Clean Water Council Meeting Agenda
Monday, January 26, 2026
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

IN PERSON at MPCA offices in St. Paul with Webex Available (Hybrid Meeting)

9:00 Regular Clean Water Council Business

- **(INFORMATION ITEM)** Introductions—please declare any perceived or actual conflict of interest
- **(ACTION ITEM)** Agenda - comments/additions and approve agenda
- **(ACTION ITEM)** Meeting Minutes - comments/additions and approve December minutes
- **(INFORMATION ITEM**) Chair, Committee, and Council Staff update

9:45 Public comment

Any member of the public wishing to address the Council regarding something not on the agenda is invited to do so as a part of this agenda item.

10:00 (ACTION ITEM) Council leadership and committee membership

Every two years, the Council nominates and elects a Chair and Vice Chair. The Committee Rosters are also reviewed annually. These will be taken up as separate votes as a part of this agenda item. If the Watershed District representative has not yet been appointed, we will delay the establishment of the rosters until February. Council members are requested to share interest in officer roles or committee assignment in advance, but may also make their wishes known during the meeting.

10:15 (INFORMATION ITEM) Proposal schedule and approach

Based on the proposals submitted, a draft schedule for their presentation has been assembled. We will use this time to review the schedule and walk through how to review proposals and submit scores and questions. As a reminder, the proposal review schedule is in Teams.

10:45 Break

11:00 (INFORMATION ITEM) 2026 Clean Water Fund Performance Report

- Kim Laing (she/her), Manager, Surface Water Monitoring Section, MPCA

Staff working on developing the 2026 Clean Water Fund Performance Report will share a high-level look at what they are producing and how it has been updated from previous iterations. Council members are invited to consider how the 2024 Performance Report could be useful during review of budget proposals as they wait for the 2026 release later this spring.

12:00 Lunch

12:30 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Large Volume Water Users Policy Statement

The Policy Committee spent several months developing a new policy statement focused on Large Volume Water Users. This continues to be an evolving and pressing area of concern, and we expect that this policy will need to be updated already in the near future. At this time, the Council is invited to engage with the draft statement as it currently stands.

1:30 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Public Participation Plan: Check in, 2026 planning

Our Public Participation Plan stipulates that we will check in on the plan every January. Please come to the meeting having read the plan as a refresher and consider in advance what you might be able to do to support the Council's goal for enhanced engagement in this budget year.

2:00 Adjourn *(Steering Committee meets directly after adjournment)*

Clean Water Council
December 15, 2025, Meeting Summary

Members present: John Barten (Chair), Steve Besser, Eunie Biel, Rich Biske (Vice Chair), Dick Brainerd, Gail Cederberg, Steve Christenson, Tannie Eshenaur, Warren Formo, Brad Gausman, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Justin Hanson, Holly Hatlewick, Peter Kjeseth, Annie Knight, Chris Meyer, Fran Miron, Jason Moeckel, Jeff Peterson, Rep. Kristi Pursell, Peter Schwagerl, Glenn Skuta, Marcie Weinandt, and Jessica Wilson.
Members absent: Rep. Steve Jacob, Sen. John Hoffman, Ole Olmanson, and 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
- Motion to approve the December 15th meeting agenda by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Steve Besser. Motion carries unanimously.
- Motion to approve the November 17th meeting summary by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Holly Hatlewick. Motion carries unanimously.
- Chair, Committee, and Council Staff update
    - The Policy Committee will meet on December 19th to update the large-volume water users policy. It will be a shorter meeting, likely 9:30-11:00. Please review the document before Friday, and send comments to Rich Biske, Jen Kader, or add the comments into the document.
    - The Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) is reviewing the KPI dashboard. Also, they may be lengthening their meetings to accommodate the required discussions for the upcoming budget process. Potentially being 9:00-2:00.
    - Jen Kader
        - Participated in the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) annual convention and celebrated all the work the SWCDs have been doing. Looking ahead, in the next round of budgeting, we should be thinking about what to do to help support engagement. Additionally, Holly Hatlewick received an award (MACDE Extraordinary SWCD Contribution Award), and previous Council member Holly Kovarik (SWCD Administrator of the Year) also received an award.
        - She attended the Metropolitan Council's joint Metro Area Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC) and Water Supply Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). They are working on water supply issues and needs, and was able to learn more about the studies and projects they are working on. It was nice to see the Clean Water Funds (CWFs) logo on slides too. They will have a report to the Legislature coming out at the end of 2026.
        - This will be Marcie Weinandt's last meeting. There is one application that did have the backing of the Minnesota Watersheds, and the Council looks forward to working with the next appointee.
        - Regarding the budget cycle, the proposals are due January 16th for the Council's budget process.
        - Regarding engagement, we will have a discussion on a year in review. In January we have a commitment in checking on our engagement plan. Please be watching for a survey due in early January. It would be good to catalog where our engagement has happened, and where we want to go.
        - Council members received a link to Teams documents for this meeting. Thank you for those that did have access. For those who did not, we will work with you to make sure you have access.
        - The 2026 calendar appointments have been sent. Please let Jen know if anyone else needs to be added to the calendar appointment emails.
        - In January, there will be election of chair and vice chair of full Council, set committee rosters, chair and vice chair committees as well. Reach out to Jen if you are interested in any of these changes. Also, note we need to watch out for quorum in the committee rosters, following the open meeting laws.

November Forecast *(Webex 00:30:00)*

The November Forecast for the State's budget was released on December 4th. It shows good news for the Clean Water Fund—both in terms of having up to $7.1M funding available in this biennium should the Council choose to make recommendations, and up to $336M for FY28-29 if not. Details are in the memo in the packet.
If the Council were to develop a supplemental budget, what would be included?

- Things to be cut or trimmed for FY26-27 budget?
- Programs that are primed for (or would like to) use an increase in funding?
- Programs from past appropriations that could use more time through an extension of funding?
- New things that have come up but perhaps have not been discussed yet?
- Some combination of these items.

Discussion:

- Steve Besser: Previously, we talked about restoring the cuts, if there was more funding available. It is something the Council should consider.
- Glenn Skuta, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA): The cuts were a result of a revenue error, correct? *Answer:* Yes, the accounting error, along with sales tax revenues not performing as well as expected. Additionally, a perceived loss because there was one-time funding in FY24-25 that was not present in FY26-27.
- Steve Christenson: I would be reluctant to make any decisions today because these numbers will change again in February. Also, I would like to hear from Rep. Krisi Pursell, to hear from a legislator, if they have an appetite for this size of funds?
    - Rep. Kristi Pursell: I can speculate. We have an incredibly short session this year, and do not gavel in until February 17, 2026. Constitutionally, we gavel out May 18th. Three months is not a lot of time, there is not a lot of motivation on a tied house. We did the state budget for the biennium, and do not know what the appetite will be. In an election year, and in a short session, if the Council did not try to put anything forward, it would probably be fine. I am co vice chair of the environment committee, and we can bring it forward to the committee. A budget surplus may also attract outside attention, and folks may try to acquire funding as well, so that is something to keep in mind.
    - Steve Christenson: I think we should wait until we know more in February. If it is a larger amount like $10 million, I would be in favor of investing. If it is smaller amount, like less than $5 million, I would want to carry it over to the next biennium.
    - John Barten: I would be good to have a little bit, in case the sales tax revenue is lower than expected next year. We don't want to make a final decision until the February budget forecast.
    - Jessica Wilson: I like the idea of reviewing the previous balance to get any programs movement, like the Ag network program. Perhaps, if it is small enough, we could make that recommendation, to get it over the finish line. If we look at restoring past cuts, I would like to do something more surgical, to look at each one individually.
- Rich Biske: When we meet in February, it will be early in session. We can wait, so we can respond to the February forecast. We have time.
- Jen Kader: The Council may also want to keep in mind when the Governor's Budget comes out; it could be hard to have alignment.
    - *Response from Tannie Eshenaur, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH):* I only know of our internal agencies' deadlines, and we are well along in that process, with conversations with MMB.
    - *Jen Kader:* I can get that clarified.
- John Barten: We will want to recommend all or none, rather than recommending a portion of it.
    - Steve Besser: I agree. Otherwise, it is a concern that the legislators will start adjusting more items.
    - John Barten: We can also send a letter, to retain the funds to adjust to any potential deceases in sales tax revenue.
- Jessica Wilson: The Council's Public Participation Plan may have some potential cost implications. It may be another spot to consider putting funds towards. It may be tiny relative to these other items, but having staff presence at these events is valuable. It is something to consider.
- John Barten: Restoring easement funding would be another area to consider. Something to consider too.

Clean Water Legacy Partners Program Update, Melissa Sjolund (She/Her) NGO/Tribal Grants Specialist BWSR, Ara Charles Gallo (He/Him) NGO/Tribal Grants Specialist BWSR, Jennifer Tonko (She/Her) Executive Director Clean River Partners *(Webex 01:09:00)*

Melissa Sjolund and Ara Gallo are Grants Staff with BWSR. Together, they are leading BWSR's grant work with Tribal Nations, and Non-Government Organizations that are delivering the work of Clean Water Council and the fund. They will be providing a program update on the Clean Water Legacy Partners Program. The presentation will include a partner, with a summary of projects, and what we've learned and opportunities going forward.

- Program history:
  - In 2021 the Minnesota legislature appropriated $1 million from the Clean Water Fund *"…for developing and implementing a water legacy grant program to expand partnerships for clean water."*
  - The purpose of the Clean Water Legacy Partners program is to provide new funding opportunities to expand partnerships to protect and restore Minnesota's water resources.
  - Applicant eligibility are Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) as well as Tribal Government and Organizations in the state of Minnesota.
- Program progress to date:
  - They have been allocated approximately $4.5 million in funds (over three biennium). They have allocated about $450,000 was appropriated to Watershed Districts (only eligible in FY24-25), $2,025,000 for NGOs, and $2,025,000 for Tribal Governments.
  - There were 65 applications received (11 Tribal, 11 NGOs, and 2 Watershed Districts (only FY24-25)). They awarded 24 grants. The projects have a wide range: green infrastructure/stormwater BMPs (6), Keep It Clean (2), Lakes and Streams (restoration and protection) (6), Agriculture conservation (agroforestry/cover crops/prescribed grazing) (3), nutrient reduction study (3), restoration engineering design (1), street sweeping (2), and carp removal (1).
  - Highlights include the Spark-Y: Youth Action Labs, Rain Garden Installation and Youth Outreach; Upper Red Lake Area Association, Keep It Clean; City of Lakes Community Land Trust, Residential Tree and Rain Garden Installations; Lida Lake Property Owners Association, Comprehensive Lakeshed Assessment; Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, Street Sweeper and Pike Lake Restoration; Red Lake Nation in partnership with Beltrami County SWCD – Blackduck and Cormorant River Watershed Cattle Access.
- Benefits of expanding partnerships:
  - What makes the Clean Water Legacy Partners (CWLP) unique?
    - Makes CWFs accessible to organizations who traditionally were not eligible for other BWSR programs.
    - Able to directly support small scale, local projects.
    - One of the few BWSR programs available to both Tribal Organizations and NGOs.
    - Provides a high level of grantee relationship building and support throughout the entire process (with dedicated BWSR NGO/Tribal Grant Specialists). These Grant Specialists provide: program management, program growth, communications planning, goal setting, relationship building, outreach and support, and they are helping to make CWLP and other BWSR programs accessible with Tribes/NGOs.
  - Benefits of Tribal and NGO Partnerships:
    - Expand impacts of the CWFs across Minnesota
    - Accelerate progress towards water quality goals
    - Local economic impact
    - Support the Council's Strategic Plan (Vision: All Minnesotans value water and take actions to sustain and protect it). In this work they are building capacity of the local communities to protect and sustain water resources. It supports local efforts to engage with farmers in water quality efforts. It also supports local efforts to engage with lakeshore property owners and private landowners.
    - Added capacity for clean water work
    - Local and traditional expertise
    - Innovative partnerships
    - Community trust and engagement
    - Long-term stewardship and support
    - Reach new communities
- Partnership highlight: Clean Rivers Partners with Jennifer Tonko *(Webex 01:25:30)*

- Who is Clean River Partners (CRP)? They are focused on the Cannon River Watershed. Members donate to fuel the mission and define strategic priorities. There are three major program areas: habitat protection and restoration, conservation agriculture adoption, and community engagement.
- They received two grants. Their purpose was to protect priority subwatersheds by supporting conservation agriculture that reduces nutrient load and improves water quality. To do this, they worked to build relationships with key farmer constituencies and connect them to a full suite of practice supports like education, technical assistance, cost sharing, peer leadership, and certification pathways. In FY2024 they received $128,519 and in FY2025 they received $250,000 (maximum grant for the CWLP).
- Their projects address water quality challenges by accelerating conservation practice adoption and strengthening farmer networks. They are supporting cover corps in key subwatersheds. They recruit farmers into the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). They educate new and small-scale farmers about the Agroforestry Poultry System. They also work to connect farmers to each other.
- Outcomes:
  - Over 900 acres of cover corps in 2024, with projected 1,300 acres in 2025.
  - 22 farmers applied to MAWQCP.
  - Educated 94 new and small-scale farmers about the Agroforestry Poultry System
  - 39 farmers were connected at Growing Resilience capstone event.
- How does this align with the CWLP program:
  - CRP is working to build the capacity of their watershed's agricultural sector to adopt conservation practices that address nitrate, sediment, and climate risks.
  - The work begins with the farmer's priorities and insights, allowing them to tailor outreach and support in ways that increase adoption.
  - This program structure encourages aligned planning between nonprofits, SWCDs, and BWSR – ensuring that activities complement rather than duplicate other efforts.
  - This program allows partners to implement the full behavior-change pathway: outreach leads to relationship building, leads to education, leads to practice adoption, leads to long-term stewardship.
- Why nonprofits?
  - Nonprofits like CRP engage farmers, small-scale growers, community members, and emerging leaders who may not be reached through traditional SWCD or agency channels.
  - They have ongoing programmatic partnerships with local units of government (LGUs).
  - Their mission allows them to bridge watershed protection, community engagement, and climate resilience – supporting activities that are outside the statutory scope of the LGUs, but essential for durable outcomes.
  - They can be nimble, integrating new activities into their workplans quickly, when those activities are supported.
  - Because they are rooted in ongoing community programs, they maintain relationships before, during, and after project funding – critical for long-term adoption.
- What makes this program work for nonprofits?
  - It's flexible – a broad spectrum of activities are supported which allows partnerships at different point to apply for funding.
  - It's fast – timing from the application to disbursement is about six months.
  - Payments up front make the program more accessible to a broader segment of the nonprofit landscape.
  - Strong and timely support from BWSR programmatic and finical oversight staff.

- The future of Clean Water Legacy Partners:
  - They will be launching another request for proposals in February 2026. These would be awarded in early FY27.
  - There is a 90-day request for proposals (RFP) period. Then, it goes to the Multi-agency Review Team. Application and financial document are reviewed for eligibility. The eligible applications are scored, and awards are recommended. Risk assessments are done. A financial/organizational review is conducted. A work plan is finalized. The grant agreement is executed. Then, the project is implemented.

- On top of that there is other support provided. Staff do an informational webinar, they provide application assistance, there is a new grantee webinar, they can setup one-on-one grant setup support (in-person if able to), as well as a reporting webinar.
- In the future, there are clear opportunities to further expand the partnerships with both NGOs and Tribal Organizations.
  - There were 41 NGO applications totaling $5.9 million that could not be funded in prior RFPs.
  - There were 5 of 13 eligible Tribal Organizations that have received CWLP funding; Tribal interest is growing, and we anticipate it will outpace available funds.

- Thank you to the Council for creating this program.

Questions/Comments/Discussion:

- Steve Christenson: What does BWSR do to reduce fraud with these kinds of programs? *Answer:* All BWSR's grant programs follow some grant management procedures. There is a lot of financial documentation filled out and submitted (i.e., tax forms, internal controls and processes, etc.). Once a grant is going to be awarded it goes through a risk assessment. This helps with the grant's compliance process. They work closely with the BWSR grants compliance specialist and have periodic evaluations of the grants spending and checking on financial documents (often required before any next payments). They also do an after-award review. There is a lot that they do to reduce fraud. It is a thorough process.
- Gail Cederberg: I like that these programs are getting to non-profits, small groups, across the state. Thank you so much for presenting. I would like to see this kind of work more.
- John Barten: In-lake activities were difficult to fund through the BWSR program because they focused on watershed runoff, so why were the Watershed Districts eliminated from eligibility? Many were looking at this as a funding source for carp control and alum treatments. *Answer:* We anticipated this question. We do not have a good answer because it was a one-off program for the Watershed Districts.
- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: For the current biennium, is there only one RFP for the whole biennium? *Answer:* After the BWSR removes the administrative costs, one RFP, typically split for the NGOs and Tribal Governments. There may be some unspent funds that BWSR may be able to tack on, which may go to the Tribal Government bucket.
- Jessica Wilson: It would be great to see the summary of what the themes are in the applications from the programs being submitted. Not just the ones funded, but all of them. Thinking about public participation, we can capture it here too. Additionally, if there are additional funds, we can make a recommendation (and not wait) because there is a need, and it is urgent. This feels like a great place to put those funds.
- Brad Gausman: Is there an opportunity to view the unfunded programs? We could maybe pass it along to the agencies, because perhaps there is a need there that could be explored. We don't know what we don't know, about what Minnesotans want to use CWFs for. *Response:* we have to check with our grants coordinator to see what we can share. We see how that can be useful to see what projects people are requesting. We recognize the value of it.
- Rich Biske: Thank you for your work in this program, you are turning it into something meaningful across the state. In particular, what you've done with public outreach, especially the work with the Tribal Governments. For the history of the CWFs, it has not always been accessible for local communities. You have mentioned that NGOs can be nimble, and innovative. I think we should support that and feed it. In the CWFs, there has been little change over time in what the programs are (within the program there might be evolution and change). Overall, this is our entrepreneurial space that we should be looking to more. The Council has been supportive of this program. I would like to see it grow. I would like to see it be successful. So, people can see themselves in this. *Response:* We have worked hard to make the RFP successful. We want anyone to be able to fill out an RFP and have a chance to receive funds; to make sure it is understandable and not too time consuming.

