Izaak Walton League of America  
Savanna Institute  
Great River Greening  
Tree-Range Farms Inc.  
Citizens' Climate Lobby Minnesota  
Mad Markets  
West Central Initiative  
Nine Hazels Farm  
Minnesota Well Owners Organization  
Friends of the Mississippi River  
Regenerative Agriculture Alliance  
Green Lands Blue Waters  
The Good Acre  
Midwest Elderberry Cooperative  
Fountain Ark Farms  
Albert Lea Seed House, Inc.  
Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture  
League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region Interleague Organization  
Minnesota Trout Unlimited  
Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture  
Clean River Partners  
Climate Land Leaders  
Elders Climate Action Twin Cities  
Land Stewardship Project

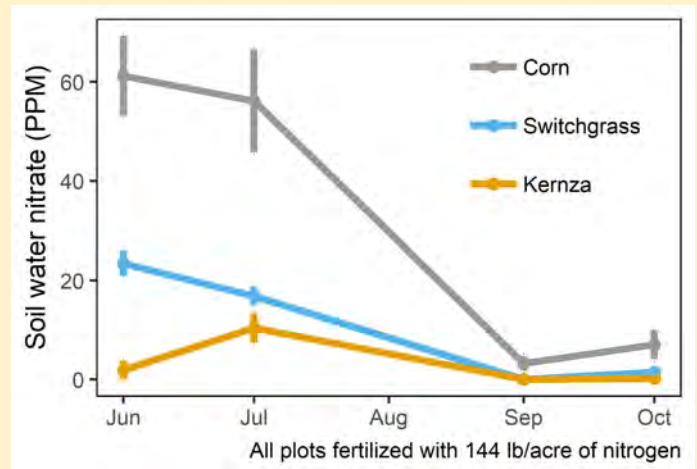


# Forever Green Crops: New Tools for Keeping Nitrates Out of Our Water

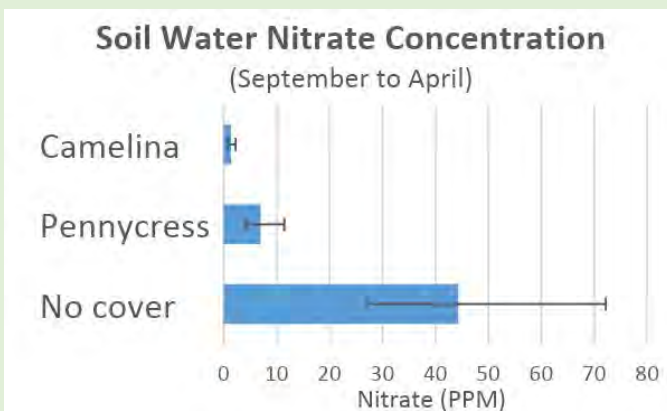
The Forever Green Initiative at the University of Minnesota is developing new, profitable crops that cover the soil all year. These crops hold soil and stop nitrates from leaching into ground and surface waters. A few of our most advanced crops include the following:

## Kernza® Intermediate Wheatgrass

- Pioneering perennial grain that protects soil from erosion, runoff and leaching
- Deep root system builds soil health and organic matter
- Reduces soil water nitrate concentration by **up to 97%** compared to corn<sup>1</sup>



## Pennycress and Camelina



- New cover crops that have cash value as oilseeds
- Planted in the fall, take up nutrients over the winter
- Reduce nitrate concentration by **up to 97%** compared to no cover (standard practice)<sup>2</sup>

Find more information at [www.forevergreen.umn.edu](http://www.forevergreen.umn.edu)



Forever  
Green

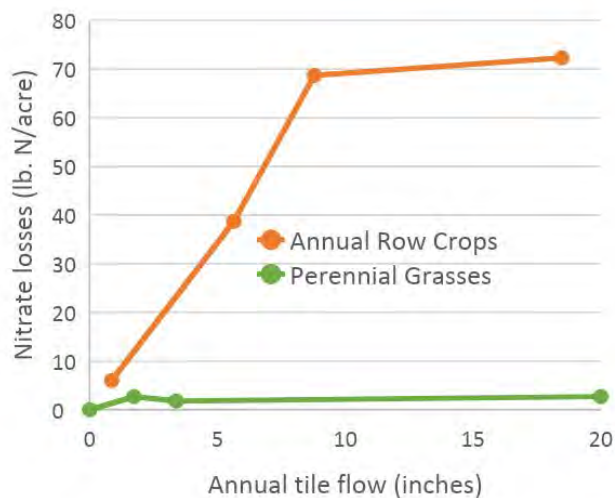
<sup>1</sup> Jungers et al. 2019. Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment.

<sup>2</sup> Weyers et al. 2019. Journal of Environmental Quality.



## Perennial Crops Reduce Tile Flow and Streambank Erosion

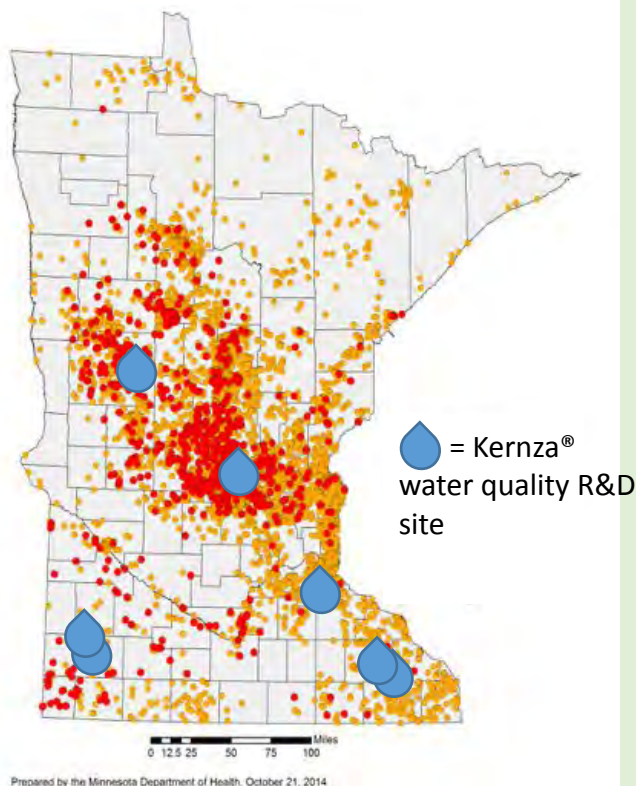
- Perennial crops can reduce nitrate losses through tile lines by **over 95%**<sup>3</sup>
- Growing perennials on 15% of a small watershed can reduce sediment loads by **over 22%**<sup>4</sup>



## We Are Testing Forever Green Crops in Real-World Implementation Studies

- Large-scale Kernza® plantings in wellhead protection areas in Chatfield, Lincoln-Pipestone, Staples, Cold Spring
- Measuring nitrates in soil water
- Demonstrating feasibility for public utilities and private farmers

### Nitrate in Private Wells



Find more information at [www.forevergreen.umn.edu](http://www.forevergreen.umn.edu)

3/14/2019

<sup>3</sup> Randall et al. 1997. Journal of Environmental Quality.