KPI Dashboard Discussion *(Webex 02:30:00)*

Staff from across several agencies have been working with Council members through the Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the Clean Water Fund. It is still in draft stage, at roughly 80 percent complete. The BOC is seeking Council feedback at this time on the full package in order to ensure that further work on this is in line with full Council preferences. This conversation today should focus on a higher level of response, and to make sure the Council is going in the right direction.

- Steve Christenson: This is about outcomes. We want to drive outcomes, by making the outcomes more visible. My experience in the corporate world, is that we had quarterly measured and recorded outcomes. Within the Council, we do our measuring of outcomes every two years through the Clean Water Performance Report. It will be coming out in April 2026. It is a great report. However, more frequent measuring and reporting on the outcomes will help strengthen the programs and hopefully enable the Council to make better choices in where the CWFs are being invested. The BOC has been working on strengthening our organization tools, to hopefully deliver stronger outcomes. We have worked on the application form, which includes outcomes on the form. We have created a scoring rubric for the proposed funding applications. Third, is the KPI Dashboard. The idea is to have a dashboard that is updated two to three times per year. It can be used to communicate with our stakeholders in a concise way, to help reveal the benefits the CWFs are providing. It is structured around the four pillars of the Council's Strategic Plan (surface water, drinking water, groundwater, and people). Within it is the section on outcomes as well as outputs. There were over 90 metrics in the Strat Plan, which we want to narrow to about a dozen. Currently, there are 29. We want the Council's feedback before moving forward. Should it be pursued, or terminated? This is not a polished version, and did not want to do more work until approval was provided. After closer review of the metrics, please submit feedback to Jen Kader by close of business Wednesday, December 17.
- Jen Kader: This is an immense amount of work across multiple state agencies. They have worked on making it more consistent. It would not have happened without the work they have done. We are grateful for their time. We know they have other deadlines they've been managing. It is about eighty percent complete. We did not want to move further to refine and adjust it until given feedback from the full Council.

Questions/Comments/Discussion:

- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: It is important to acknowledge "key" so people know they are viewing these key items, and the Clean Water Performance Report exists so folks can be directed there for the rest of the metrics.
- Marcie Weinandt: Is this a subset of the Clean Water Council Performance Report? *Answer:* Yes, and a few other things being measured.
- Fran Miron: At the BOC when we had this discussion, you will notice there are links. For those folks who want to take a deeper dive, there is the ability to provide a lot of detail. That ties into the public participation. For the public members who want to take a look at it, we should have those links. We should make sure we provide as much information as we can in those links, so others can explore the metrics further.
- Tannie Eshenaur, MDH: The Clean Water Council Performance Report has adjusted the number of metrics over the years. We have worked through it. The target audience has never been the average Minnesotan, because we want to make sure we reach people who are engaged and affected by CWFs. We also want to provide those layers that people can consume, where they can easily find more details as they search further. There are highlights, tables, profile pages, and metadata. It is aspirational to get down to a few key indicators.
- Gail Cederberg: I want to understand what this document would be used for, because it may raise some confusion (people may use this instead of the Performance Report). As long as there is some front-end text, to explain it well. In the useability outside of the agencies, I think it could cause confusion.
- Steve Besser: I think 29 is too many. I would like to see it around 5 to 10 indicators.
- John Barten: It would be nice to reduce the number. It takes a long time to go through the indicators, and you get a little lost in the graphs. The labeling needs to be improved as well, so it does need to be polished. In particular with the goals provided so it is very clear. If we have the indicators be directly connected, it is a clearer indicator for us to use, rather than metrics that float around the four pillars.
- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: For "key" it probably needs to be less than 29 metrics. This is not perfect, and we can make decisions, and put it out in the world. You will hear about it if you miss something. Then, you add it back in at the next iteration. When you make it simple, people will complain there is not enough info. Also, if there is a trend provided, sometimes it is hard to interpret if the trend is moving "in the right direction", and so some context needs to be provided to help the reader interpret. Then, there is more for the reader to view, and they feel like it is too much information provided. It is a hard balance. One is too simple, one is too complicated.
- Jason Moeckel, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Steve, you talked about seeing metrics quarterly. Little would change in that timeframe, showing as "no change" since the previous.
    - *Response:* It would be a few times a year, and perhaps it would not change.

    - *Jason Moeckel, DNR:* These metrics can change slowly. Who is the KPI for? Who is the audience? These things take time, and additional challenges come up as well. There is so much complexity, so what you are attempting to do is admirable.
    - *Answer:* The Council. Although it is transparent to the public.
- *Rich Biske:* If we are going to use it, it would be good to have some indication of the relative impact, perhaps the categories of funds. We don't know how each program is contributing to the outcome. We can't do everything, yet the CWFs are trying to hold everything together. By holding on to everything, are we letting some things go? By not investing in them?
- *Jessica Wilson:* I think it could be useful to see how these programs map onto the KPI (an exercise the Council could do in the future), to see if they map onto what we say are our priorities now? It could help with budget decisions down the road. I also think the more general they are, the better, but I would also still be careful. It could signal to others what we think is valuable, even though we are trying to capture the four pillars. Could we have four metrics to represent the four pillars? I don't know if that is possible.
- *Annie Knight:* When I look at the role of the Council, the main role is to steward the CWFs to yield water quality results across the state. In order to do that, while we need as much data as possible, there is so much data in the Performance Report, but we are looking for something to point directly at to have a concrete direction on knowing what is going well or not well. We need to be directing CWFs in a certain way. The audience is the Council. I like the idea of mapping our programs to the KPI, to have this be a useable document. I think it is a good exercise, so we know how we are stewarding the CWFs.
- *Peter Schwagerl:* How do we make the information meaningful for the people that use it? One way to do that, might be to have the level of detail match with the level of the decision being made. Can we create a suite of information and tools for the Council, to help tell the story and help the Council make decisions.
- *Holly Hatlewick:* I keep circling back to the history of the Council, and why we are going on our trajectory. Would we dilute the direction we are going? Are we going to do anything significant, because science is slow? We know it takes a long time to turn a big ship around. If we look at these, and drop a program, we may need to think about staying the course. Reporting timing is also essential. Will this be valuable if it is updated, but there is no change. Perhaps, it needs a one-year update, versus putting a bunch of staff time into something that did not change.
- *Jen Kader:* In June of 2019, I facilitated a BOC meeting. There was a lot of frustration from environmental organizations, not feeling like it was producing a lot of outcomes. This was right after the Trajectory Report came out. The group was comprised on the BOC, members of the G16, people involved in the Trajectory Report process, environmental organizations, state agency staff, and other stakeholders all in a joint meeting. The outcomes of this meeting revealed that the Clean Water Performance Report is essential, but also cannot on its own serve as a communications document. It cannot be both. Additional work from the outside is needed to identify those communication points. Same with the KPIs. Everyone will pull a different piece of it, that is meaningful to them. There are different KPI for different Council members.
- *John Barten:* We do need something that is kind of comprehensive and at least tackles the big picture items of where we are making progress, with the charge of the CWFs. That is different than trying to look at a document that provides information for the Council, for the public, and political representatives. The key audience has to be the Council.
- *Glenn Skuta, MPCA:* I can summarize the CWFs in ten KPI metrics. I can think of other KPI metrics that were not included as well. From here, I think there are ten metrics that can tell the story, in a KPI kind of way. To do that, it's taking out stuff more program specific, so it may not be as impacting to certain Council members. However, these would be more integrated rather than specific. It would not matter if it is CWF-related, or not. Another note, it is supposed to leveraging. Is the water getting better? What comes with integrative measures, is that the change is slow. If the audience is the Council, which I think is wise, you can have more complex graphics. The Council can get the metrics down to 10-12 items. That would be digestible.
- *Rich Biske:* I agree with Glenn. There is a way to organize this with the Council's Strategic Plan, and these metrics should be integrated. Let's make sure it is connected.
- *Tannie Eshenaur, MDH:* I remember when Victoria Reinhardt brought in the Ramsey County staff to talk on the reorganization of how they measured progress, outputs, and outcomes. They had a two-year sequence where they did their budgeting one year, and the other they reviewed their different measures to decide how to allocate their resources. As part of the statue, we are required to complete measurable outcomes. If it is going

to be used to make resource decisions, there needs to be the ability to convey the nuances that comes along with the outputs and outcomes. We need to know the purpose of how you are going to use these metrics.

- *Jen Kader:* To confirm, the Council is the intended audience. Regarding purpose, there is additional work needed with it, based on the conversations today. What does the Council want to do with this information, with check-ins. Additionally, due to the complementary nature of it, we would not want it to be duplicative. We want to be considerate of the amount of work that would go into it. Further conversations are needed.
- *Brad Gausman:* We are meeting monthly, looking at these programs all the time. Developing a document just for us seems like a whole extra step. We've had good conversations about how there is a uniqueness to our leanness. Should we have staff creating a whole new document for just us, when we meet all the time. It seems like an extra step. We already have the Performance Report to view.
- *Tannie Eshenaur, MDH:* If you are interested in more, the Council could request it on the proposals.

Clean Water Council Year in Review (*Webex 03:46:00)*

As 2025 and this "Strategy Year" ends, this will be an opportunity to look back, celebrate the work done, and note the needs going forward.

- First, we want to thank those who will be leaving the Council:
  - Thank you to Marcie Weinandt for your commitment to the Clean Water Council. This is her last meeting on the Council. We appreciate all the work you do. We appreciate you representing the Watershed Districts in Minnesota. You will be missed. We know she will still be around to support clean water actions. *Response:* Thank you, I will see you around. I first started water work in 1988 with the first county water plans. Back then we shared that it didn't make sense to do this work county by county, we need to complete it by watersheds. To see us at this point, we all need congratulations and keep up the good work. We always need to be doing something. I will not be far away. Thank you for your time and energy. I will be watching.
  - Thank you to Jeff Peterson for all his commitment to the Clean Water Council. He has been important to the Council; we respect all the work he has done. It is much appreciated. *Response from Joel Larson (UMN):* I will pass that along. He was unable to be here because he is picking up his wife up from the airport, and she has been on sabbatical the last few months out of the country. He will still be at the UMN. Bonnie Keeler is the new director and starts on January 7th. She will attend the January meeting.
  - Thank you to Joel Larson, we will also miss you. I'm sure we will see you periodically at a Council meeting.
- Why do a year in review? It is an opportunity to reflect. Celebrate accomplishments, acknowledge the work done. Remind ourselves about what we've learned. It can help consider next steps, and what to carry forward into 2026. It also can identify needs and opportunities for improvement.
- 2025 has been the "Strategy Year"
  - The Council completed deep dives into emerging or challenging topics: Nutrient Reduction Strategy, WBIF Tracking , Reduced tillage, PFAS (fish tissue, land application, blueprint implementation), Large-volume water users, Forest management for water quality, Drinking water protection and mitigation (especially in SE Minnesota), Wake boats, We Are Water retrospective, Knowledge Attitudes and Beliefs study of private well owners, Connection to Climate Action Framework, Improving tracking and awareness of CWF outcomes
  - Strategy Year Outcomes: Adopted first-ever Public Participation Plan, Revised policy priorities based on public input in previous budget cycle (Current list: Large-volume water users, Private well mitigation support, Sustainable Aviation Fuels, Chloride, Shoreline protection (including wake boats), Targeted wellhead protection, De-risking agricultural transition
  - Upper Mississippi River Field Tour (September 2025)
  - More Strategy Year Outcomes: Created first-ever scoring rubric, Conducted a survey regarding CWF uses and priorities, Made significant headway on developing KPI
- New Faces: Fran Miron, Eunie Biel, Rep. Steve Jacob, Sen. John Hoffman, Chris Meyer, and Jen Kader.
- Thank you and farewell to Paul Gardner, Jeff Peterson, and Marcie Weinandt.
- Engagement - There have been many events Council members have attended and interacted with the public regarding CWFs. Moving forward, we will plan to report back on the Public Participation Plan tracking.

Adjournment *(Webex 03:59:06)*

Clean Water Council
By-Laws

Clean Water Council (Council) Purpose
The Clean Water Council was created to advise on the administration and implementation of MN Statutes Chapter 114D, the Clean Water Legacy Act, and foster coordination and cooperation as described in section MN Statutes Chapter 114D.20, subdivision 1. The Council may also advise on the development of appropriate processes for expert scientific review as described in MN Statutes Chapter 114D.35, subdivision 2.

Council Member Conduct
Council members have a duty to act in good faith and with complete accuracy, candor, truthfulness and disclosure in all formal or informal discussions, communications or related actions between any members of the Council.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair
The Council shall elect from its voting members a chair and vice-chair. Elected chair and vice-chair will serve one two-year term, beginning in January. The Council shall use the methods of nomination and elections consistent with Robert's Rules of Order, and in compliance with Minnesota Open Meeting Law, as outlined below.

Election Process: *(Process to be followed separately; first for election of Chair and subsequently, election of Vice-Chair)*

1. Council members submit nominees to Chair prior to election.
2. Current Chair may designate another Council member to facilitate the election of Chair.
3. Chair or designee presents list of nominees for Chair/Vice-Chair to the Council. There is no vote taken on accepting this list of nominees, these nominations are treated as if made by members from the floor.
4. Chair or designee opens floor for further nominations for Chair/Vice-Chair.
5. Council member makes verbal nomination; nominees names are noted. Nomination need not be seconded.
6. Chair or designee seeks any further nominations.
7. Chair or designee seeks motion to close nominations. Council members make a motion; motion is seconded by another Council member.
8. Chair or designee calls for a vote on the motion to close nominations.
9. When the Council votes on closing the floor for nominations, Council then proceeds to the election.
   a) *If there are no nominees for the position of Chair/Vice-Chair*, the Council shall vote on continuing the term of the current Chair/Vice-Chair.
   b) *When there is one nominee for Chair/Vice-Chair*: Chair or designee calls for a vote to elect this individual to the position. If majority of Council members vote in favor, nominee is elected as Chair/Vice-Chair.
   c) *When there are multiple nominations*: Chair or designee calls for a vote for each nominee. Each Council member may only vote once. Council member may vote for him/herself. A member has the right to change his/her vote up to the time the vote is finally announced. Nominee with the majority vote is elected to the position.
10. Chair or designee announces who is elected as Chair/Vice-Chair, their effective starting date (typically January), and length of term (typically 2 years from start date).

The powers and duties of the Chair shall be as follows:

1. To preside as Chair at all meetings of the Council.
2. To see that the laws of the State, pertaining to the purpose and functions of the Council, the resolutions of the Council and its policies are faithfully observed and executed.
3. To call special meetings of the Council, on his/her own initiative, or upon request of three or more members.
4. To serve on the Steering Committee.

The powers and duties of the Vice-Chair shall be as follows:

1. To perform the Chair's duties at regularly scheduled or special Council meetings whenever the Chair is absent.
2. To handle Council business on behalf of the Chair whenever illness or personal matters prevent the Chair from handling Council business outside of regularly scheduled or special Council meetings.
3. To serve on the Steering Committee.

Whenever the Chair and Vice-Chair are both absent from any regularly scheduled meeting, his/her duties shall be performed by another member of the Council as determined at the beginning of a meeting.

Council Organization

1. The **Steering Committee**, the **Budget and Outcomes Committee**, and the **Policy Committee** are standing committees.

2. A **Steering Committee** will consist of the following members:
   - Chair
   - Vice-Chair
   - Past Chair (two-year term on Committee)
   - Agency representatives on the Council
   - Budget and Outcomes Committee Chair and Vice-Chair
   - Agency staff

   The Steering Committee plans meetings and other activities as designated by the Chair or Council. The Steering Committee is accountable to the Council.

3. The **Budget and Outcomes Committee** shall consist of a minimum of four voting members and a maximum of a non-majority of the current seated voting Council members. The Budget and Outcomes Committee:

   - Prepares initial input on budget recommendations to Council;
   - Reviews existing measurable outcomes information to show effectiveness of accomplishments;
   - Is accountable and advisory to the full Council; and
   - Elects its own Chair and Vice-Chair.

   Membership of this Committee is reviewed every two years. If the number of members interested in serving on the Budget and Outcomes Committee exceeds a non-majority of voting members, the Council Chair will decide who will serve on this Committee. If a Committee member misses more than three consecutive Budget and Outcomes Committee meetings, the Council Chair may replace this person at his/her discretion.

The powers and duties of the Budget and Outcomes Committee Chair shall be as follows:

- To set the agenda for Committee meetings.
- To preside as Chair at all Committee meetings.
- To serve on the Council's Steering Team.
- To coordinate with the Clean Water Fund Interagency Coordination Team.
- To discuss Council recommendations with the Legislature and Governor (in coordination with the Council Chair and Vice-Chair).
- To call special meetings of the Committee.

The powers and duties of the Budget and Outcomes Committee Vice-Chair shall be as follows:

- To perform the Committee Chair's duties at regularly scheduled or special Committee meetings whenever the Committee Chair is absent.
- To handle Committee business on behalf of the Committee Chair whenever illness or personal matters prevent the Committee Chair from handling Committee business outside of regularly scheduled or special Committee meetings.
- To serve on the Steering Committee.

4. The **Policy Committee** shall consist of a minimum of five voting members and a maximum of a non-majority of the current seated voting Council members. Non-voting members appointed by the Legislature, the University of Minnesota, and the Metropolitan Council may also be members. The Policy Committee:

   - Reviews existing policy information from the Council meetings and relevant reports;
   - Prepares policy recommendations for the Council;
   - Is accountable and advisory to the full Council;
   - Solicits input on potential policy recommendations from stakeholder groups, agencies, and other experts; and
   - Elects its own Chair and Vice-Chair.

   Membership of this Committee is reviewed every year or by the Council Chair's discretion and is approved by the Council. If the number of members interested in serving exceeds a non-majority of voting members, the Council Chair will decide who will serve on this Committee. If a Committee member misses more than two consecutive meetings, the Council Chair may remove this person at his/her discretion.

   The Clean Water Council will review, revise, and decide whether to adopt the Committee's policy recommendations.

   The powers and duties of the Policy Committee Chair shall be as follows:

   - To set the agenda for Committee meetings.
   - To preside as Chair at all Committee meetings.
   - To serve on the Council's Steering Team.
   - To coordinate with the Clean Water Fund Interagency Coordination Team.
   - To discuss Council recommendations with the Legislature and Governor (in coordination with the Council Chair and Vice-Chair).
   - To call special meetings of the Committee.

   The powers and duties of the Policy Committee Vice-Chair shall be as follows:

- To perform the Committee Chair's duties at regularly scheduled or special Committee meetings whenever the Committee Chair is absent.
- To handle Committee business on behalf of the Committee Chair whenever illness or personal matters prevent the Committee Chair from handling Committee business outside of regularly scheduled or special Committee meetings.
- To serve on the Steering Committee.

5. **Administrative Support**: The Pollution Control Agency and the other state agencies represented on the Council shall provide administrative support for the Council, as appropriate.

Council Procedures

- **Council Decisions** - All formal actions of the Council shall be made at open public meetings. A simple majority vote of the voting Council members present at the meeting, at which a quorum has been established, is needed to take formal action. Agency and legislative representatives on the Council are non-voting members.
- **Quorum** - A simple majority of seated voting Council members constitutes a quorum.
- **Record of Decisions** - The Council shall use meeting minutes or resolutions to transmit a record of its formal actions. Upon their adoption, copies of the resolutions shall be sent to affected parties/organizations. Resolutions shall be kept on file and shall be made available to the public.
- **Speaking on Behalf of the Council** - Members speaking on behalf of the Clean Water Council may speak only in terms of ideas or resolutions supported and agreed upon by the Council, either by a formal vote, resolution or supported in discussion at a regularly scheduled Council meeting.
- **Legislative Input** - Members of the Clean Water Council may not be registered lobbyists. Communication with the legislature is limited to providing information on Council matters, and submittal of the legislative reports, specified in MN Statutes Chapter 114D.30.

Council Meetings

- **Frequency and location** - Regular Council meetings shall be held the third Monday of the month, on a monthly basis, unless determined otherwise. When the third Monday falls on a holiday, the Council shall meet the fourth Monday of that month. Meetings will be held in St. Paul, unless determined otherwise.
- **Accessibility to the Public** – Meetings of the Council shall be held at facilities that are readily accessible to the public. All regular Council meetings and work group meetings shall be open to the public.
- **Public Information** – Information regarding regular Council meetings, meeting minutes and meeting agendas will be available on the Clean Water Council website.
- **Public Input** - The Council welcomes public input on matters relevant to Council work. Members of the public may comment at Council meetings during specified times, as the agenda allows. Time for public comment is under the discretion of the Council chair.
- **Agendas** - The Council chair, in collaboration with the Steering Committee, shall establish the agenda for Council meetings. The chair shall provide an opportunity to obtain Council member input at each meeting regarding the substance of future Council agendas.
- **Rules of Order** - Robert's Rules of Order shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure of this Council not otherwise covered in these By-Laws. In the event of conflicts between Robert's Rules of Order and the Minnesota Open Meeting Law or Data Practices Act, the Minnesota law requirements shall prevail.

The Council's duties, membership, appointment, conflict of interest, implementation plan, recommendations on appropriations of funds, biennial report to the legislature, and vacancies are specified in MN Statutes Chapter 114D.30.

The Council members' terms, compensation, and removal are specified in MN Statutes Chapter 114D.30 and MN Statutes Chapter 15.059.

The procedure to be used by Council members for requesting and receiving payment of per diem and expenses is identified in the *Council Per Diem and Expenses Policy* document.

Changes to By-Laws

Any additions, deletions or revisions to the approved Clean Water Council By-Laws must be submitted as an amendment in writing for discussion and consideration at a meeting of the Council prior to approval by the Council at a subsequent meeting.

Council Member	Policy Committee	Budget and Outcomes Committee
John Barten	x	
Rich Biske	x	
Kelly Gribauval	x	
Chris Meyer	x	
Peter Schwagerl	x	
Jessica Wilson	x	
Steve Besser		x
Dick Brainerd		x
Steve Christenson		x
Warren Formo		x
Brad Gausman		x
Holly Hatlewick		x
Annie Knight		x
Fran Miron		x

Option A - WBIF ALONE

		Minutes	Total Minutes
#1 Set of Proposals: Implementation round one FEBRUARY			
GRANTS (minus WBIF)			
Surface and Drinking Water Protection Restoration (Projects and Practices)	BWSR	30	
Accelerated Implementation	BWSR	10	
Conservation Drainage (Multipurpose Drainage Management)	BWSR	15	
Watershed Legacy Partners Grants	BWSR	10	
Enhancing Landowner Adoption of Soil Health Practices for DW & GW Protection	BWSR	20	
Measures, Results, and Accountability	BWSR	10	
Water Demand Reduction Grant Program	MC	10	
Culvert Replacement Incentive Program	DNR	10	
MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program	MDA	20	
			135
EASEMENTS			
Critical Shoreland Easements	BWSR	10	
Wetland Restoration Easements	BWSR	10	
Working Lands and Floodplain Easements	BWSR	10	
Targeted Wellhead/Drinking Water Protection	BWSR	10	
			40
POINT SOURCE IMPLEMENTATION			
Chloride Reduction	MPCA	15	
Wastewater/Stormwater TMDL Implementation	MPCA	10	
Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Program*	PFA	10	
Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program*	PFA	10	
			45
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE			
Conservation Equipment Assistance	MDA	15	
AgBMP Loan Program	MDA	15	
			30
		TOTAL	**250**

2nd Set of Proposals: Implementation continued MARCH			
WBIF GRANTS			
Watershed Based Implementation Funding	BWSR	40	
			40
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE			
Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance (formerly Buffer Law Implementation)	BWSR	10	
Technical Evaluations	BWSR	10	
Nonpoint Source Restoration and Protection Activities	DNR	10	
Technical Assistance	MDA	15	
Southeast Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative	Olmstead County	20	
			65
"STATE CAPACITY"			
Native Mussel Restoration	DNR	10	
Great Lakes Restoration Projects (Lake Superior LAMP)	BWSR	10	
Conservation Corps of MN and IA	BWSR	10	
			30
Groundwater/Drinking Water Implementation			
Irrigation Water Quality Protection	MDA	10	
Nitrate in Groundwater	MDA	15	
Water Sustainability Support	MC	10	

SSTS Program Support	MPCA	10	
National Park Water Quality Protection Program	VNPCWJPB	15	
Private Well Initiative	MDH	15	
			75
		TOTAL	**210**

3rd Set of Proposals: Strategies, Planning APRIL			
Watershed & Groundwater Restoration/Protection Strategies			
Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (including TMDLs)	MPCA	15	
Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies	DNR	10	
Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies	MDH	15	
Source Water Protection	MDH	15	
			55
Comprehensive Local Watershed Management			
One Watershed One Plan	BWSR	30	
			30
Problem investigation and applied research			
County Geologic Atlases Part A	UMN	15	
County Geologic Atlases Part B-Groundwater	DNR	15	
MN Water Research Digital Library (MnWRL)	MDA	10	
Forever Green Initative	MDA	20	
Agricultural Research and Evaluation	MDA	10	
Beach Portal	MDH	10	
Stormwater Research Program	UMN	15	
Tillage and Erosion Transects	BWSR	10	
Future of Drinking Water	MDH	10	
Manure Land Application and Water Quality Specialist	MDA	10	
			125
		TOTAL	**210**

4th Set of Proposals: Point Source Implementation & Monitoring, Characterization, and Assessment MAY			
Monitoring, Characterization, and Assessment			
Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning	DNR	10	
Fish Contamination Assessment	DNR	10	
Lake Biological Monitoring and Assessment (formerly Lake IBI)	DNR	10	
Forestry BMP Evaluation and Lidar Hydrography Tools	DNR	10	
Stream Flow Monitoring	DNR	10	
Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater	MDA	10	
Pesticide Testing of Private Wells	MDA	10	
Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern	MDH	30	
River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment	MPCA	15	
Groundwater Assessment	MPCA	15	
River Watch and River of Dreams	Red River Board	20	
			180
Administration			
Clean Water Council Administration Budget	MPCA	15	
Legislative Coordinating Commission	LCC	5	
			20
		TOTAL	**200**

OPTION B - GRANTS TOGETHER

		Minutes	Total Minutes
#1 Set of Proposals: Implementation round one FEBRUARY			
EASEMENTS			
Critical Shoreland Easements	BWSR	10	
Wetland Restoration Easements	BWSR	10	
Working Lands and Floodplain Easements	BWSR	10	
Targeted Wellhead/Drinking Water Protection	BWSR	10	
			40
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE			
Conservation Equipment Assistance	MDA	10	
AgBMP Loan Program	MDA	10	
			20
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE			
Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance (formerly Buffer Law Implementation)	BWSR	10	
Technical Evaluations	BWSR	10	
Nonpoint Source Restoration and Protection Activities	DNR	10	
Technical Assistance	MDA	15	
Southeast Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative	Olmstead County	20	
			65
Groundwater/Drinking Water Implementation			
Irrigation Water Quality Protection	MDA	10	
Nitrate in Groundwater	MDA	10	
Water Sustainability Support	MC	10	
SSTS Program Support	MPCA	10	
Private Well Initiative	MDH	15	
			55
Point Source Implementation			
Chloride Reduction	MPCA	15	
Wastewater/Stormwater TMDL Implementation	MPCA	10	
National Park Water Quality Protection Program	VNPCWJPB	15	
Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Program*	PFA	10	
Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program*	PFA	10	
			60
			240

2nd Set of Proposals: Implementation continued MARCH			
GRANTS			
Watershed Based Implementation Funding	BWSR	45	
Surface and Drinking Water Protection Restoration (Projects and Practices)	BWSR	30	
Accelerated Implementation	BWSR	10	
Conservation Drainage (Multipurpose Drainage Management)	BWSR	15	
Watershed Legacy Partners Grants	BWSR	10	
Enhancing Landowner Adoption of Soil Health Practices for DW & GW Protection	BWSR	20	
Measures, Results, and Accountability	BWSR	10	
Water Demand Reduction Grant Program	MC	10	
Culvert Replacement Incentive Program	DNR	10	
MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program	MDA	20	
			180
"STATE CAPACITY"			
Native Mussel Restoration	DNR	10	
Great Lakes Restoration Projects (Lake Superior LAMP)	BWSR	10	
Conservation Corps of MN and IA	BWSR	10	
			30
			210

3rd Set of Proposals: Strategies, Planning, Problem investigation and research APRIL			
Watershed & Groundwater Restoration/Protection Strategies			

Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (including TMDLs)	MPCA	15	
Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies	DNR	15	
Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies	MDH	10	
Source Water Protection	MDH	15	
			55
Comprehensive Local Watershed Management			
One Watershed One Plan	BWSR	30	
			30
Problem investigation and applied research			
County Geologic Atlases Part A	UMN	15	
County Geologic Atlases Part B-Groundwater	DNR	15	
MN Water Research Digital Library (MnWRL)	MDA	10	
Forever Green Initative	MDA	20	
Agricultural Research and Evaluation	MDA	10	
Beach Portal	MDH	10	
Stormwater Research Program	UMN	15	
Tillage and Erosion Transects	BWSR	10	
Future of Drinking Water	MDH	10	
Manure Land Application and Water Quality Specialist	MDA	10	
			125
			210

4th Set of Proposals: Monitoring, Characterization, and Assessment MAY			
Monitoring, Characterization, and Assessment			
Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning	DNR	10	
Fish Contamination Assessment	DNR	10	
Lake Biological Monitoring and Assessment (formerly Lake IBI)	DNR	10	
Stream Flow Monitoring	DNR	10	
Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater	MDA	10	
Pesticide Testing of Private Wells	MDA	10	
Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern	MDH	30	
River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment	MPCA	15	
Groundwater Assessment	MPCA	15	
River Watch and River of Dreams	Red River Board	20	
			180
Administration			
Clean Water Council Administration Budget	MPCA	15	
Legislative Coordinating Commission	LCC	5	
			20
			200

2026 Clean Water Fund Performance Report

TRACKING MINNESOTA'S CLEAN WATER FUND INVESTMENTS

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

MINNESOTA

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Clean Water Fund
Performance Report

A report of Clean Water Funds invested, actions taken and outcomes achieved

2016

Clean Water Fund
Performance Report

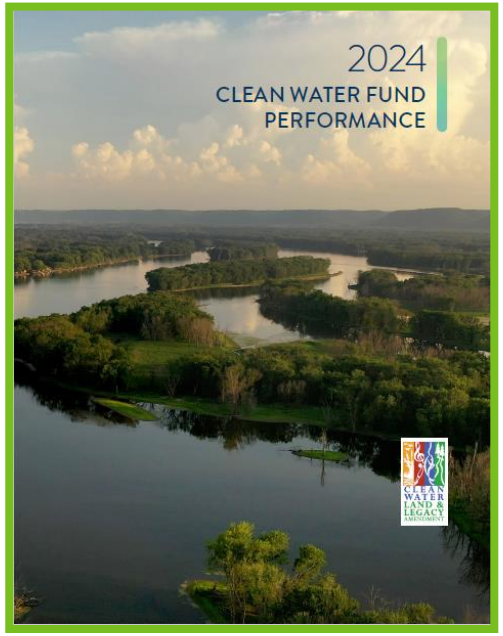
A report of Clean Water Funds invested, actions taken and outcomes achieved

2018

Clean Water Fund
Performance Report

A report of Clean Water Funds invested, actions taken and outcomes achieved

2022



In Draft

2026

8th Edition of Clean Water Fund Performance Report In Development

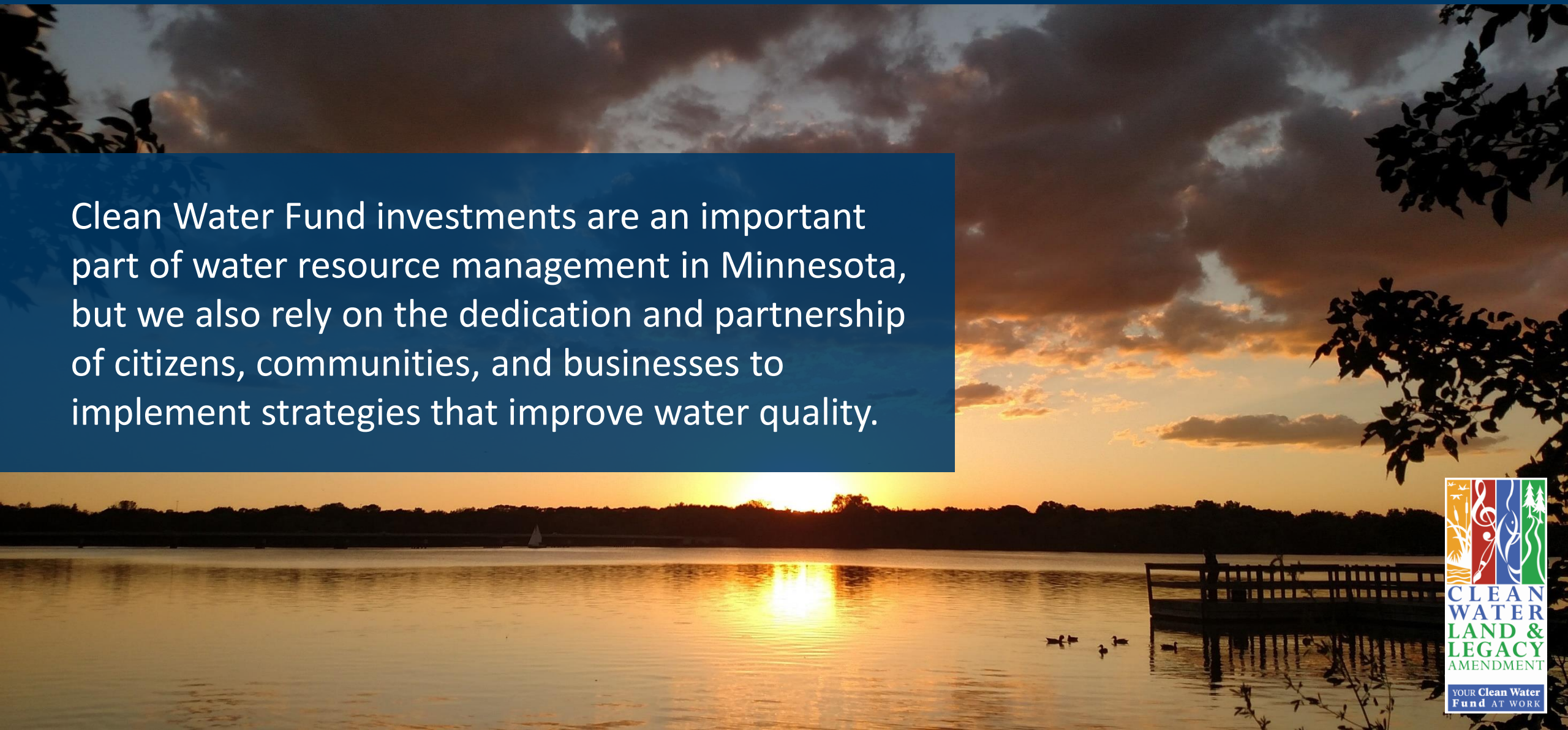
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