<sup>4</sup> Dalzell and Mulla. 2018. Journal of Soil and Water Conservation.



## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

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**From:** David Filipiak <dfilipiak@srfconsulting.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 13, 2024 2:45 PM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Subject:** Clean Water Fund Public Input

You don't often get email from dfilipiak@srfconsulting.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Good afternoon,

I want to express my gratitude for funding the Clean Water Council has provided the MN Stormwater Research Council in the past, and ask you include funding it in the next biennium.

Stormwater research funded by the Council over the years has been regularly applied in my consulting practice. As a consulting engineer, my staff and I have applied several research findings in our day-to-day design, allowing us to incorporate innovative, cost-effective designs on many large, public projects. Incorporating tested research has results in better design, smoother permitting and most importantly, cleaner water.

My support for the organization stems from these experiences and has resulted in volunteering my time on the Advisory Board this year. As a Board member and practitioner, I ask that you consider funding stormwater research thru the MN Stormwater Research Council in the upcoming biennium.

Thanks for your consideration,

**David Filipiak, PE (MN)**

Project Director - Water Resources

[SRF Consulting Group](#)

Court International Building, 2550 University Avenue West, Suite 345N, Saint Paul, MN 55114

Direct: 651.333.4161 | Cell: 612.202.2828 | [dfilipiak@srfconsulting.com](mailto:dfilipiak@srfconsulting.com)



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13 August 2024

John Barten  
Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Barten, Mr. Gardner, and members of the Clean Water Council,

As a private Minnesota citizen, I appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. Although this is not a direct endorsement from the Minnesota Groundwater Association (MGWA) Board of Directors, the Private Well Initiative proposed by the Minnesota Department of Health supports my and other MGWA volunteer efforts to expand private well owner understanding of 1) their drinking water quality and 2) what they can do to protect or improve it. Our goal, along with the Minnesota Well Owners Organization (MNWOO), is to help ensure drinking water is safe for private well owners/users, everywhere in Minnesota. I ask that you place a high priority on funding the Private Well Initiative and consider including funding within these appropriations to support the cooperative work by non-profit organizations.

#### **Private Well Water Education**

Through well-user clinics designed to provide preliminary screening of basic water quality, MGWA and MNWOO along with local sponsors have reached out in-person to about 1,000 well users per year, beginning in 2021. Based on our onsite participant surveys, the majority of well owners and users have been grateful for the screening and most importantly, their improved knowledge gained for future self-monitoring and safe drinking water protection.

Although the volunteerism from many retired people is useful in our screening clinics, the rate of well-owner contact is limited in capacity. An adequately funded Private Well Initiative could greatly shorten the time to reach most of Minnesota's the approximate 900,000 private-well owners/users and begin a culture that focuses on self-monitoring of their drinking water quality.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Bruce M. Olsen  
Retired professional geologist



Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

As a local unit of government representing a watershed partnership that uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations.

Our watershed partnership, consisting of the Coon Creek Watershed District, Anoka Conservation District, and the Cities of Andover, Blaine, Coon Rapids, Fridley, Ham Lake, and Spring Lake Park counts on long-term, stable funding from the Clean Water Fund (CWF) to ensure that we are able to implement projects for clean water consistent with our Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan.

Over the past five years, our watershed partnership has implemented the following projects with CWFs via the Watershed Based Implementation Funding program:

- Pleasure Creek Biochar and Iron-Enhanced Sand Filter:  
<https://www.cooncreekwd.org/pcfilter/>
- Aurelia Park Pond: <https://www.cooncreekwd.org/aureliapond/>
- Coon Creek Watershed Districtwide Street Sweeping Study:  
[https://www.cooncreekwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CCWD\\_StreetSweeping\\_PhaseII\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.cooncreekwd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/CCWD_StreetSweeping_PhaseII_Report_Final.pdf)
- Ongoing planning and modeling efforts to identify cost effective water quality improvement practices to address impairments in high priority subwatersheds

We would like to invite the Council to visit our constructed projects to provide a better understanding of their importance and the role they play in clean water efforts. In the next biennium, we are planning to use CWFs to implement the enhanced street sweeping recommendations resulting from our Districtwide study.

Without long-term, stable funding from the CWF, none of these efforts would have been possible. We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tim Kelly", is written over a large, stylized blue checkmark.

Tim Kelly  
District Administrator





**Anoka Conservation District**  
1318 McKay Drive NE, Suite 300  
Ham Lake, Minnesota 55304  
Ph: 763-434-2030  
[www.AnokaSWCD.org](http://www.AnokaSWCD.org)

---

Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

July 29, 2024

Mr. Gardner and the Clean Water Council,

The Anoka Conservation District uses Clean Water Funds for implementation, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide input as the Clean Water Council (Council) begins to develop their FY26-FY27 recommendations. We strongly encourage the Council to prioritize maintaining Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF).

We are members of the Lower St. Croix and Rum River Watershed Partnerships and participate in several metro watershed WBIF allocation areas. In each of these groups, many local units of governments collaborate to vet projects carefully to select the best across the watershed.

The predictability of WBIF funding improves the process in two ways: 1) members readily postpone their own projects in favor of moving ahead quickly on partner projects of equivalent return on investment without the fear of being left empty-handed, and 2) partners tend to invest more on project feasibility analysis, planning and design before submitting them for consideration.

Additionally, the best endeavors often come in the form of installing many small practices distributed across the landscape as opposed to single large-scale capital improvements. WBIF has been especially effective to install many smaller projects that would individually rank poorly in a competitive grant process due to scale, even though they provide an excellent return on investment.

WBIF has also been effective for shared services, such as agricultural conservation practice experts that serve multiple counties. Finally, we've found that WBIF is well suited for incentive programs spanning multiple counties such as shoreline stabilization or cover crop programs.

WBIF was developed to provide reliable, consistent funding to implement locally developed, state-approved watershed plans. It has become just that. We recognize the Council will be confronting difficult budget decisions, and encourage you to prioritize WBIF.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Lord", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Chris Lord  
District Manager



## West Otter Tail Soil & Water Conservation District

506 Western Ave N, Fergus Falls MN 56537

Phone: 218-998-5300

August 6, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator 520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations FY26-FY27

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Clean Water Council (CWC) considers proposals for funding recommendations. The Watershed Based Implementation Fund (WBIF) supports our work at West Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District (WOT SWCD) along with the many other partners in the six watershed plans that we are involved in.