MINNESOTA

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Scope of Clean Water Fund Efforts and Report

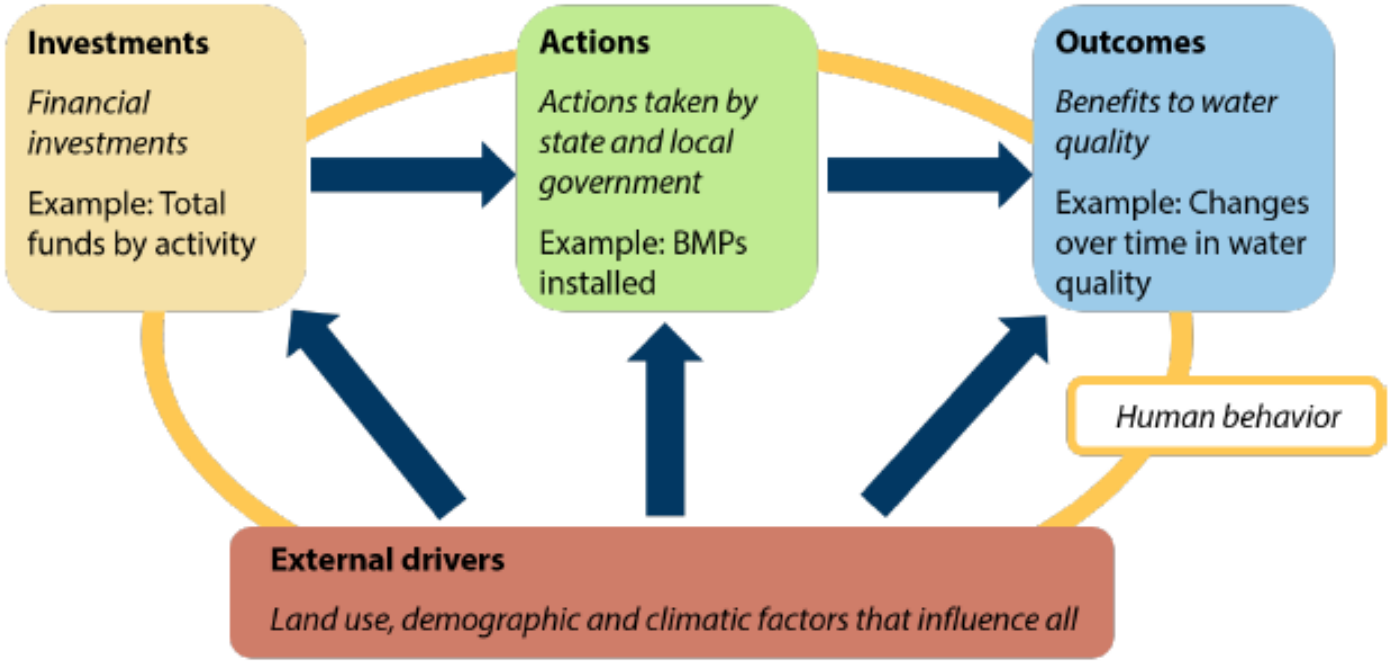


Clean Water Fund investments are an important part of water resource management in Minnesota, but we also rely on the dedication and partnership of citizens, communities, and businesses to implement strategies that improve water quality.

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Clean Water Fund Performance Report



GOAL: Clarify the connections between Clean Water Fund investments, actions taken, and outcomes achieved in Minnesota's water resources.

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Performance Report Measures

Action Status Legend

SYMBOL	MEANING
	We are making good progress/ meeting the target
	We anticipate difficulty; it is too early to assess; or there is too much variability across regions to assess
	Progress is slow/we are not meeting the target; or the activity or target is not commensurate with the scope of the problems

Outcome Status Legend

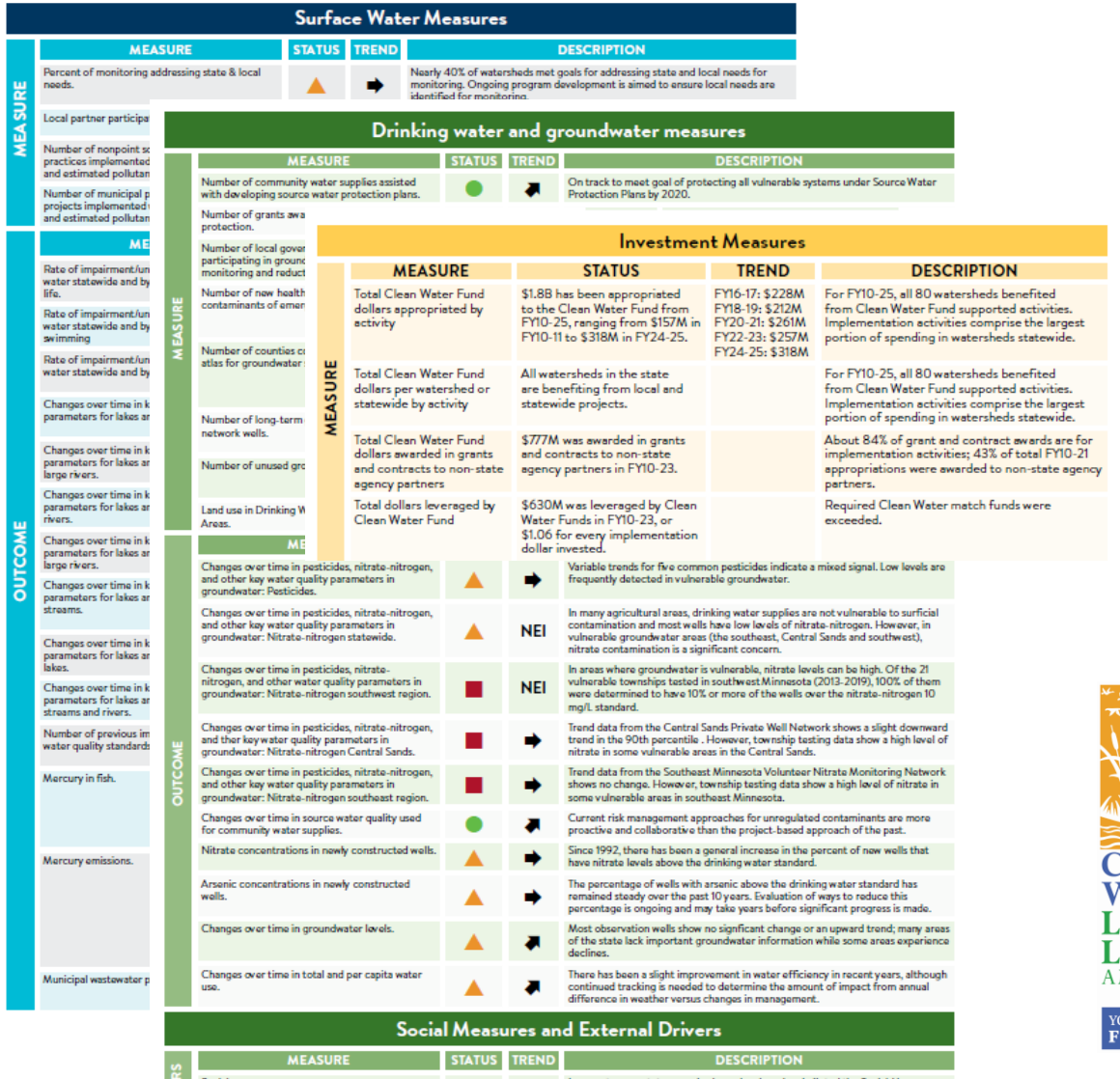
SYMBOL	MEANING
	Water quality is high – we are on track to meet long-term water resource needs and citizen expectations
	Water quality needs improvement or it is too early to assess – it is unclear if we will meet long-term water resource needs and citizen expectations; and/or water quality varies greatly between regions
	Water quality is under intense pressure – long-term water resource needs and/ or citizen expectations exceed current efforts to meet them

Trend Lengend

SYMBOL	MEANING
	Improving trend
	No change
	Declining trend
NEI	Not enough information to determine trend at this time

Performance Report Measures

Report card gives an overview of the status and trend of each measure



Surface Water Measures

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
MEASURE	Percent of monitoring addressing state & local needs.	▲	➡	Nearly 40% of watersheds met goals for addressing state and local needs for monitoring. Ongoing program development is aimed to ensure local needs are identified for monitoring.
MEASURE	Local partner participa			
MEASURE	Number of nonpoint so practices implemented and estimated pollutan			
MEASURE	Number of municipal p projects implemented and estimated pollutan			
OUTCOME	ME			
OUTCOME	Rate of impairment/un water statewide and by life.			
OUTCOME	Rate of impairment/un water statewide and by swimming			
OUTCOME	Rate of impairment/un water statewide and by			
OUTCOME	Changes over time in k parameters for lakes ar			
OUTCOME	Changes over time in k parameters for lakes ar large rivers.			
OUTCOME	Changes over time in k parameters for lakes ar rivers.			
OUTCOME	Changes over time in k parameters for lakes ar large rivers.			
OUTCOME	Changes over time in k parameters for lakes ar streams.			
OUTCOME	Changes over time in k parameters for lakes ar lakes.			
OUTCOME	Changes over time in k parameters for lakes ar streams and rivers.			
OUTCOME	Number of previous im water quality standards			
OUTCOME	Mercury in fish.			
OUTCOME	Mercury emissions.			
OUTCOME	Municipal wastewater p			

Drinking water and groundwater measures

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
MEASURE	Number of community water supplies assisted with developing source water protection plans.	●	➡	On track to meet goal of protecting all vulnerable systems under Source Water Protection Plans by 2020.
MEASURE	Number of grants awa protection.			
MEASURE	Number of local gover participating in ground monitoring and reduct			
MEASURE	Number of new health contaminants of emer			
MEASURE	Number of counties c atlas for groundwater			
MEASURE	Number of long-term network wells.			
MEASURE	Number of unused gro			
MEASURE	Land use in Drinking W Areas.			
OUTCOME	ME			
OUTCOME	Changes over time in pesticides, nitrate-nitrogen, and other key water quality parameters in groundwater: Pesticides.	▲	➡	Variable trends for five common pesticides indicate a mixed signal. Low levels are frequently detected in vulnerable groundwater.
OUTCOME	Changes over time in pesticides, nitrate-nitrogen, and other key water quality parameters in groundwater: Nitrate-nitrogen statewide.	▲	NEI	In many agricultural areas, drinking water supplies are not vulnerable to surficial contamination and most wells have low levels of nitrate-nitrogen. However, in vulnerable groundwater areas (the southeast, Central Sands and southwest), nitrate contamination is a significant concern.
OUTCOME	Changes over time in pesticides, nitrate-nitrogen, and other water quality parameters in groundwater: Nitrate-nitrogen southwest region.	■	NEI	In areas where groundwater is vulnerable, nitrate levels can be high. Of the 21 vulnerable townships tested in southwest Minnesota (2013-2019), 100% of them were determined to have 10% or more of the wells over the nitrate-nitrogen 10 mg/L standard.
OUTCOME	Changes over time in pesticides, nitrate-nitrogen, and ther key water quality parameters in groundwater: Nitrate-nitrogen Central Sands.	■	➡	Trend data from the Central Sands Private Well Network shows a slight downward trend in the 90th percentile . However, township testing data show a high level of nitrate in some vulnerable areas in the Central Sands.
OUTCOME	Changes over time in pesticides, nitrate-nitrogen, and other key water quality parameters in groundwater: Nitrate-nitrogen southeast region.	■	➡	Trend data from the Southeast Minnesota Volunteer Nitrate Monitoring Network shows no change. However, township testing data show a high level of nitrate in some vulnerable areas in southeast Minnesota.
OUTCOME	Changes over time in source water quality used for community water supplies.	●	➡	Current risk management approaches for unregulated contaminants are more proactive and collaborative than the project-based approach of the past.
OUTCOME	Nitrate concentrations in newly constructed wells.	▲	➡	Since 1992, there has been a general increase in the percent of new wells that have nitrate levels above the drinking water standard.
OUTCOME	Arsenic concentrations in newly constructed wells.	▲	➡	The percentage of wells with arsenic above the drinking water standard has remained steady over the past 10 years. Evaluation of ways to reduce this percentage is ongoing and may take years before significant progress is made.
OUTCOME	Changes over time in groundwater levels.	▲	➡	Most observation wells show no signficant change or an upward trend; many areas of the state lack important groundwater information while some areas experience declines.
OUTCOME	Changes over time in total and per capita water use.	▲	➡	There has been a slight improvement in water efficiency in recent years, although continued tracking is needed to determine the amount of impact from annual difference in weather versus changes in management.

Investment Measures

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
MEASURE	Total Clean Water Fund dollars appropriated by activity	$1.8B has been appropriated to the Clean Water Fund from FY10-25, ranging from $157M in FY10-11 to $318M in FY24-25.	FY16-17: $228M FY18-19: $212M FY20-21: $261M FY22-23: $257M FY24-25: $318M	For FY10-25, all 80 watersheds benefited from Clean Water Fund supported activities. Implementation activities comprise the largest portion of spending in watersheds statewide.
MEASURE	Total Clean Water Fund dollars per watershed or statewide by activity	All watersheds in the state are benefiting from local and statewide projects.		For FY10-25, all 80 watersheds benefited from Clean Water Fund supported activities. Implementation activities comprise the largest portion of spending in watersheds statewide.
MEASURE	Total Clean Water Fund dollars awarded in grants and contracts to non-state agency partners	$77M was awarded in grants and contracts to non-state agency partners in FY10-23.		About 84% of grant and contract awards are for implementation activities; 43% of total FY10-21 appropriations were awarded to non-state agency partners.
MEASURE	Total dollars leveraged by Clean Water Fund	$630M was leveraged by Clean Water Funds in FY10-23, or $1.06 for every implementation dollar invested.		Required Clean Water match funds were exceeded.

Social Measures and External Drivers

	MEASURE	STATUS	TREND	DESCRIPTION
RS				

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Performance Report Measures

Measure narrative

- Why the measure is important, what state agencies are doing and what progress has been made.

Graphic

- Summarizes the data

Status and Trend

- Summarizes the status and progress toward the long-term goal (where feasible for action and outcome measures).

Local partners doing water monitoring

Measure: Percent of watershed chemistry monitoring performed by local partners

As of 2023, all programs are meeting participatory goals.

Status: There is great variability

Trend

Why is this measure important?

Clean Water Fund dollars enable intensive sampling and assessment of lakes and streams in all 80 major watersheds. This allows for better protection of Minnesota's clean waters and restoration of the polluted ones. As noted in statute, one of the purposes of the Clean Water Fund is to provide "...grants, loans, and technical assistance to public agencies and others testing waters..." This measure shows the participation of local partners, citizen volunteers, and students across Minnesota.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) alone cannot complete all of the monitoring necessary to comprehensively assess the waters in the state. Local partner participation is crucial to meet water monitoring strategy goals and to build a base of engaged participants for restoration and protection activities that follow the monitoring and assessment of waters.

What are we doing?

MPCA works with local organizations across the state to build capacity for monitoring efforts. Each year, MPCA prioritizes certain lake, river, and stream sites and works with local partners to award contracts to cover the costs of staff, training, equipment, and lab analysis of condition monitoring.

In this way, MPCA is ensuring that the most current and comprehensive dataset is available for assessment and for the development of protection and restoration strategies. By bolstering local capacity, expertise, and equipment inventory, these partners become well suited to carry out future monitoring efforts, such as subwatershed pollutant load monitoring to aid in restoration and protection strategies.

In addition, MPCA supports a volunteer water monitoring program for stream and lake clarity. Over 1,300 volunteers participate annually; the data supports assessment and trend development work and provides an engage citizenry for environmental protection and restoration.