I am writing today on behalf of the WOT SWCD to ask the CWC for your support by fully funding the WBIF. The WOT SWCD is currently in the implementation stages of 5 watersheds (Pomme de Terre, Buffalo-Red River, Bois de Sioux, Otter Tail – Pelican River, and Long Prairie) and the Chippewa River is currently awaiting BWSR approval prior to starting implementation. The WBIF program through the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is a vital program to our targeted and prioritized implementation of projects and practices in Otter Tail County.

Since the inception of WBIF, WOT SWCD has been able to increase staffing to better serve our landowners with the addition of engineering staff and soil health specialist, as well as retain long term quality staff that are trusted by our landowners. In addition, this funding has greatly increased the number of projects that we have been able put in place to restore and protect our water resources in Otter Tail County. Practices that we have been able to implement with WBIF include shoreline restoration plantings and bluff stabilizations on lakes and rivers, water and sediment control basins, closure of animal waste pits, sealing of unused wells, grass waterways, and cover crops. All these practices are valuable pieces in a much larger puzzle to protecting and improving not only the lakes and rivers in Otter Tail County but across all of Minnesota.

Without long-term, stable funding from the Clean Water Fund, none of these efforts would be possible. We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

We ask that you continue to support this important program as it leads to implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aaron Larsen", written over a horizontal line.

Aaron Larsen  
Manager  
West Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District



Protecting, restoring and enhancing the metro  
Mississippi River and its watershed since 1993.

106 W. Water St., Ste. 600 | St. Paul MN 55107-2032  
(651) 222-2193 | [fmr.org](http://fmr.org) | [info@fmr.org](mailto:info@fmr.org)

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Honorable Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North St. Paul,  
MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

August 13th, 2024

Dear Chair Barten, Executive Director Gardner, and Clean Water Council Members

As a non-profit dedicated to protecting and restoring the Mississippi River and its watershed in Minnesota, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to provide input on the Clean Water Council's FY 26-27 recommendations.

We acknowledge that the Council has some difficult decisions to make due to an anticipated reduction in FY 26-27 dollars available (compared to FY 24-25). To that end, we wish to highlight a few program areas that we strongly support, a few items that raise some concerns, and some complementary policy considerations.

**Our top priority: The UofM Forever Green Initiative (Line #8 - \$6.0M)**

The Council clearly understands we can't "BMP our way to clean water." That is why the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative is working to develop new, economically viable 'Continuous Living Cover' (CLC) cropping systems.

Integrating perennial and winter-annual crops into existing farming systems is our 'clean water moon shot'. CLCs hold soil in place and stop pollutants from leaching into groundwater and surface water. In the process, CLC crops provide producers with new revenue streams that can bolster our agricultural economy through the development of high-value, commercially marketable food, feed and fuel products.

As our friend Dr. Don Wyse liked to say: *"If you want to change the landscape, get farmers an economic opportunity to change the landscape."*

We urge the Council to fund Forever Green at the \$6M level, and flag it for up to \$4M in additional funds should future budget forecasts allow.

## Other programs we strongly support

- **Chloride reduction (Line # 19 - \$1.3M):** Chloride is an increasing and irreversible threat to water and aquatic ecosystems. This program has demonstrated results through innovation and adaptation to protect and restore surface and groundwater.
- **Clean Water Council capacity (Line #20 - \$922K):** Enhanced administrative, communications and planning support strengthens the Council and the Clean Water Fund.
- **Watershed Partners Legacy Grants (Line # 48 - \$1.0M):** This grant opportunity invites local partners to bring their creativity and innovative thinking to bear on our water quality challenges in a new way. This is similar to the new proposed community grants program in the ENRTF amendment.
- **Protecting our drinking water (multiple):** Every Minnesotan deserves access to clean, safe drinking water. We are very pleased to see several drinking water programs recommended for increases in funding, including:
  - MDH Private Well Initiatives (Line #54 - \$6.0M)
  - MDH Source Water Protection (Line #55 - \$7.779M)
  - Groundwater Protection & Restoration Strategies (Line #56 - \$3.5M)

## Items of concern

**(1) National Park Water Quality Protection Program (Line # 21):** While the merits of this activity are clear, the Clean Water Fund is not the right funding source.

- Clean Water Fund recommendations have traditionally been program-based, rather than earmarked for specific parcels. We do not believe the Council's role is to select between individual on-the-ground projects for implementation. If the Council wishes to begin choosing which stream banks to restore, which culverts to replace, or which homes receive well testing - it should consider revising its strategic plan accordingly.
- As supporters noted at the July CWC meeting and in multiple letters to the Council, this project includes funding for private, for-profit resorts to facilitate an increase in the size of weddings and events that can be hosted on-site. The Clean Water Fund was not (in our view) intended as a local economic development fund.
- Water infrastructure upgrades of this type could be funded through bonding (cash or debt), general fund appropriations, county funds, IRRRB funds, the PFA Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program or even the Council's own Watershed Partners Legacy Grants program.

We ask the Council to consider the long-term implications of selecting specific on-the-ground projects in a non-competitive process outside of the traditional programmatic and/or watershed-based approach, and whether doing so might normalize picking clean water winners and losers in this fund. In our view, the risks outweigh the benefits.

**(2) Buffer Law Implementation (line #40 - \$4.0M):** Clean Water Funds have already provided \$22.872 million to BWSR for grants to SWCDs for the implementation of the buffer law. [99.8%](#) of parcels currently comply.

While we acknowledge that some parcels remain out of compliance (or may fall out of compliance from time to time), we are curious as to whether General Fund Riparian Aid dollars could fund a portion of this work (perhaps 50%).



- General Fund Riparian Aid dollars go to Counties, Watershed Districts and BWSR to support buffer enforcement, including \$15 million in aid in 2023 and 2024 and an ongoing annual appropriation of \$12 million thereafter. With so few cases out of compliance, it seems reasonable that those general-fund enforcement dollars could provide for both monitoring/implementation and enforcement activities.
- Administrative Penalty Order (APO) authority exists to compel intransigent landowners to comply with a longstanding law. The maximum penalty for violations was [increased](#) during the 2024 legislative session. While we do not relish the idea of deploying APO authority, revenue from fines could cover a portion of the enforcement cost. This would provide fairness for taxpayers and potentially free up some General Fund Riparian Aid support for monitoring and implementation work.

### Summary of requested funding levels

Line	Agency	Program Title	Original FY24-25 Funding Level	Requested FY26-27 Funding Level
8	MDA	Forever Green Initiative	\$6.0M	\$6.0M
19	MPCA	Chloride Reduction	\$1.3M	\$1.3M
20	MPCA	Clean Water Council	\$675K	\$922K
21	MPCA	National Park Water Quality Protection Program	\$2.0M	\$0M
40	BWSR	Buffer Law Implementation	\$4.0M	\$2.0M
48	BWSR	Watershed Partners Legacy Grants	\$1.0M	\$1.0M
54	MDH	Private Well Initiatives	\$3.0M	\$6.0M
55	MDH	Source Water Protection	\$7.489M	\$7.779M
56	MDH	Groundwater Protection & Restoration Strategies	\$1.5M	\$3.5M

### Potential policy recommendations

Several policy recommendations might complement ongoing efforts to protect surface water and groundwater throughout Minnesota.

- **Chloride liability reform:** As several Council members have noted, chloride reduction efforts would benefit from policies that allow certified "smart salt" commercial applicators to apply for liability protections that reduce their risks for "slip and fall" lawsuits if they are properly applying de-icing chemicals (and taking careful records).

This approach, already in place elsewhere, reduces business risk and minimizes chloride pollution without compromising public safety.

- **Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) easements:** Agency staff have indicated that securing permanent conservation easements in DWSMAs can be challenging, in part due to elevated property values on cropland parcels near rural population centers. We ask the Clean Water Council Policy Committee to explore policy options that might facilitate higher-cost easements on parcels located within high-risk DWSMAs.
- **Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program (MNAWQCP) in higher-risk DWSMAs:** Multiple communities have elevated nitrate levels in their drinking water and are now protected by Part 2 of the MDA's Groundwater Protection Rule (GPR). To protect public health, phases III and IV of the GPR provide for regulatory interventions that may require farmers to adopt practices well beyond those required for the MNAWQCP.

Because certified farms are exempt from new regulation for 10 years, the program could allow farm operations to forgo GPR-required public health protections in favor of a far less protective certification standard for up to a decade. To protect public health, we ask the Clean Water Council Policy Committee to explore a pair of potential administrative adjustments to that program:

- i. Certified farms inside a DWSMA's are not to be held exempt from Phase III and IV GPR requirements, regardless of certification status;
- or
- ii. The certification period for farms inside DWSMA's with elevated levels of nitrate should be reduced from 10 years to 5 years.

### **Looking ahead**

The Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment expires in ten years. Voters are expecting to see measurable progress in our water resources by 2034. We urge the Council and agencies to place renewed emphasis on delivering measurable outcomes that will help Minnesotans see the value of these funds moving forward.

We appreciate the efforts of the Clean Water Council to date, and we look forward to working with you to maximize the clean water outcomes of the FY 26-27 Clean Water Fund recommendations.



Trevor Russell  
Water Program Director  
Friends of the Mississippi River



13 August 2024

John Barten  
Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Barten, Mr. Gardner, and members of the Clean Water Council,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments as a Minnesota citizen while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. Although not a direct endorsement from the Minnesota Groundwater Association, the work done through the Minnesota Department of Health with the Private Well Initiative supports our volunteer work in collaboration with this nonprofit science organization. Our goal is to help ensure drinking water is safe for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota. I suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

**Private Well Water Education**

Through well-user clinics designed to provide preliminary screening of basic water quality, we have reached out in person to about 1,000 well users per year, beginning in 2023. Based on our onsite participant surveys, the majority of well owners and users have been grateful for the screening and most importantly their improved knowledge gained for future self-monitoring and safe drinking water protection.

Although the volunteerism from many retired people is useful in our screening clinics, the rate of well-owner contact is limited in capacity. A funded Private Well Initiative could greatly shorten the time to reach most of the approximate 900,000 private-well users in Minnesota through the volunteer collaboration.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jeffrey D. Stoner  
Retired hydrologist



## MINNESOTA WATER WELL ASSOCIATION

### Representing Minnesota's Water Well Drilling Industry

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e mail: [mwwa@ngwa.org](mailto:mwwa@ngwa.org)

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August 14, 2024

John Barten  
Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council support for the Private Well Initiative (FY26-27)

Dear Mr. Barten, Mr. Gardner, and members of the Clean Water Council,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder input while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The **Private Well Initiative** as proposed by the MDH would greatly support private well owners and make positive strides in ensuring the citizens of Minnesota have safe drinking water sources. We feel this program would be very complimentary to our work at the Minnesota Water Well Association (MWWA) where we endeavor to help private water users understand their drinking water and make sure that water supplies are safe for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota now and for future generations.

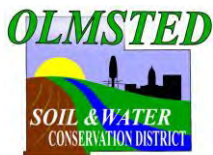
The MWWA has been an integral part of Minnesota's water history for 103 years, helping to not only bring potable water supplies to over 70% of the population, but also actively participating in the development of our State well code, state water policy initiatives, the advisory council on wells and borings and more. Through continued partnership with State Agencies (MDH, DNR and others) we have been able to advance many positive policies and evolve water systems across the state. The **Private Well Initiative** will help improve awareness, provide solutions, and further improve the health and welfare of over one million Minnesotans. Please consider funding this program for FY26-27 and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Schulenberg", with a horizontal line drawn underneath the signature.

David Schulenberg  
MWWA Executive Director.



**TAP-IN**  
SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR SE MN

August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024

John Barten  
Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[bbarten79@gmail.com](mailto:bbarten79@gmail.com)

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Barten, Mr. Gardner, and members of the Clean Water Council,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at Olmsted County to support clean and safe drinking water for all citizens. We suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

#### **Private Well Initiative**

Olmsted County has provided water testing services across the Southeast region of Minnesota and has supported local and state monitoring programs through the County's environmental laboratory for decades. We support providing an avenue to ensure that private well owners have access to local and economical testing options and resources that give them peace of mind every time they draw water from their tap.

Through the Private Well Initiative, we were able to develop our regional TAP-IN, Safe Drinking Water program and maintain a collaborative of soil and water districts, local public health, and environmental services staff across 9 SE MN counties. In the pilot phase of funding through the MN Department of Health, we were able to offer testing for nitrate-nitrogen, manganese, and arsenic to nearly 200 households, provide nitrate screening to almost 400 households, and offer one on one consultation to connect private well users with resources to assist them in addressing their water quality issues. Our outreach effort ensures private well owners understand the need to test their drinking water, perform routine maintenance, and provides funding support to mitigate issues when testing exceeds safe drinking water limits.



**Image** - Drive Through Nitrate Screening Clinics Hosted in Rochester, MN in 2021 served nearly 300 private well households with screening results and consultation.

Olmsted County is dedicated to ensuring the health and well-being of our citizens. We will continue to work alongside other SE Minnesota Counties to protect our vulnerable groundwater and drinking water resources. We ask you to continue supporting the Private Well Initiative to expand current programming and ensure our citizens have access to safe drinking water.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

*Denise Daniels*

622DB5070F2B49D...  
Denise Daniels

Director, Olmsted County Public Health

Signed by:

*Skip Langer*

C6C2D89BB8454D2...  
Skip Langer

Soil & Water Manager, Olmsted Soil & Water Conservation District

[8/14/2024]

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Milaca to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

**Source Water Protection**

The City of Milaca has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2009. We are currently undergoing an amendment to our Wellhead Protection Plan, and we are eagerly anticipating implementing the measures in our new Plan.