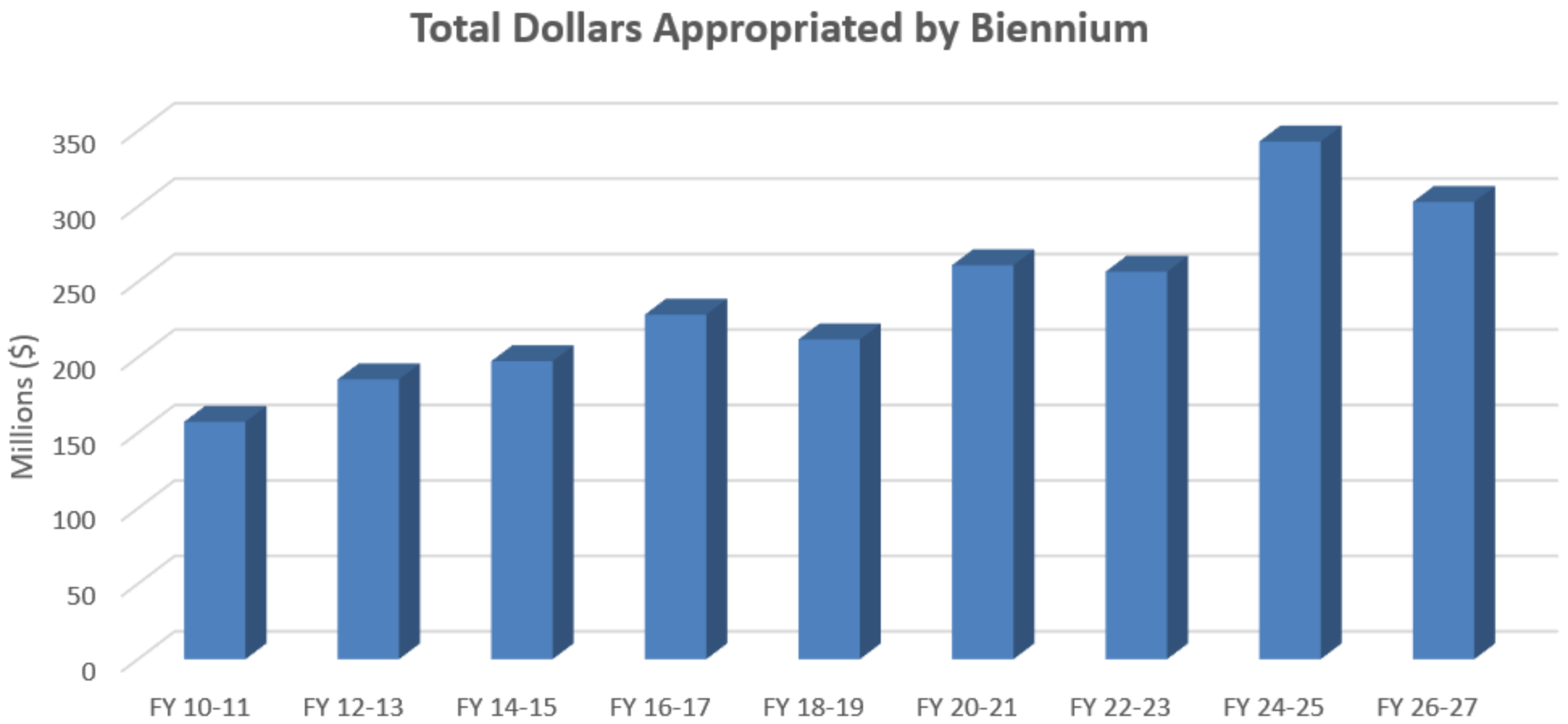
Clean Water Fund dollars also support a large environmental education effort in the Red River Basin through the Red River Watershed Management Board. This work exposes hundreds of students to local waterways, provides watershed training to teachers, curriculum development for elementary students, and engages students in biological and continuous monitoring.

What progress has been made?

MPCA has been able to maintain its goal of a minimum of 75 percent of the stream sites offered being picked up by local partners. The MPCA has seen a decline in the participation with lake monitoring through the SWAG program. This has been attributed to a lack of staff capacity at the local level to undertake the tasks associated with lake monitoring.

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT
YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

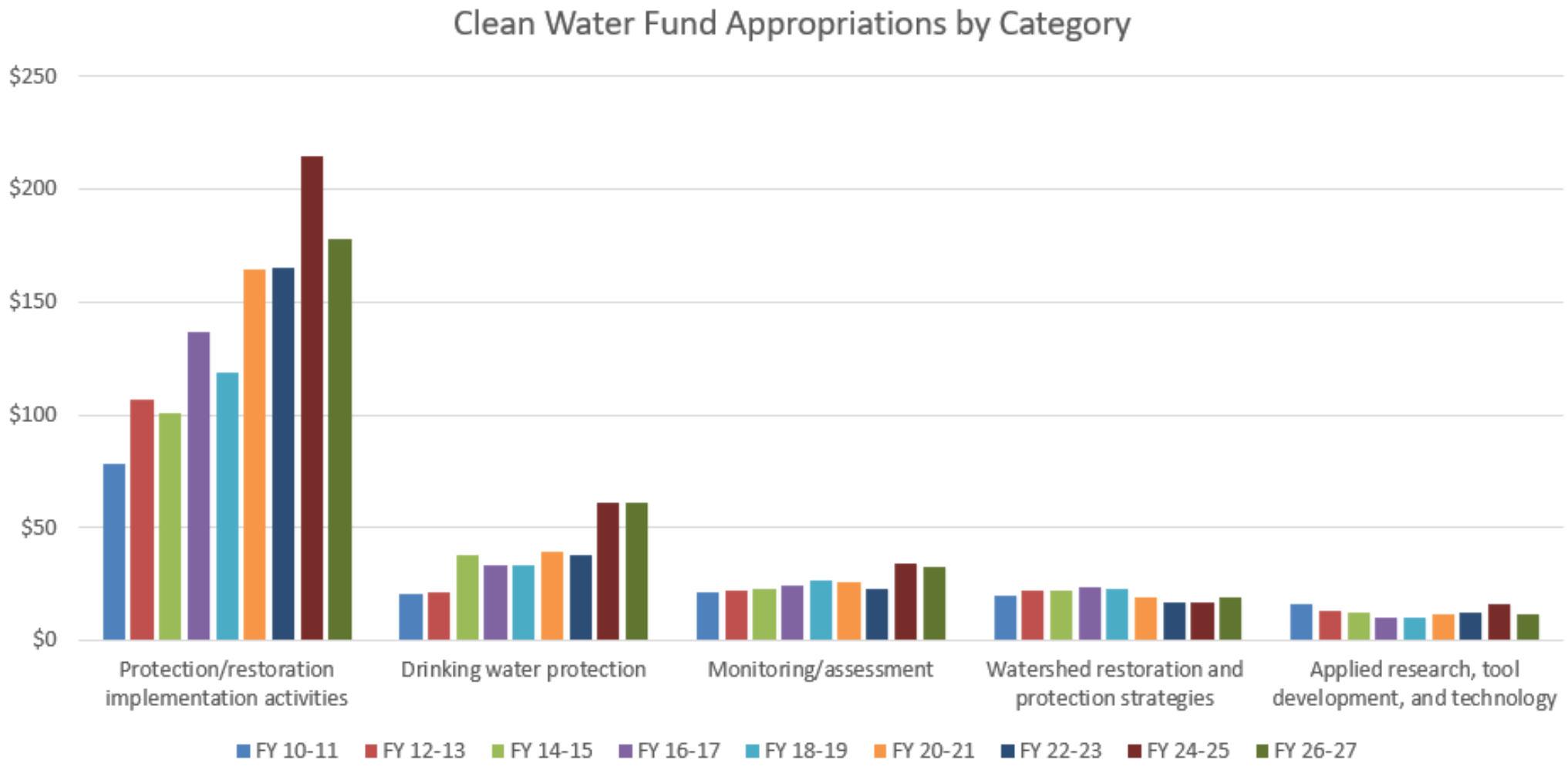
Investment



CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

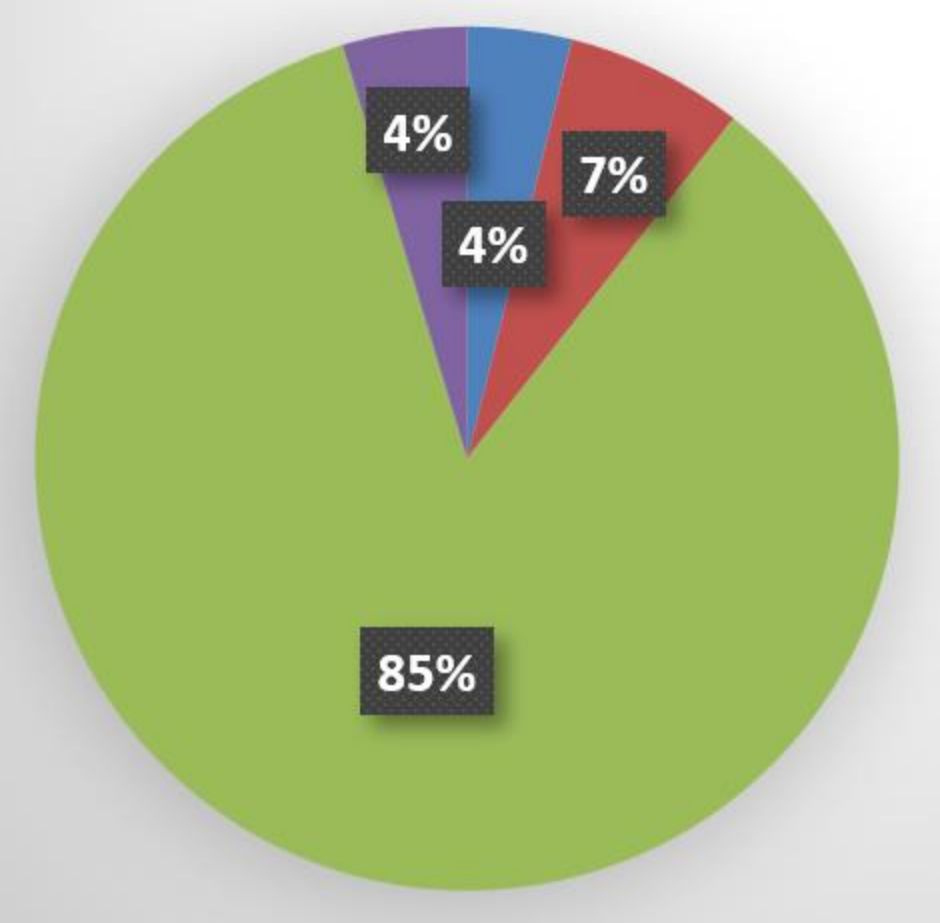
Appropriations by category



CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Total grant and contract awards by category



CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT
YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Highlights: Partnership and Collaboration

- Awarded more than **3,736** grants to protect and restore Minnesota's water resources
- Issued more than **2,797 loans** to prevent nonpoint source water pollution or solve existing water quality problems

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT
YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Producers' work with Martin SWCD targets Fairmont city water supply

- Clean Water Funds enabled Martin SWCD to install and incentivize practices to keep nutrients out of the subwatersheds that drain to Fairmont's drinking water source
- *"Having this really targeted area allows you to focus your energy and efforts on specific, critical areas, and having this grant gave us the staff time to do that,"* said Martin SWCD Manager Ashley Brenke.
- *"I think there's a lot of people that care a lot about the water quality in the Fairmont Chain of Lakes, and I think it takes all of those people and more to make improvements,"* shared Jesse Walters, Martin SWCD outreach coordinator.

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT
YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

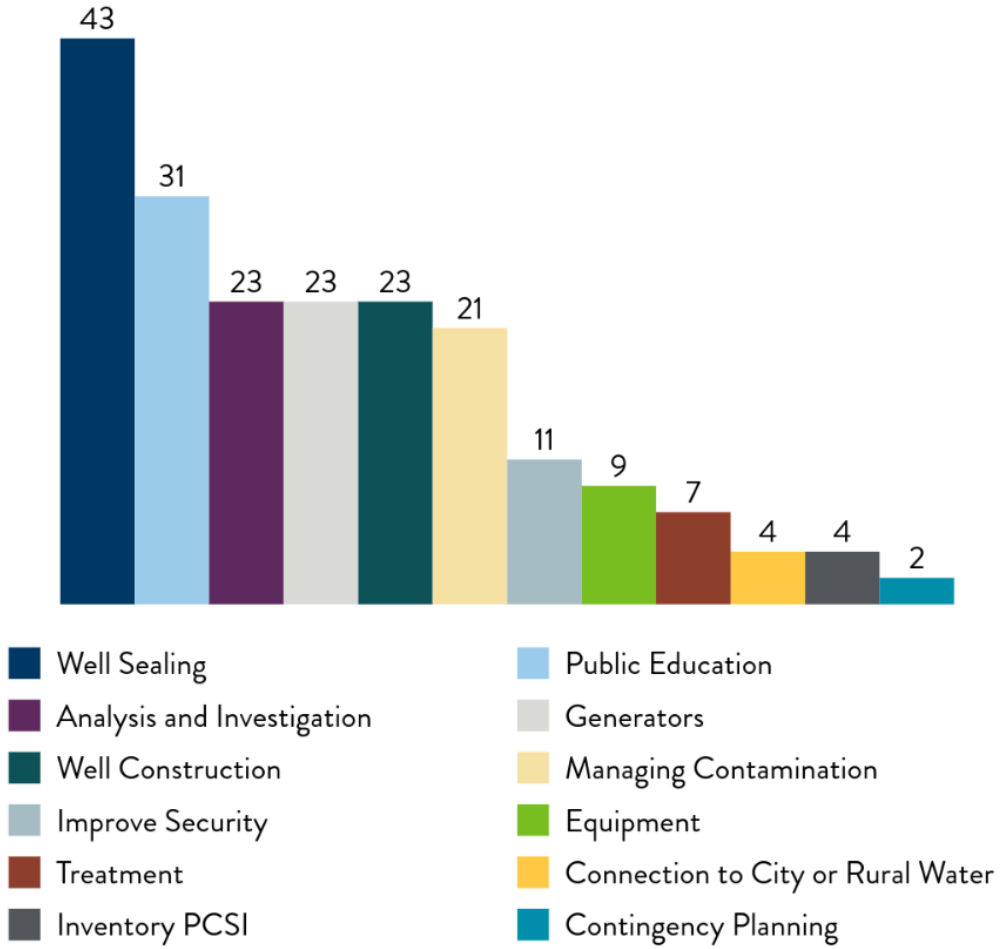
Highlights: Protection

- Secured more than **984 easements** that will permanently protect approximately 35,235 acres along riparian corridors and within wellhead protection areas, of which **27,409 acres** were protected using Clean Water Funds
- **830 out of the approximately 970** community water systems plans developed to protect drinking water sources.

Source Water Protection Grants for public water systems

- Source Water Protection Grants are small grants that enable water systems to take action to protect their source water
- Since the grants program started in 2010, MDH has awarded $10.4 million
- A new, modern grants database was launched in 2025

Grant-funded activities (2024-2025)

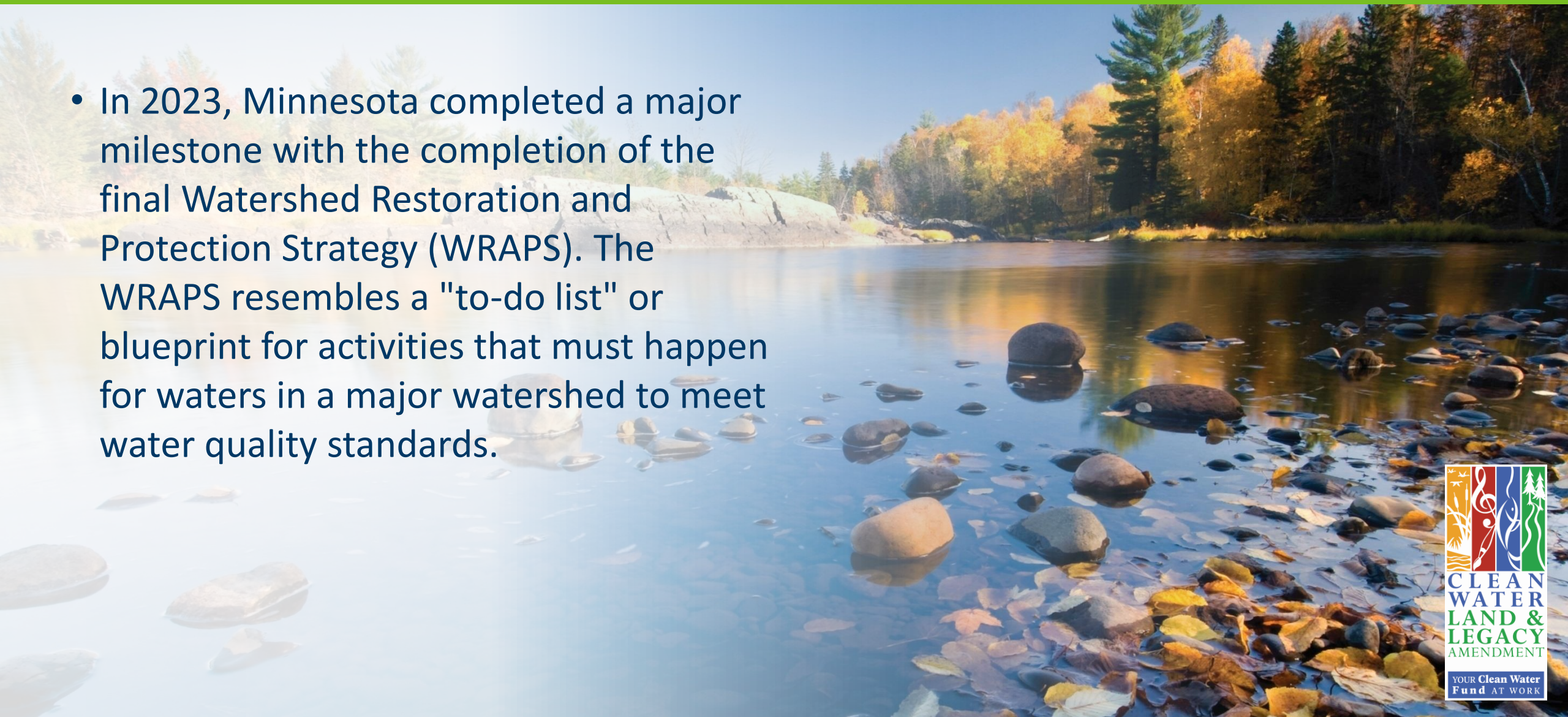


CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

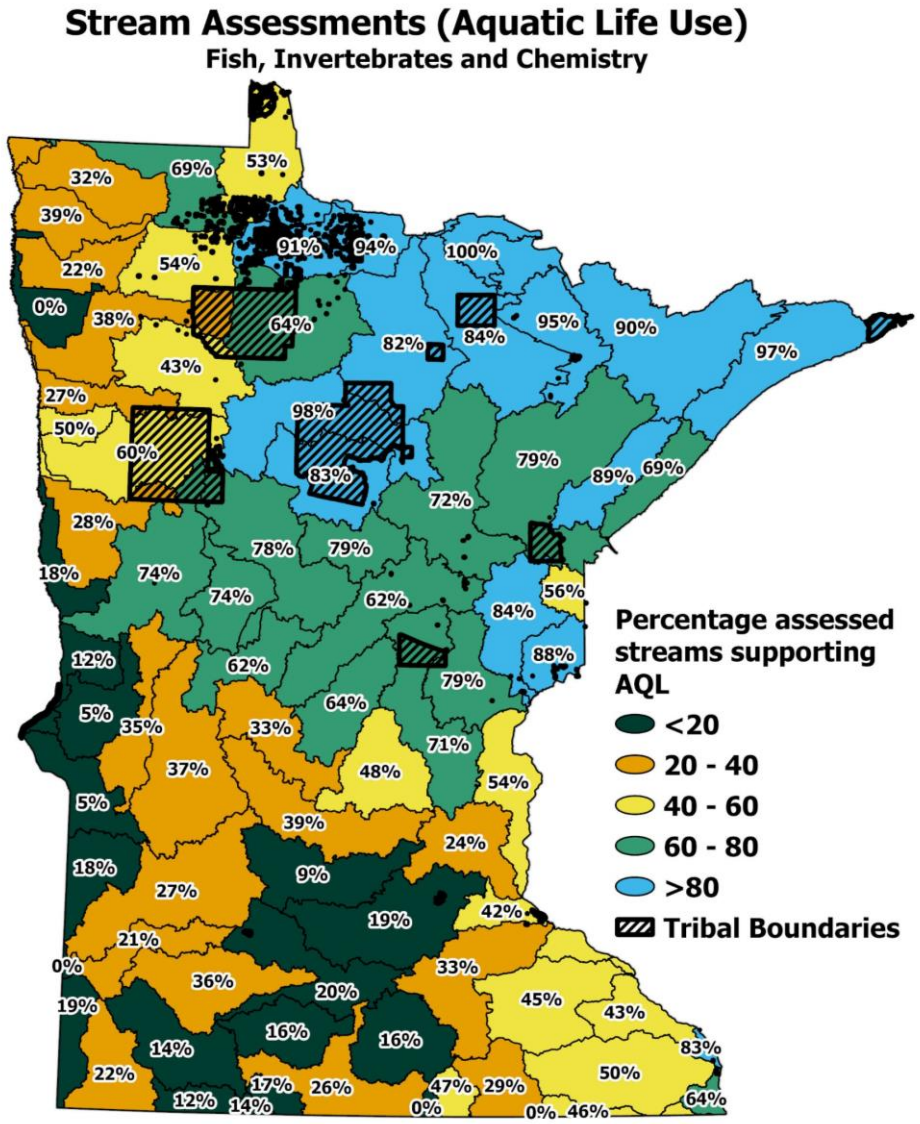
YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