Under our current Wellhead Protection Plan, we were awarded a Source Water Protection Grant in 2017 to purchase and install a camera system for security purposes, and in 2023, we procured a Source Water Protection Grant to seal an unused large-diameter dug well. Through these grants, the City of Milaca was able to address an ongoing security threat to our infrastructure, as well as address a threat to our source water.

*Working with the Source Water Protection program has allowed us to target and prioritize threats to our drinking water source.*

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gary Kirkeby  
Public Works Supervisor  
City of Milaca

Cc: Kylie Jacobsen ([kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us](mailto:kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us)) and Chad Anderson ([chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us](mailto:chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us)), Minnesota Department of Health







***City of Grey Eagle***

PO Box 116 • 202 Woodman Street South • Grey Eagle MN 56336  
P: 320.285.2464 • E: gecity@meltel.net

---

August 14, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St Paul MN 55155  
Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us

Dear Mr. Gardner –

RE: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Grey Eagle to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

**Source Water Protection**

The City of Grey Eagle has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2016. Despite staff turnover, we have implemented many of the activities in our plan and have partnered with city staff, our local SWCD, and MDH staff on different activities.

Some of the most important activities in our plan required outside funding. In 2023, we were able to procure a Source Water Protection Grant to purchase, install and test security system equipment, and we were able to drill a test well to help in the process of identifying a possible new well location.

Working with the Source Water Protection program and obtaining the grant funding allowed us to protect our critical drinking water infrastructure, and it has also helped us plan for future community needs.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Beth Ramacher  
Clerk/Treasurer, City of Grey Eagle

Cc: Kylie Jacobsen (kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us) and Chad Anderson  
(chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us), Minnesota Department of Health

8/14/2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Randall to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.


**Source Water Protection**

The City of Randall has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2013. The installation of a previously unanticipated but necessary new well left us completely re-doing our Wellhead Protection Plan, leaving us working closely with MDH staff on the new well and on Plan development until 2023. We have already implemented approximately 40% of the activities in our Plan.

In 2022, while we were still developing our Plan, the City of Randall experienced flooding from an extreme rainfall event. One of our wells was inundated with flood waters. Following the approval of our Wellhead Protection Plan, one of our first orders of business was to get a grant from MDH to extend the casing of our (now refurbished) well, reducing the likelihood of a similar event. We plan on working closely with MDH staff to procure additional grants and to continue implementing our Wellhead Protection Plan.

Working with the Source Water Protection program has allowed us to target and prioritize threats to our drinking water source.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
  
Matt Pantzke  
City Manager  
City of Randall

Cc: Kylie Jacobsen ([kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us](mailto:kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us)) and Chad Anderson ([chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us](mailto:chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us)), Minnesota Department of Health

# FRESHWATER

August 14, 2024

Steven Besser, Budget Outcomes Committee Chair  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
Saint Paul, MN 55115

Paul Gardner, Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
Saint Paul, MN 55115

## Re: Clean Water Council FY26-27 funding recommendations

Dear Chair Besser, Council Administrator Gardner, and Clean Water Council members,

We have reviewed the Clean Water Council's list of funding recommendations for the next biennium, and we appreciate the considerable thought and discussion that has gone into its development thus far. As our state continues to address complex water challenges, we cannot overstate the importance of your work in stewarding the Clean Water Fund.

Within the current list of recommendations, we'd like to offer our strong support for the following:

- **MDH - Private Well Initiative (\$6.0 million)**
  - We believe safe drinking water for all Minnesotans should remain a top priority for the Clean Water Council. Unfortunately, residents who rely on private wells remain largely unprotected and under-represented in this area. The MDH Private Well Initiative is a needed step towards widespread testing of private wells, outreach and assistance to well owners, and coordination with local partners to implement these actions.
- **MDH - Future of Drinking Water Initiative (\$0.5 million)**
  - This funding supports completion of the State Drinking Water Action Plan, an important initiative to ensure long-term safety and public trust of drinking water systems.
- **DNR - Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning (\$4.0 million)**
  - With the high demand for groundwater across the state, including proposed data centers, expanded irrigation, and suburban development, it is critical that the DNR maintains a robust monitoring network to inform permitting decisions.
- **MDA - Conservation Equipment Assistance (\$3.5 million)**
  - This program is a powerful tool for driving adoption of soil health practices through access to specialized equipment. MDA has reported significant interest from the agricultural community with FY24 application requests totaling \$8.4 million.
- **MDA - Technical Assistance (\$3.2 million)**
  - Through initiatives like the Root River Field to Stream Partnership, this funding both implements conservation practices and evaluates their effectiveness to provide field-tested recommendations for protecting water.

- **MDA - Forever Green Agricultural Initiative (\$6.0 million)**
  - Perennial cropping systems represent a huge potential for improved water quality outcomes in our state, along with new economic opportunities for Minnesota farmers. We would like to see Clean Water Fund support continue at previous funding levels to maintain the momentum of this important work.
- **BWSR - Watershed Legacy Partner Grants (\$1.0 million)**
  - Tribal governments and local nonprofit groups are critical partners in Minnesota's clean water efforts. We support this funding to help implement watershed restoration and protection within local communities.
- **BWSR Accelerated Implementation (\$8.7 million)**
  - This program enhances the capacity of local governments and provides important technical assistance to conservation partners.
- **MPCA - Chloride Reduction Efforts (\$1.3 million)**
  - Chloride continues to permanently pollute Minnesota waters, and we support MPCA's efforts to train salt applicators and conduct needed outreach to address this problem.
- **Met Council Water Demand Reduction Grant Program (\$1.5 million)**
  - We have heard from cities and counties that are asking for this type of funding for water reuse and water efficiency/rebate programs. This program helps move Minnesota in the right direction toward more sustainable groundwater use.

Thank you for considering these comments, and for your work to protect and improve Minnesota waters.



Michelle Stockness, PE

Executive Director, Freshwater



August 14, 2024

**VIA E-MAIL AND REGULAR U.S. MAIL**

Mr. Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

500 Center Avenue  
P.O. Box 779  
Moorhead, MN 56561-0779  
Phone: 218.477.8000  
Fax: 218.477.8020  
[www.mpsutility.com](http://www.mpsutility.com)

**RE: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations**

Dear Mr. Gardner:

Moorhead Public Service (MPS) appreciates the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at MPS to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota now and for future generations.

**Source Water Protection**

MPS has successfully utilized grants available through the Source Water Protection Program for various projects aimed at improving infrastructure and ensuring the success of our mission to supply high-quality drinking water to the cities of Moorhead and Dilworth. Grant projects have been diverse, from Wellhead Protection Plan implementation and updating, installation of monitoring sensors at our surface water intake, to security updates for well houses and portable generator docking stations, well televising, and full water supply well rehabilitation. The support received from the Source Water Protection Program ensures MPS' water supply resiliency and redundancy are maintained through the completion of these projects.

Source Water Protection staff have been instrumental in safeguarding source water bodies. For example, a series of parcels, near MPS' Wellhead Protection Plan - Drinking Water Supply Management Area boundary, are frequently at risk of being rezoned, posing a direct threat to the main groundwater source used to supply Moorhead and Dilworth. Source Water Protection staff took the time to dial into the public hearings to speak on behalf of protecting the source water. This kind of effort, complimented by the opportunity for grant-funded projects, is instrumental to the ongoing success and stewardship of the State's valuable water resources.

Working with the Source Water Protection Program has allowed MPS to target and prioritize needed items that ensure our water utility's resiliency and redundancy are maintained as we strive to be the best possible stewards of our state's water resources. MPS' staff appreciates the opportunity to access and receive guidance, planning assistance, and grant funding to carry out these essential projects and objectives. They not only represent assistance in planning and

day-to-day operations but also prove critical to bolstering the resilience of utilities, providing direct benefit to the communities we serve.

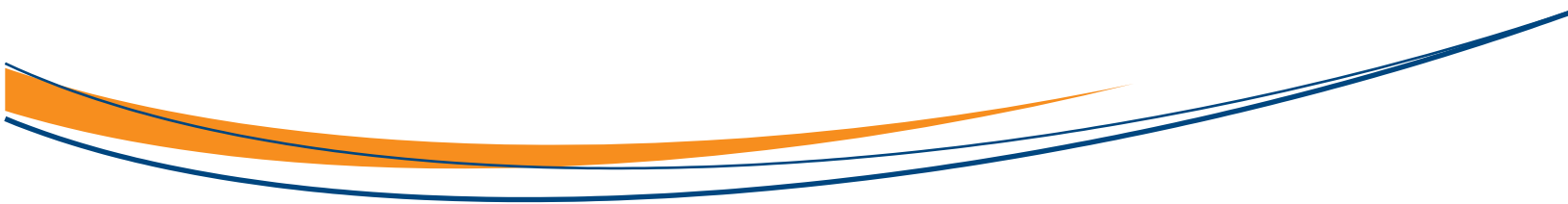
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Marc Pritchard  
Water Plant Manager  
Moorhead Public Service  
PO Box 779  
500 Center Avenue  
Moorhead, MN 56561-0779

MP/ln





8/14/2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. Our Source Water Protection Program supports our work at the City of Waconia to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources. The City supports making funding a priority to continue our work of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

The City of Waconia's Public Water System has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2012. Working with the Source Water Protection Program has allowed us to target and prioritize threats to our drinking water source. Through the grants program, it has also created funding opportunities for us to partner with our local SWCD on projects that benefit our community. Some activities include private well locating, sealing of unused wells and documenting where these wells are located. We have implemented 80% of the activities in our Source Water Protection Program.

In addition to these activities the implementation of our program has helped our awareness of the DWISMA area and protecting source water for the future. We hope to continue our efforts with the assistance of Source Water Protection Grant.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Doug Bode  
Utility Maintenance Supervisor  
City of Waconia

Mr. Paul Gardner  
Council Administrator  
Clean Water Council  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

August 14, 2024

Mr. Gardner and the Clean Water Council,

My farm is in Middleville Township in Wright County. I recently completed an erosion control project right along the North Fork Crow River that addressed surface erosion in my field and improved the rivers' water quality. This project was made possible by North Fork Crow River One Watershed, One Plan cost share funding. Due to the scope of this project involving multiple landowners and several erosion spots, I would have not been able to complete the work without the cost share provided.

The Wright Soil and Water Conservation District was able to design my project, assist me in finding additional federal cost share funds, and supervise the installation of my project by local contractors. Projects like this, planned and implemented at the local level, are where we are going to see our water quality improve and build trust with local farmers. As farmers we don't want to send our topsoil downstream, because we can't replace it in our lifetime. This cost-share helps us do our part for the next generation.

I strongly encourage the Clean Water Council to continue supporting the Watershed Based Implementation Funding at the current or increased levels for 2026 and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Raymond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James Raymond  
Wright County Farmer



To:	Paul Gardner, Council Administrator of the Clean Water Council
From:	Dan Cibulka, MRSC Watershed 1w1p Project Coordinator
Date:	8-14-2024
Subject:	Watershed Based Implementation Funds

Mr. Gardner and the Clean Water Council,

On behalf of the Mississippi River St Cloud Watershed Partnership (Partnership), I am writing you to encourage continued funding for the Watershed-based Implementation Fund by the Clean Water Council.

The Partnership has been working since late 2022 to develop a Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP - anticipated to be approved in early spring 2025) for this region. Staff and elected officials from Benton, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright Counties and Soil and Water Conservation Districts have been leading this effort with strong support from a Citizen Advisory Committee and project consultant. There has been an incredible amount of time invested in this process with the anticipation of watershed funding coming our way to carry out the plan. True, the current estimated funding amount will be insufficient to complete all aspects of our work. However, we see tremendous value in having a predictable stream of funds to provide for projects as well as to leverage additional funding sources.

This letter is coming to you today from our team of staff; due to the timing of your next meeting we were unfortunately unable to bring this to our Policy Committee for full consideration. I assure you however that our Policy Committee is supportive of predictable funding streams to carry out the plan that they have recently approved for 60-day public review. As we near completion of our CWMP we look forward to using these funds to carry out the priorities listed in the plan for both local and downstream benefits. We respectfully request that the Council continue to fully fund the Watershed-based Implementation Fund so that local governments, in partnership, can fulfill their responsibilities in carrying out the work for clean water on behalf of the state of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

*Daniel A Cibulka*

Dan Cibulka  
MRSC Watershed 1w1p Project Coordinator  
On behalf of the MRSC Watershed Partnership

**MRSC Watershed Partnership**  
(Benton County & SWCD, Meeker County & SWCD, Mille Lacs SWCD,  
Sherburne County & SWCD, Stearns County & SWCD, Wright County & SWCD)

8/13/2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Avon to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

**Source Water Protection**

The City of Avon has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2011. We are currently finalizing an amendment that when approved, will run through 2035, and we are looking forward to implementing the new Plan with our local and state partners.

The City of Avon has a history of successful procurement of funding through the Source Water Protection Grant. Four of the five successful grant applications have focused on education and outreach regarding source water protection, water conservation, and the Wellhead Protection Plan, while one of the grants included the purchase and installation of static water monitoring equipment to allow us to keep an eye on water quantity and ensure the city is not overusing its aquifer.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Justin Kurtz  
Water/Wastewater Foreman  
City of Avon

Cc: Kylie Jacobsen ([kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us](mailto:kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us)) and Chad Anderson ([chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us](mailto:chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us)), Minnesota Department of Health

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

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**From:** Emily Resseger <EResseger@mwmo.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 14, 2024 2:00 PM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA)  
**Cc:** Kevin Reich; Minnesota Stormwater Research Council @ the Univ. of Minnesota  
**Subject:** Support for funding of the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council

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Dear members of the Clean Water Council,

I am writing to express my appreciation to the Clean Water Council for past funding of the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council (MSRC) (Clean Water Fund proposal program 82B) and to encourage continued funding for the 2026-2027 biennium.