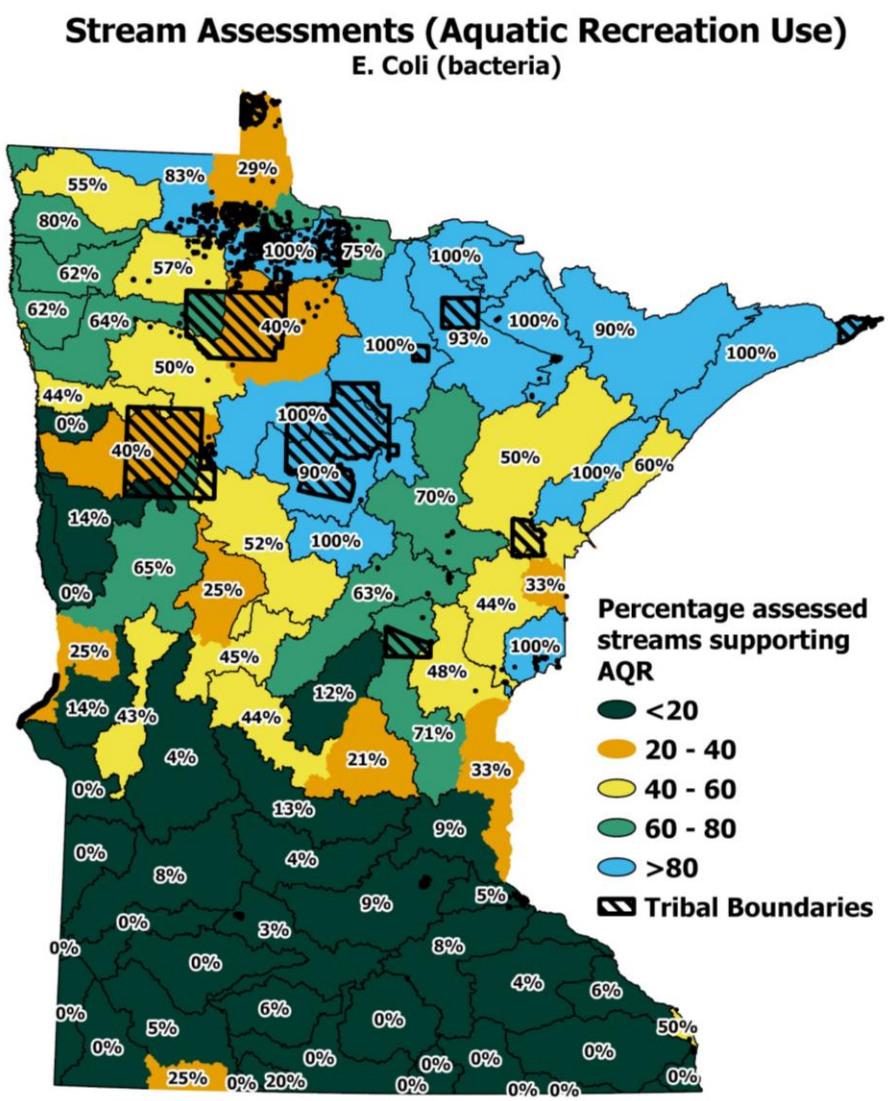
Highlights: Reducing Pollutants and Documenting Successes

- In 2023, Minnesota completed a major milestone with the completion of the final Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS). The WRAPS resembles a "to-do list" or blueprint for activities that must happen for waters in a major watershed to meet water quality standards.



Stream Condition Assessments

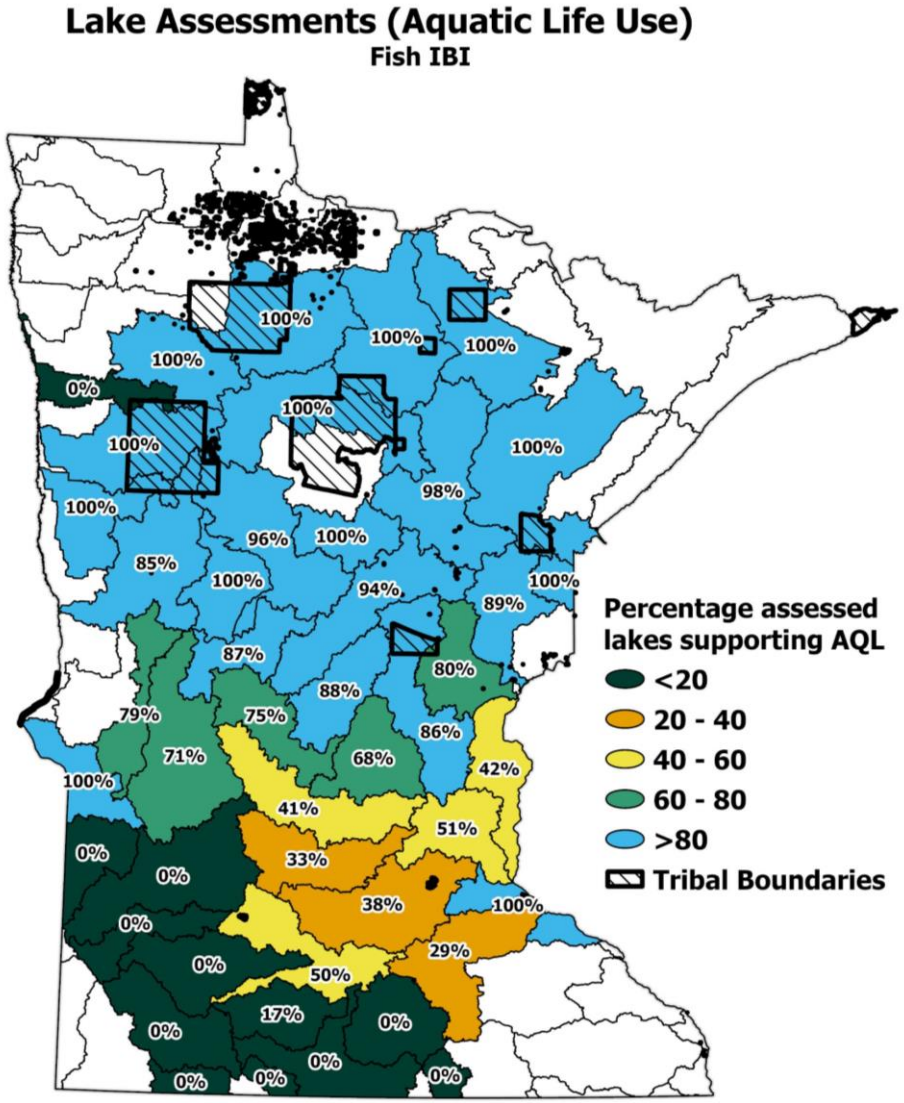


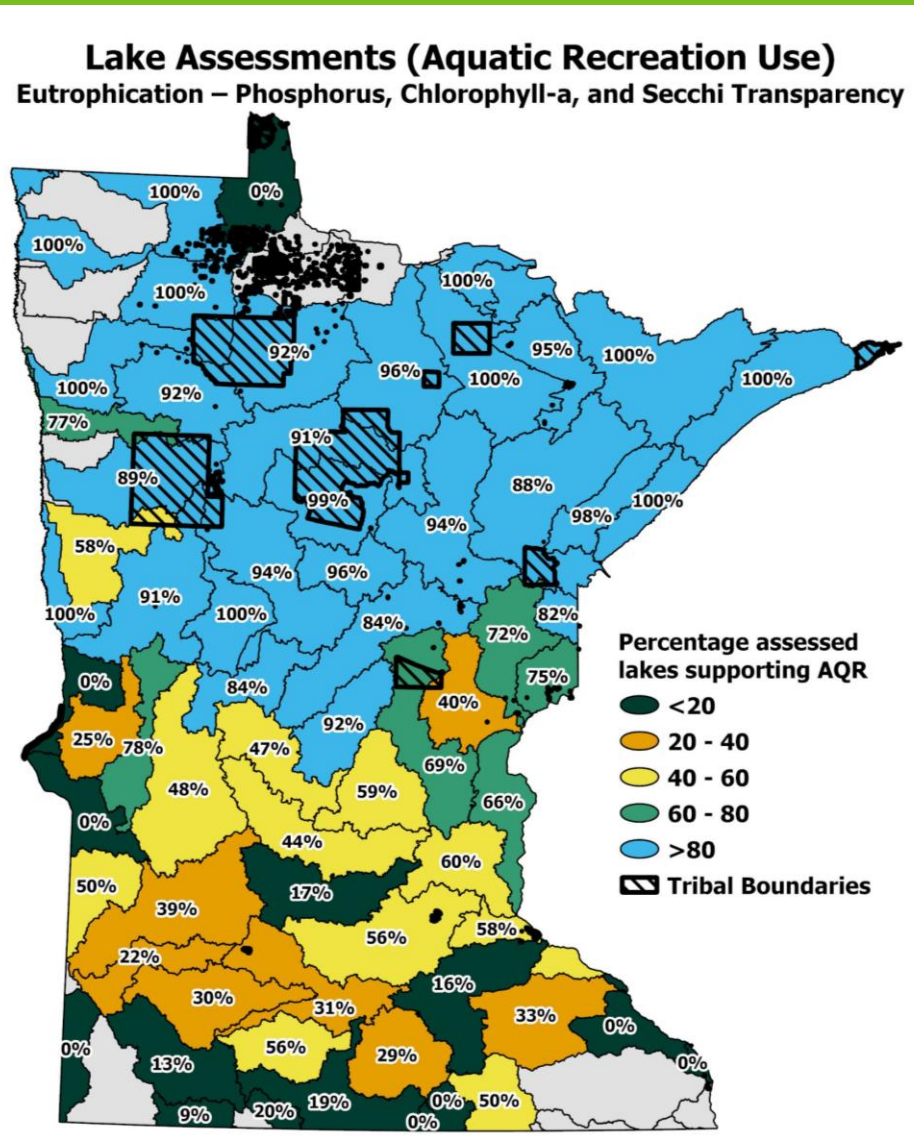


CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Lake Condition Assessments

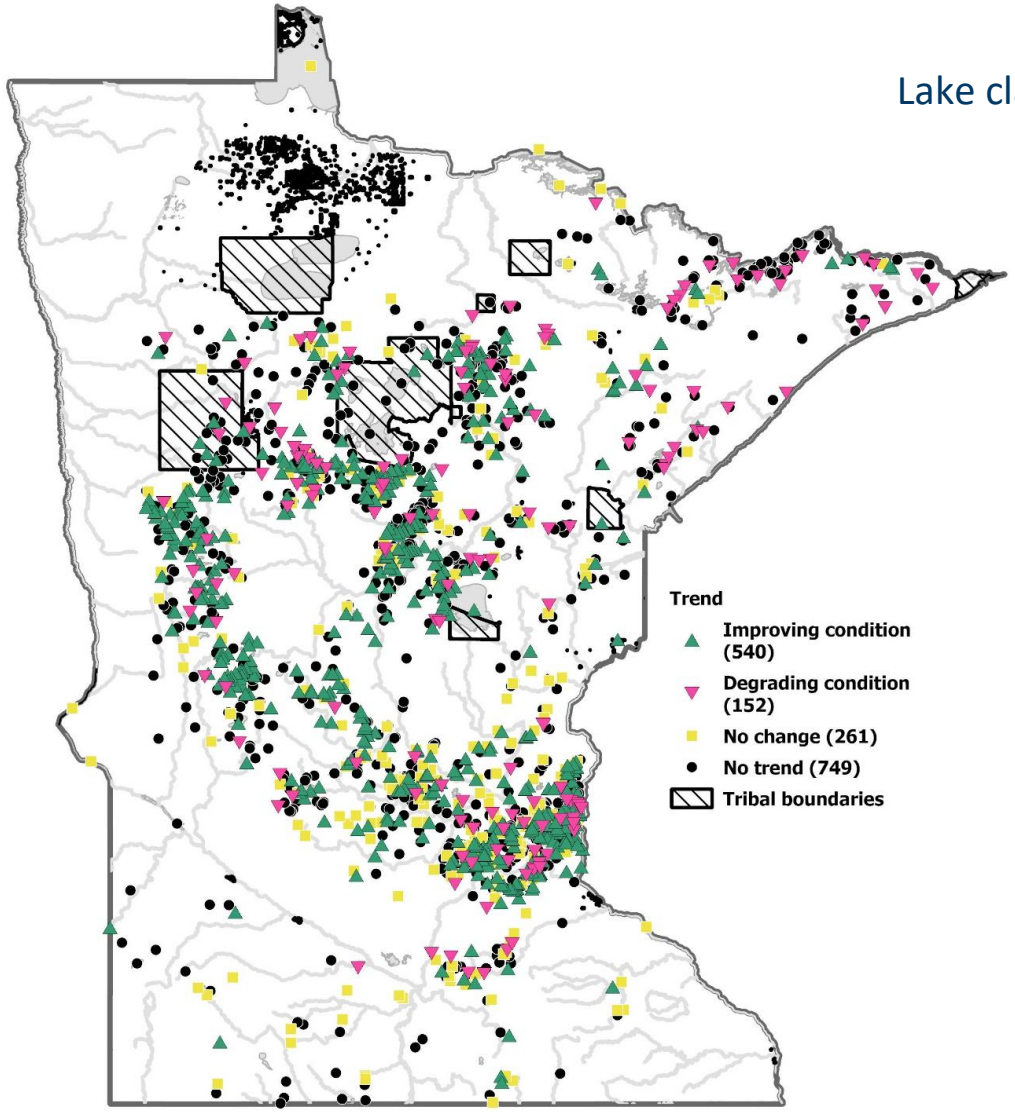


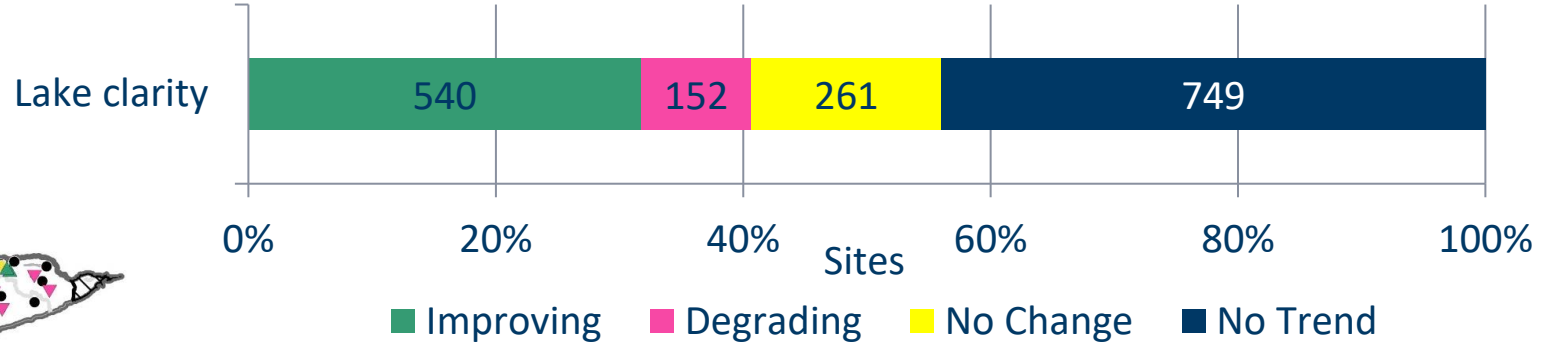


CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Lake and stream water quality





540 lakes have increasing water clarity

Of the 540 lakes with an improving trend, 175 have known invasive zebra mussels (36% of those with improving clarity).