The Mississippi Watershed Management Organization works to protect and improve water quality, habitat and natural resources in our urban watershed that drains to the Mississippi River, largely through the installation of stormwater best management practices (BMPs). As a fully developed watershed, we need to work creatively with our partners on projects that protect the river, often working within small areas and underground. The MSRC is vital to our ability to do this work effectively. We are able to utilize outcomes from projects funded by the MSRC, such as those that investigated the performance of underground sand filters, compared different phosphorus binding medias, and identified sources of contaminants in urban stormwater, to ensure our projects will be successful.

We are an ongoing, long-term contributor to the MSRC because we believe it is the best way to support organizations throughout the state in understanding complicated stormwater issues and staying on top of new stormwater technology. We ask the Clean Water Council to continue funding the MSRC so that organizations like ours can continue to benefit from its excellent work.

Thank you,

**Emily Resseger**

*Monitoring, Assessment, and Research Program Manager*

*She / Her / Hers\**

(612) 746-4980 direct

(612) 746-4970 office

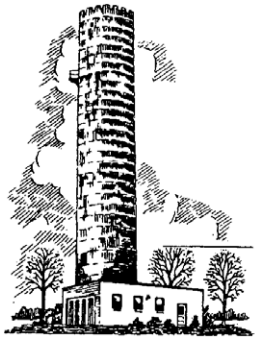
Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

2522 Marshall Street NE

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55418-3329

[www.mwmo.org](http://www.mwmo.org)

Connect with us!



# CITY OF OGILVIE

102 N. HILL AVENUE  
PO BOX 57  
OGILVIE MN 56358  
(320) 272-4822  
(320) 272-4959 FAX

August 14, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
[Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us](mailto:Paul.Gardner@state.mn.us)

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following program supports our work at the City of Ogilvie to preserve and improve the quality of drinking water resources, and we suggest that its priority in funding recommendations reflects our shared priority of protecting drinking water in Minnesota for future generations.

## **Source Water Protection**

The City of Ogilvie has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2012. Staff turnover at the clerk level in the city has meant that implementation of our Plan has not always been at the top of our list of priorities. However, we recently secured the first MDH Source Water Protection Grant ever issued in Kanabec County, and we are now in the process of sealing our old Ogilvie Creamery Well, which has been unused for several years. This grant opportunity allows the City to efficiently remedy an issue that would have been a significant expense for the City to take on. The entire process has been incredibly smooth and the staff who assisted with this were very helpful.

Working with the Source Water Protection program to seal this well has allowed us to protect our drinking water source. We anticipate pursuing additional funding to continue to protect our drinking water.

Thank you for your consideration.



Sincerely,

Heather Heins  
Clerk  
City of Ogilvie

Cc: Kylie Jacobsen ([kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us](mailto:kylie.jacobsen@state.mn.us)) and Chad Anderson  
([chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us](mailto:chad.r.anderson@state.mn.us)), Minnesota Department of Health

Thank You  
City of Ogilvie





Historic Courthouse  
635 2<sup>nd</sup> St SE, Milaca, MN 56353  
320-983-2160  
[www.millelacsSWCD.org](http://www.millelacsSWCD.org)

August 9, 2024

Paul Gardner  
Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Clean Water Council Draft Recommendations

Dear Mr. Gardner,

We appreciate the opportunity to provide stakeholder comments while the Council considers proposals for funding recommendations. The following programs support our work at Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to preserve and improve the quality of groundwater resources, and we suggest that their priority in funding recommendations reflect our shared priority that groundwater is clean and available to all in Minnesota.

**Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies**

Since our GRAPS report for the Rum River Watershed was developed, Mille Lacs SWCD has undertaken many actions outlined in the Plan to address potential sources of contamination. We have received two Accelerated Implementation Grants to work with the public water systems and private well owners in the county to protect drinking water sources. This also presented an opportunity for us to educate our community members about the importance of drinking water protection and actions they can take to protect drinking water sources.

Working with the GRAPS program has allowed us to target and prioritize threats to groundwater in the region. Through the grants program, it has created funding opportunities for us to partner with public water systems, community leaders and citizen stakeholders on projects that benefit our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Shaw". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Susan Shaw  
District Administrator  
Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation District

August 14, 2024

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN, 55155  
bbarten79@gmail.com

VIA EMAIL



Honorable Paul Gardner, Clean Water Council Administrator  
520 Lafayette Road North  
St. Paul, MN, 55155  
paul.Gardner@state.mn.us

Dear Chair Barten, Executive Director Gardner, and Clean Water Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Clean Water Council's FY26-27 recommendations on behalf of the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA), the Minnesota Well Owners Organization (MNWOO), and Winona County Coalition for Clean Water (WCCCW). MCEA is a nonprofit environmental organization that uses law and science to protect Minnesota's environment, its natural resources, and the health of its people, and MNWOO provides education, legal, and technical services to anyone who owns a private well. WCCCW is a local advocacy group based in Southeastern Minnesota.

As the Council considers its final budget recommendations, we would like to underscore the importance of groundwater protection programs that address both immediate public health needs and longer-term source reduction goals. This is especially important for private well owners, who don't have the same regulatory protections that people on public water systems do. The Environmental Protection Agency's recent directive to Minnesota state agencies to accelerate their work on groundwater nitrate contamination in the karst region, where over 9,000 residents with private wells are estimated to be at risk, underscores the urgency of this issue in our state.

We would like to voice our support for the below programs that are included in the Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) recommendations for FY26-27:

- MDH Private Well Initiative (Line #54 - \$6.0M)
- MDH Source Water Protection (Line #55 - \$7.779M)
- Groundwater Protection & Restoration Strategies (Line #56 - \$3.5M)
- Pesticide Testing in Private Wells (Line #9 - \$1.0M)

A fully funded allocation for the Private Well Initiative is critical for MDH to implement the Phase II Public Health Response Work Plan for Southeastern Minnesota that was sent to the EPA in January 2024. This includes a well inventory for private wells constructed before the Minnesota Well Code was put in place, free well testing, education

and outreach, and an online data dashboard. At this point, limited details have been provided on how the \$6 million request would be allocated across these different initiatives: we expect that this information will be provided to stakeholders and the public if the request is approved by the Council, and that it will not include private well mitigation. We also expect that measurable results of the Clean Water Council investment will be provided, in terms of number of well tests provided per year, progress on the statewide well inventory, number of people reached through education and outreach events, and accessible public data on private well water quality.

We also support continued investment in the Source Water Protection program, which is key to reach the Clean Water Council's strategic objective to secure long-term protection for the most vulnerable lands in DWSMAs statewide, and the development of Groundwater Protection & Restoration Strategies to ensure that local partners have sufficient groundwater information to implement effective source reduction plans.

Finally, we know from local studies in Dakota County that when nitrate levels are above 3 mg/L, there is a significantly higher likelihood that pesticides are also present. The combination of nitrate at elevated levels with pesticides can increase the human health risk for certain toxicological endpoints, therefore we strongly support pesticide testing in private wells to supplement that data on nitrate in private wells from the Township Testing Program.

The Clean Water, Land and Legacy amendment expires in ten years, and voters expect to see measurable progress in our water resources by 2034. Thank you and we look forward to working with you to maximize the clean water outcomes of the FY 26-27 Clean Water Fund recommendations.

Sincerely,

Carly Griffith  
Water Program Director  
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
cgriffith@mncenter.org

Jeff Broberg  
Director  
Minnesota Well Owners Organization  
brobergmnwoo@gmail.com

Cherie Hales  
Member  
Winona County Coalition for Clean Water  
cheriehales@gmail.com

## Gardner, Paul (MPCA)

**From:** Mary Thompson <mary.thompson@co.rock.mn.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 14, 2024 5:28 PM  
**To:** Gardner, Paul (MPCA); Wagner, Margaret (MDA)  
**Subject:** AgBMP Funding Need

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Hello Paul and Margaret –

I wanted to touch base with both of you regarding the Ag BMP program. I administer the program here at Rock SWCD. We have been able to fund 15 loans thus far in 2024 totaling \$1,208,625.97.

We currently have allocated funds for 5 more projects totaling \$502,000 with a wait list of 19 that have applied for funding totaling \$1,115,000.00.

Needless to say, the high interest rates have driven the demand for funding in this program to an all-time high in the 18 years I have worked with it. We typically have a lot of interest in feedlot improvements in order to help manage and control runoff and manure application as well some replacement septic systems that were no longer up to standards but, with Soil Health at the forefront, we have seen an increase in interest and for conservation equipment in order for landowners to put practices in place that ultimately help protect our groundwater. These landowners are interested in implementing cover crops or no till /strip till practices but need to retrofit or trade their equipment in order to do so. Without available funding, we do try to direct landowners and producers to other funding sources that may be helpful to them, typically referring them to the MDA website Bus Dev/Loan/Grants and we have also contacted those on our wait list to encourage them to apply for the Soil Health Equipment Grant not only for their benefit but it would also leave more in our budget for other projects if they were to be partially funded for their equipment.

With our October payments we will potentially be able to fund one project which is frustrating on the local level, especially when we have to tell them how long the wait will most likely be.

This program is important to our landowners and producers in making upgrades to feedlots, manure management and conservation tillage more affordable with the 3% interest rate and we continue to receive more requests.

It is important to us as well in being able to offer this program and help make changes that ultimately improve water quality.

Below is a measurable breakdown for the conservation equipment we have funded in the last several years. There are only 4 but as I said, we are seeing more and more interest in soil health and landowners are willing to try these practices with equipment upgrades and cost share incentives toward these practices in an effort to promote better soil health.

Conservation Tillage Acres	Year Purchased	Nitrogen (lbs/yr) Reduction	Phosphorus (lbs./yr) Reduction	TSS (tons/yr) Reductions
600	2024	532.1	64	23.4
700	2022	329.6	75.6	14.8
1500	2022	706.4	162.1	31.7
2200	2021	1950.9	234.8	85.6



	Totals	3519	536.50	155.5
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Below are the pollution reductions on the septic systems we were able to fund over the past several years. We have had several that have had to pursue other avenues of funding as they could not wait to upgrade their systems until Ag BMP funding became available.

## Septic System Improvement Estimator

**5. Results -** The table below provides the *additional* removal of Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), Total Suspended Solids (TSS), Bacteria measured as Fecal Coliform, along the nutrients Nitrogen and Phosphorous based on the data entered above. The total removal is summarized for all the systems at the bottom.

Number	System Location Identifier	Pounds of BOD <sub>5</sub> per Year	Pounds of TSS per Year	Ton of TSS Per Year	Bacteria per Year (CFU)	Pounds of Phosphorus per Year	Pounds of Nitrogen per Year
1	41 100th Avenue, Luverne, MN	632	349	0.17	1.08E+14	16	45
2	90 110th Avenue, Luverne, MN	451	249	0.12	7.70E+13	11	32
3	2 211th Street, Valley Springs, MN	451	249	0.12	7.70E+13	11	32
4	527 80th Avenue, Luverne, MN	361	199	0.10	6.16E+13	9	26
5	78 State Hwy 23, Garretson, MN	541	299	0.15	9.23E+13	13	39
6	426 20th Avenue, Hills, MN	541	299	0.15	9.23E+13	13	39
7	901 51st Street, Luverne, MN	361	199	0.10	6.16E+13	9	26
8	653 91st Street, Luverne, MN	361	199	0.10	6.16E+13	9	26
9	909 41st Street, Ellsworth, MN	361	199	0.10	6.16E+13	9	26

Total	4061	2243	1.12	6.93E+14	101	290
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Thank you for all your work with and for the Clean Water Funds – we appreciate it out here at the local level and the fact that it allows us to help our landowners and livestock producers improve not only their operations but improve water quality for everyone in the process!! I hope this is helpful in an effort to emphasize the need for further funding allocated to this program.

Mary Thompson  
Rock SWCD





August 14, 2024

Chair Barten, Administrator Gardner, and Members of the Clean Water Council:

Thank you for your dedication to and your service on the Clean Water Council (CWC). The role of the CWC is vital in ensuring the success of the Legacy Amendment and we appreciate this opportunity to respectfully provide comments on the upcoming Clean Water Fund recommendations.

In 2008, when Minnesota voters approved the Legacy Amendment, they did so with the hope that our lakes, rivers, wetlands and water resources would be protected and restored for all Minnesotans to enjoy. As of 2022, the Clean Water Fund had spent \$1.2 billion on programs and projects across the state. While we believe many of these programs and projects are worthwhile, we do so with an eye towards 2034 - hoping that future voters can clearly see the impacts these investments have made.

The most recent CWC strategic plan established a goal to “protect and restore surface waters to achieve 70% swimmable and 67% fishable waters by 2034.” While we wholeheartedly support and endorse these efforts, we worry that the Council is not providing clear or measurable progress or updates towards this end. At the very least, we feel there is a lack of transparent tracking and communicating progress towards this goal with the broader public.

Further, it is unclear the influence the Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) may have over Clean Water Fund recommendations each biennium. While the CWC has a clearly established goal for swimmable and fishable waters, the motivations of the ICT are unclear.

We respectfully urge the Council to make decisions they believe are best for achieving measurable goals – such as swimmable, fishable or drinkable waters. We believe the Council, with its strong and measurable goals in mind, better understands which projects and programs are needed currently. We also hope you will find more ways to present measurable progress to Minnesotans going forward.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the recommendations, and thanks for your service on the CWC.

Sincerely,

Nels Paulsen, Policy Director

James Lehner, Policy Associate