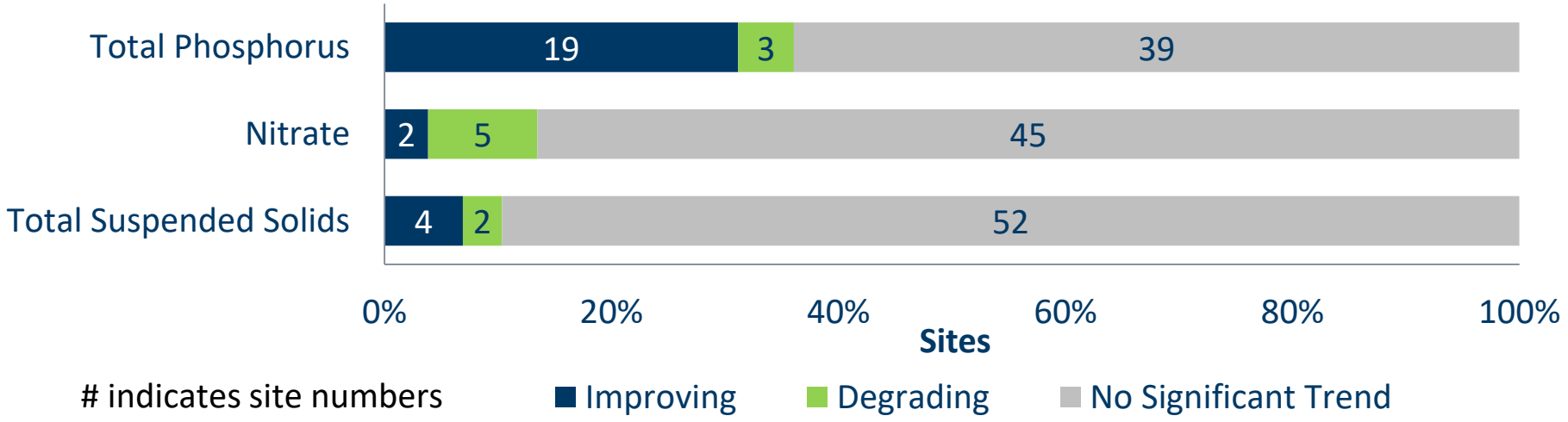
Lake water clarity must change more than half a foot per decade to be considered a detectable change

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Lake and stream water quality

- Water quality varies greatly by region. Over 50% of streams have no trend detected.
- Total Phosphorus and Total Suspended Solids are generally improving or have no trend detected.
- Nitrate trends are generally showing no trend and five locations degrading throughout the state.



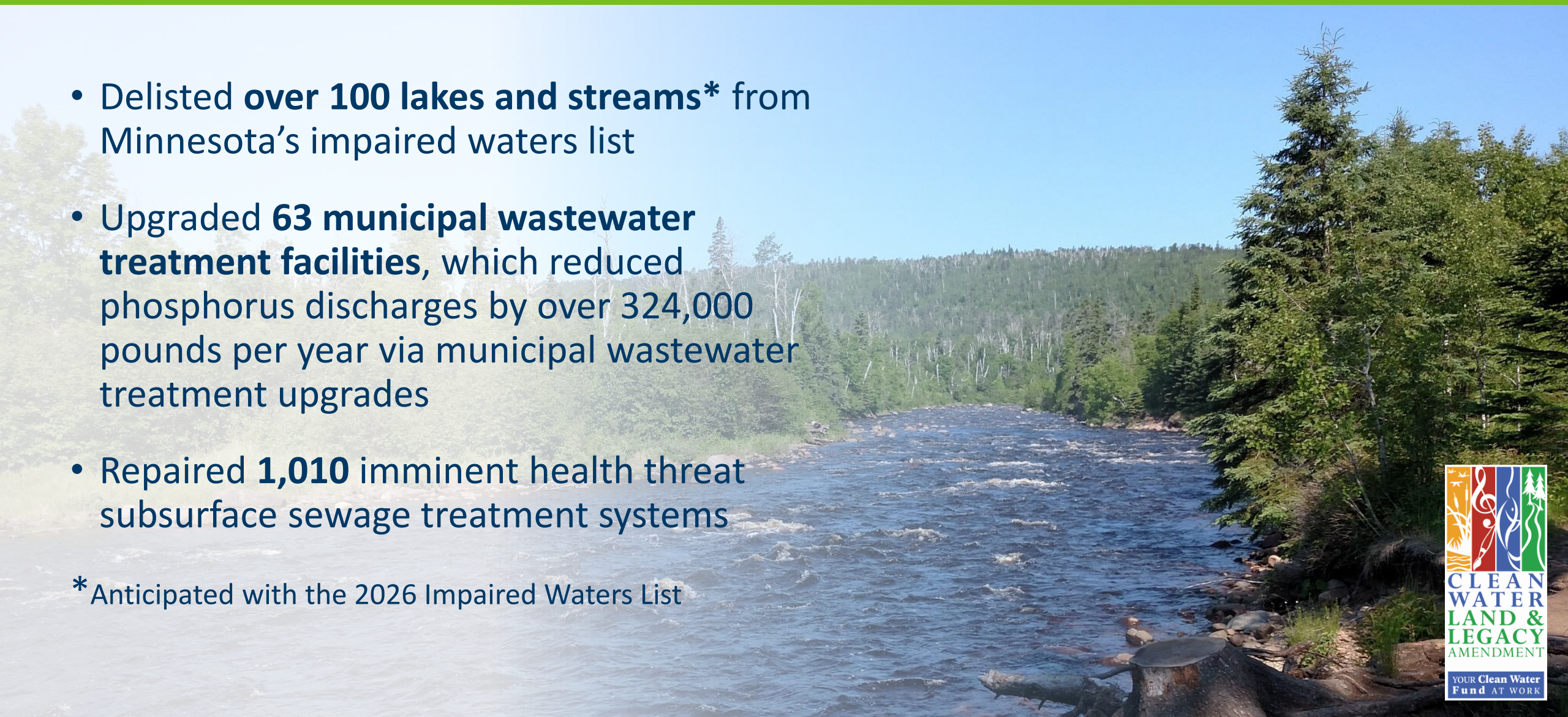
CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Highlights: Reducing Pollutants and Documenting Successes

- Delisted **over 100 lakes and streams*** from Minnesota's impaired waters list
- Upgraded **63 municipal wastewater treatment facilities**, which reduced phosphorus discharges by over 324,000 pounds per year via municipal wastewater treatment upgrades
- Repaired **1,010** imminent health threat subsurface sewage treatment systems

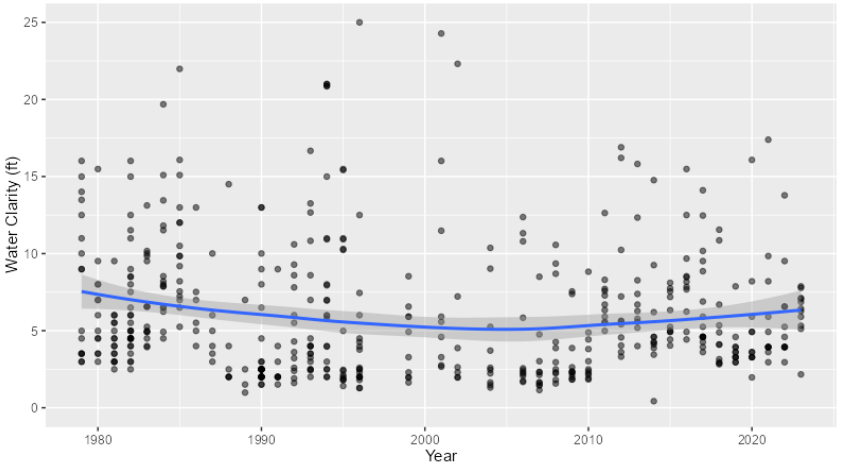
*Anticipated with the 2026 Impaired Waters List



CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT
YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Lake Rebecca

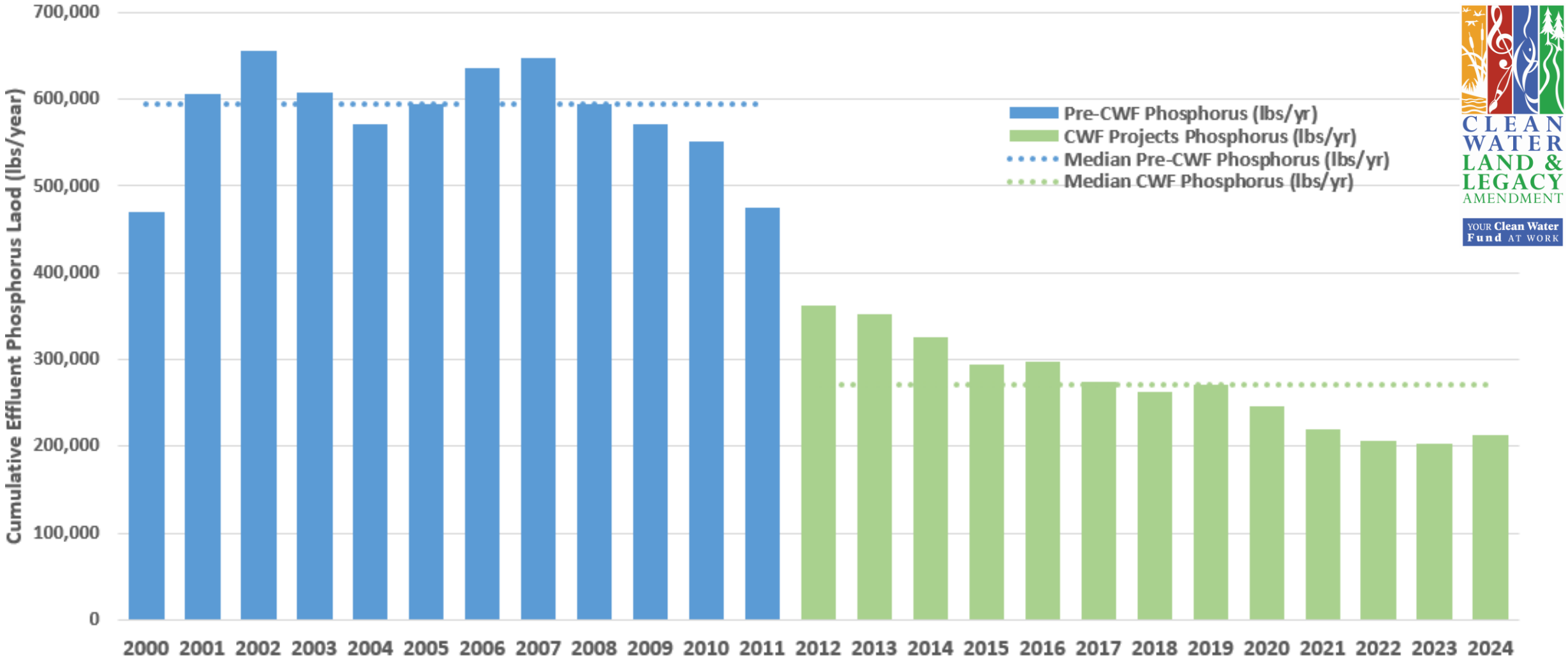
- Lake Rebecca was listed as an **impaired waterbody in 2008** for excessive nutrients, high phosphorus levels and poor water quality which led to seasonal algal blooms and fish mortality events.
- **Three Rivers Park District implemented a water quality improvement program** to reduce phosphorus inflow and control invasive plant species, enhance the growth of native plant communities, and reduce algal growth, along with alum treatments were applied in 2010 and 2011.
- When Lake Rebecca was assessed in 2014 excessive phosphorus, high chlorophyll-a, and reduced water clarity remained.
- Overtime water quality improvements worked showing a shift in impairment state and data from 2012-2017 show Lake Rebecca was meeting the lake eutrophication standards. It was recommended that the lake be removed as a **delisting from the Impaired Waters List in 2018**.
- **In the most recent watershed assessment, in 2025, phosphorus and Secchi are meeting, and chlorophyll-a is improving**.



CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Phosphorus Load Reductions at CWF Wastewater Treatment Facilities



Highlights: Reducing Pollutants and Documenting Successes

- CWF supported pilot projects to two groups of rural counties to offer **free private well testing, one for nitrate and one for arsenic**, and options for alternative water for income-qualified households. These pilots form the basis for the state's upcoming response to recent federal requirements to support drinking water needs for private well users with high nitrate levels in southeastern Minnesota.
- Added pesticide water quality monitoring for approximately **140 additional pesticide compounds** in vulnerable groundwater and surface water resources statewide.

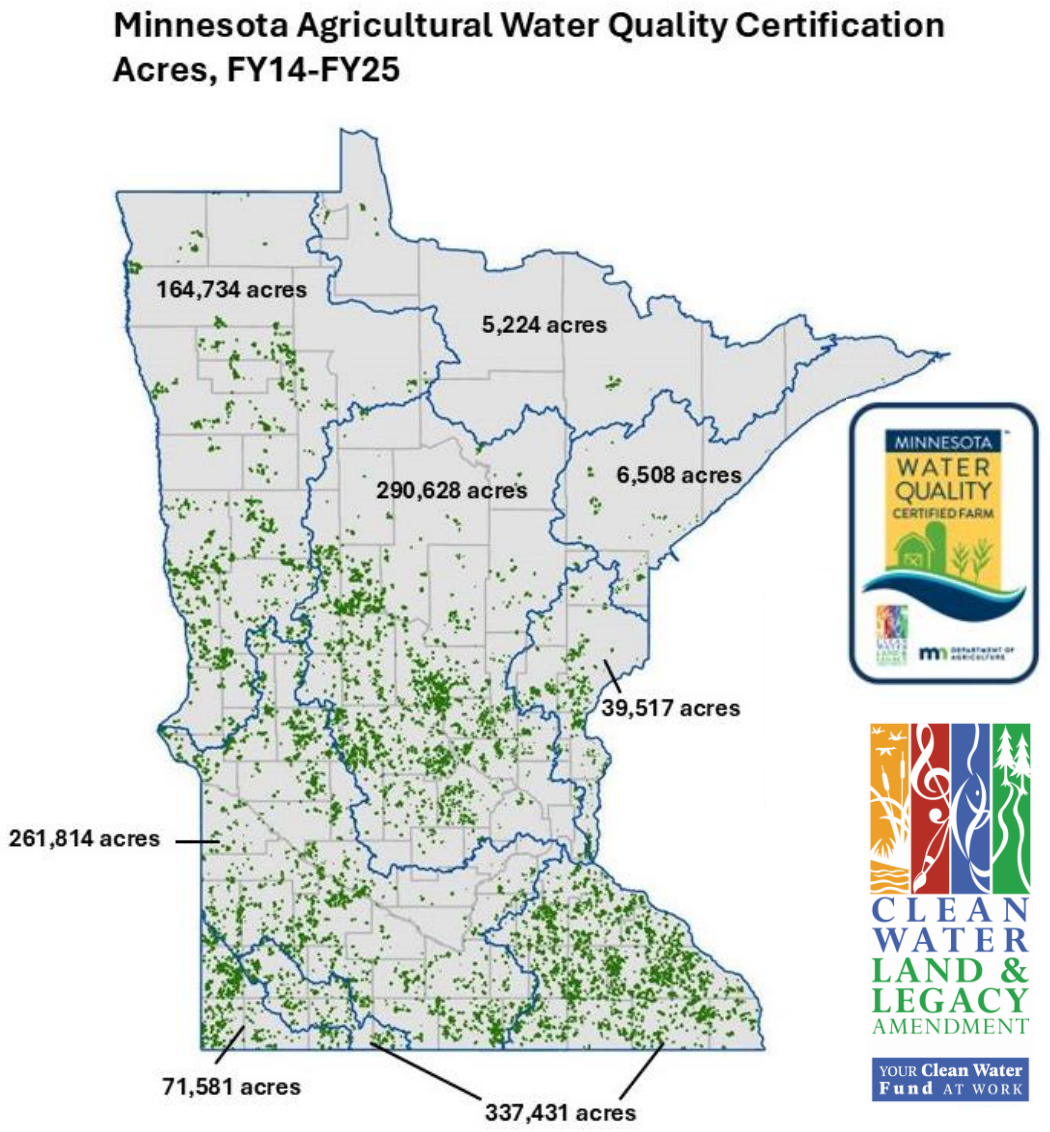
CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT
YOUR Clean Water Fund AT WORK

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)

Certified **1,177,437** acres of farmland across more than 1,600 farms

Certified producer surveys in 2024 shares:

- 74% have implemented additional conservation practices since becoming Ag Water Quality Certified
- MAWQCP inspired 69% to implement conservation practices in the future and
- 58% report MAWQCP increased their ability to implement conservation.



Acknowledgements

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Designers: Paul Andre (MPCA)

Thank You!

The 2026 Clean Water Fund Performance Report will be available at:

http://www.legacy.leg.mn/funds/clean-water-fund/clean-water-fund-performance-reports

Large-volume water users

Introduction

In response to recent increases in interest from prospective large-volume water users, the Clean Water Council is interested in understanding risks associated with overuse or contamination of water from large-volume water users, and in addressing the potential gaps in the statewide, regional and local decision-making processes. To that end, this document will:

- Summarize the Clean Water Council's policy statement with high level recommendations
- Explore the current conditions and future concerns
- Elaborate on the recommendations for policies or actions needed

Individual large-volume users of water, or those using more than 100 million gallons of water per year or one million gallons per day, are not new to Minnesota. Users below that threshold, such as irrigators and water suppliers, can also impact local groundwater levels. They are not the focus for this policy statement, though could be influenced still by the recommendations.

As a state, Minnesota has an identity synonymous with water, and there is a perception that water is abundant and limitless. There is concern that large-volume water users are being attracted to Minnesota without appropriate consideration of water needs, limitations, or water sustainability. Increased interest from large-volume water users, most recently data centers, have raised concerns about siting large-volume water users in locations where sustainable water supply could become (or already is) an issue. The concern becomes more acute when groundwater is the source of water for local water supply.

While the demand for new data centers has spurred the development of this policy statement, the Council is looking at this more holistically in considering large-volume water users in general, including those already permitted and operational. Additionally, while concerns exist around energy, air pollution, long-term economic development, and other issues, the Council within its charge is interested predominantly in the implications specific to water.

Policy Statement

In response to a recent increase in interest from prospective large-volume water users and demonstration of clear need for a coordinated response, the Clean Water Council recommends that the State of Minnesota implement the following actions to protect groundwater across jurisdictional boundaries and for future generations:

- Enhance regional groundwater models and use them to prevent negative impacts before they occur.
- Increase intention around siting and design of new facilities with respect to water supply.
- Require proposers of a new large-volume water user publicly disclose anticipated water use as a part of environmental review.

- Incorporate large-volume water users as considerations in existing state, regional, and local water plans.
-

Problem

While Minnesota is a water rich state, water is not an unlimited resource. Large increases in water use can increase the risk for over-using our water resources. Over-use can impact individuals, businesses, communities and ecosystems. People are concerned about the risk of over-allocating water for large water volume users. Hyperscale data centers, for instance, can use up to 1-5 million gallons of water per day, or the equivalent of a small city[1]. The addition of one data center alone can dramatically impact local groundwater levels. Quality can also be impacted, as pumping of large volumes of water can change groundwater chemistry through changing flow patterns and mobilizing contaminants such as arsenic, manganese, and others. The addition of multiple large-volume water users within a single community (or adjacent communities) can therefor create significant impacts on local and regional groundwater sustainability, local water quality, groundwater-dependent waters, ecosystems, and future availability of groundwater.

In considering these impacts, it is important to note that water for domestic consumption is considered by the State of Minnesota as the highest priority use, therefor higher than water for large-volume water users, as identified in State Statute (Minn. Stat. §103G.261). The prioritization of uses is an important safeguard, ensuring that water is available for domestic consumption (public and private) as long as possible in the event of an emergency. Requests from proposers of new data centers to have water guaranteed have caused concern that this statute could be circumvented, or water suppliers could feel pressure to continue supply in the event of an emergency longer than they should. Private well impacts are also a concern, as well interference and quality changes can create hardship for users and financial risks for municipalities if large water users are on a municipal water supply system. Additionally, the volume of water needed for supply or being added to wastewater streams can create challenges for local infrastructure capacity, leading to additional financial and planning implications for a community.

Large-volume water users can be an attractive development option to communities due to their potential economic benefit. However, the information needed to be able to weigh benefits and risks of a proposed development is not always readily available. Proposals can be too early in design to contain sufficient information about water need, and nondisclosure agreements can limit transparency. This can make evaluation of proposals challenging, especially in instances when data regarding current conditions are lacking. Communities and the State need data that are at a relevant scale, include planned developments, incorporate understanding of water quality conditions and impacts of changes in groundwater flow, considers an uncertain future, and more.

[1] (Include reference to Freshwater data centers fact sheet, McKinsey & Company Report, and MCEA documents)

Fortunately, work in recent years has better equipped Minnesota to respond to the influx of interest from large-volume water users. The State is not starting from scratch. The following are the tools or resources are a sampling of what we have as a result of Clean Water Fund investments:

- Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies have built on statewide monitoring information to identify strategies to protect and restore groundwater quality and quantity
- One Watershed, One Plan has elevated groundwater as an issue on regional scales across the state, drawing attention to need for protection and restoration
- The DNR has engaged in aquifer monitoring for water supply planning across the state, with specific attention to areas of concern
- Modeling and planning for Little Rock Creek Area Water Use Conflict
- Planning and technical support for the three Groundwater Management Areas
- Staff in the Twin Cities metropolitan region have been researching and planning around water sustainability and have worked to cultivate intergovernmental relationships:
    - Metro Model 3 (Metro Model 4 in the works)
    - Multi-community Wellhead Protection Plan pilot
    - Subregional water planning collaboratives
    - Metropolitan Council commissioned research paper on large-volume water users, due in early 2026, that will have a checklist guide for cities to use

The Environmental Quality Board also developed a new Groundwater Report in 2025 that provides great detail and content.

Given the resources listed above and more, we have information and tools available to enhance decision making. While we can build on top of that, much of the work can simply be leveraged. For instance, some groundwater models exist for the metro region and other parts of Minnesota at greater risk of over withdrawal. These models and other tools can inform safe water yield thresholds. However, as a state, we do not yet have a good way to understand the cumulative impact of large-volume water users everywhere or assurances that this information is consistently leveraged between plans and jurisdictions. Water in aquifers, like water on the surface, does not adhere to jurisdictional boundaries. Decisions in one community impact the communities around it, and vice versa. As demonstrated above, large-volume water users impact both groundwater quantity and quality. Whether we look at individual proposals or cumulatively, we do not have the tools to fully understand regional impact. Regional planning support for cities and intergovernmental collaboration is needed to help manage for regional impact.

At the end of the 2025 legislative session, the State Legislature set new expectations for pre-application and early coordination with the Department of Natural Resources for any new data centers. This provides an opportunity to discuss the regulatory framework, but also do an assessment of possible locations under consideration and share resource concerns, trends, other wells, etc. While this can help to address some siting concerns and support private industry and communities in making early informed decisions regarding data centers, additional action with regard to all large-volume water users is needed to safeguard water availability for today and the future.

Recommendations

The Council has a statutory role to foster coordination and cooperation as part of the Clean Water Legacy Act. The Council is interested in protecting groundwater across jurisdictional boundaries and for future generations. The Council encourages improved data sharing, local government capacity building, and broader intergovernmental collaboration. Doing so would protect groundwater in a way that also provides efficient and coordinated responses for industry decision-making.

To address these concerns, the Council recommends the following.

1. Enhance regional groundwater models and use them to assess and manage risks to groundwater.

- Enhance regional groundwater models in order to better understand current conditions, the influence of new proposals, and cumulative impacts on water supply, aquifers, and groundwater dependent surface waters and ecosystems. Ensure these regional models are translated for and integrated into local water plans for communities across the state and factor in forecasted population growth and climate change.

- Modernize the Statewide Drought Plan to incorporate extreme weather threats and address triggers for groundwater conservation based on risks to groundwater supply. This would better tie the risk (overuse of groundwater) to the triggers and could help communities and industry better understand the risks and prepare for emergencies. Further, this could provide some assurance to communities that the state and water suppliers have a coordinated emergency response plan to address the concern of over allocation of water to particular uses.

    - Collaborate with neighboring states, Tribal governments, and Canada to more fully reflect and manage water conditions where activities have the potential to impact water quantity and quality in Minnesota.

- Identify areas of the state where limited groundwater resources

- **2. Increase intention around siting and design of new facilities with regard to water supply.**

    - With sufficient information around anticipated water use and intended source as well as an increased understanding of conditions, early coordination with the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (and the Met Council, where appropriate) could

allow them to assist with siting of new facilities from a groundwater availability and water supply perspective.

- Develop a framework or tool to aid the public and private sector in better evaluating water risk and/or more strategically site or design large-volume water use industries.
- Encourage co-location of large-volume water uses with wastewater treatment facilities or other beneficial industries, and consider opportunities for recharge of treated discharge.
- Incentivize closed loop geothermal systems and water reuse systems.
- **3. Require proposers of a new large-volume water user publicly disclose anticipated water use as a part of environmental review.**

4. Incorporate large-volume water users as considerations in existing state, regional, and local water plans.

- Include large-volume water users as considerations in Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS) and the development or amendment of comprehensive watershed management plans (One Watershed One Plan or other approved plans). Groundwater use and discharges to surface waters from data centers should be of particular interest. Encourage amendments for comprehensive watershed management plans in areas which have recently seen an increased interest from developers.
- Include large-volume water users as considerations for municipal planning efforts, more closely aligning land use decisions with water supply and protection plans, including local and regional Wellhead Protection Plans, Water Supply Plans (including emergency preparedness plans), Local Water Plans, and Local Comprehensive Plans in the metro area.
- When new land use decisions allowing for large-volume water users are proposed, the DNR should review impacts on high-priority current and future water use; MDH should be engaged for review of Drinking Water Supply Management Areas, water chemistry and private well considerations; and, in the metro area, the Metropolitan Council should review whether impacts to water availability will require a change to population forecasts or service availability. These local planning resources should be informed by statewide risk management plans including the Statewide Drought Plan.
- Develop a framework or tool that local communities could use to ensure they have full access to needed information to evaluate proposals and understand risks to water availability and infrastructure capacity. The resources ought to include models and examples for hosting community conversations around this topic to give Minnesotans a seat at the table in planning in advance of a proposal and ideas for tying land use decisions to water supply and resource protection goals more directly.

- Work with the Metropolitan Council, the League of Minnesota Cities, and the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities, and Minnesota Association of Townships for proactive outreach and training opportunities.

June 16, 2025

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Clean Water Council is committed to seeking the input not just from interested parties but from the public at large. The ratification of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment in 2008 led to the creation of the Clean Water Fund. Because voters provided their direct financial support to clean water, the Council believes that the Clean Water Fund deserves special attention from the public.

This public participation plan is intended to guide the Clean Water Council in seeking input on its budget and policy recommendations and strategic plan. It is based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) framework.

The purpose of this plan is to

- Apply a process to increase public participation, build trust and relationships, gather input and feedback, and promote transparency and accountability.
- Help the Council be intentional about why, how, when, and who it is engaging, including identifying the voices that may be missing.
- Be strategic in identifying the public participation efforts that are needed as well as capturing those already underway so that they can inform the Council's decisions. Public participation can be diffuse; and we know it's happening at multiple levels, to varying degrees, across many groups, in formal and informal ways. This plan can help to aggregate input and apply it at strategic points in time so that it can be used as a more formal element in the Council's decision-making process.
- Improve transparency and accessibility for the budget recommendation and policy recommendation process. Defining the Council's scope of work and role allows the Council to better sort and respond to the input received including informing people when their input is outside of the scope of the Clean Water Council.
- Continually review and adapt the approach to meet public participation goals and objectives. To that end, the Council intends to review the plan annually in January and adapt as needed.

DECISION TO BE MADE

- Clean Water Council budget and policy recommendation to the legislature.
- Clean Water Council will make a recommendation, Minnesota legislature will decide.

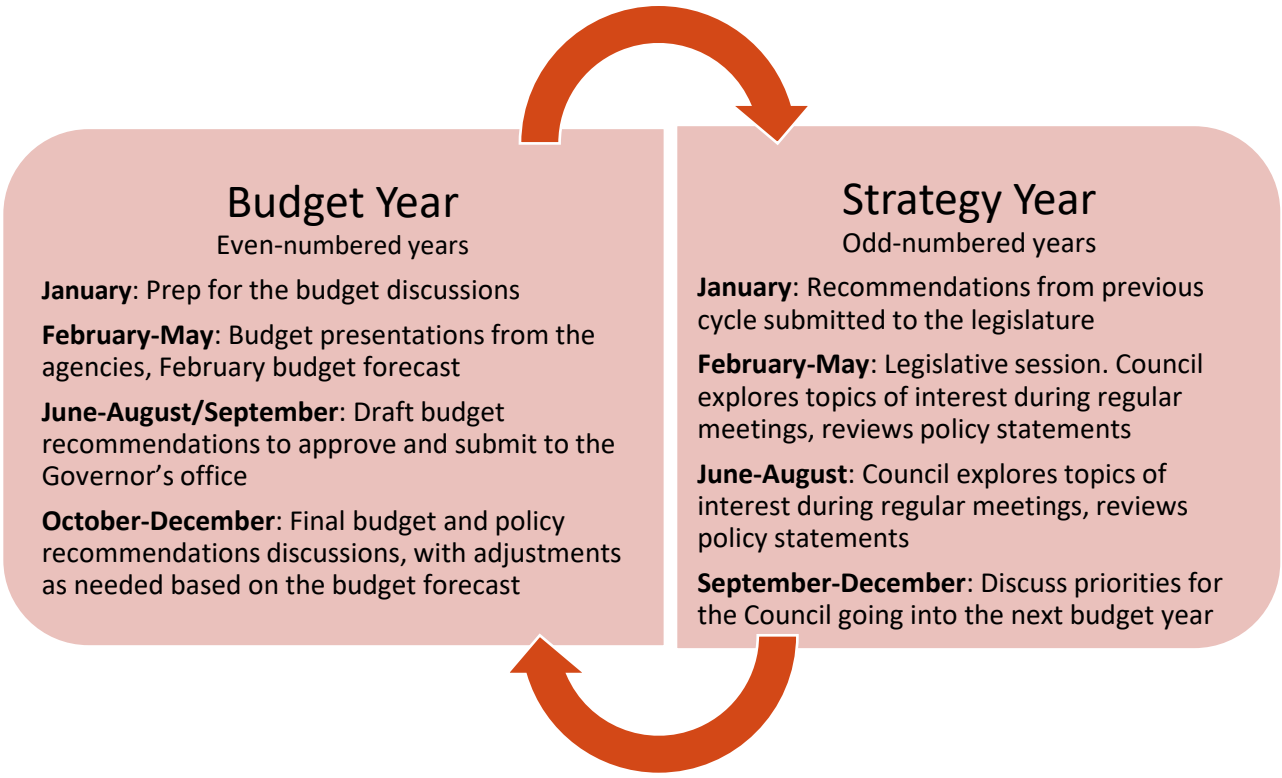


Figure 1. Clean Water Council workflow diagram.

DECISION CRITERIA

IN SCOPE

- Funding allocation for individual programs, projects, and initiatives
- Policy statements
- Clean Water Council Strategic Plan

OUT OF SCOPE

- Implementation of Clean Water Funded programs, projects, and initiatives
- Grant award processes and decisions

DECISIONS ALREADY MADE

- Budget deadlines
- Past budget recommendations
- Existing appropriations with and without tails
- Clean Water Council Bylaws and charter
- Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment and statutory language, Statute 114D

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Clean Water Council Strategic Plan
- Clean Water Fund Performance Report and Dashboard
- Clean Water Fund Communications Plan
- Clean Water Road Map

- Most recent Clean Water Fund budget and policy recommendations report
- Individual agency and Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) structure and budget process
- Research on values, attitudes, beliefs around water
- Outcomes of engagement initiatives such as the We Are Water program
- Budget and Outcomes Committee scoring rubric

INTERESTED PARTIES

- Tribal governments
- Minnesota Residents and Taxpayers
- Rights-holders
- Environmental organizations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Business organizations
- Statewide hunting organizations
- Statewide farm organizations
- Statewide fishing organizations
- County government (rural counties and seven-county metropolitan area)
- City governments
- Township officers
- Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Watershed Districts
- Metropolitan Council
- University of Minnesota
- Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Minnesota Department of Health
- Minnesota Public Facilities Authority
- Local public health officials
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Interagency Coordination Team
- Minnesota House of Representatives
- Minnesota Senate
- Governor's Office

ROLES

INTERESTED PARTIES, PRACTITIONERS, RIGHTS-HOLDERS, AND RESIDENTS

Expertise in sense of place, community interests and values, public attitudes, and desired amenities.

- Provides their expertise on values
- Communicates questions, concerns, and ideas
- Reviews and provides input on Council budget recommendations and policy statements

Individuals and groups may provide input directly to the Council or their representative on the Council. Insights may also come indirectly from local engagement initiatives (for example, the We Are Water program) or from research on local perspectives on water.

CLEAN WATER COUNCIL

The state varies widely in terms of demography, geography, industry, land use, and local capacity. Members of the Council represent the interests of various groups in strategic planning, setting priorities, providing feedback to agencies on programs, making funding recommendations, and forming policy statements.

- Provides information to and acts as the aggregator of public sentiment
- Coordinates budget and policy recommendations with the Interagency Coordination Team

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION TEAM (ICT)

The Clean Water Fund Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) was formed to coordinate the use of Clean Water Fund dollars for achieving the aims of Clean Water Land and Legacy Act. The ICT includes the seven state agencies involved in protecting water quality: Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Public Facilities Authority.

- Represents the agencies that implement various programs funded by the Clean Water Fund
- Informs the Council of agency programs and their associated budgets, needs, and outcomes
- Considers feedback from the Council in their budget proposal to the Governor's office

CLEAN WATER COUNCIL ADMINISTRATOR

This position exists to perform high-level strategic planning, outreach, and coordination for the Clean Water Council. They guide the process for developing policy recommendations and biennial budget recommendations, provide communication and engagement support, coordinate with the legislature and state agencies, and ensure that all Members are equipped with what they need to participate fully and effectively.

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

- Receives Clean Water Fund budget recommendation from the Clean Water Council
- Receives Clean Water Fund budget recommendation from the ICT (with input from the Clean Water Council)
- Submits its budget proposal to the Legislature

LEGISLATURE

- Receives Clean Water Fund budget recommendation from the Clean Water Council
- Receives Clean Water Fund budget recommendation from the Governor's Office (which is informed by the ICT and Clean Water Council)
- Finalizes and approves the Clean Water Fund budget and makes appropriations to agencies

The Clean Water Council makes Clean Water Fund spending recommendations to the Governor and Legislature

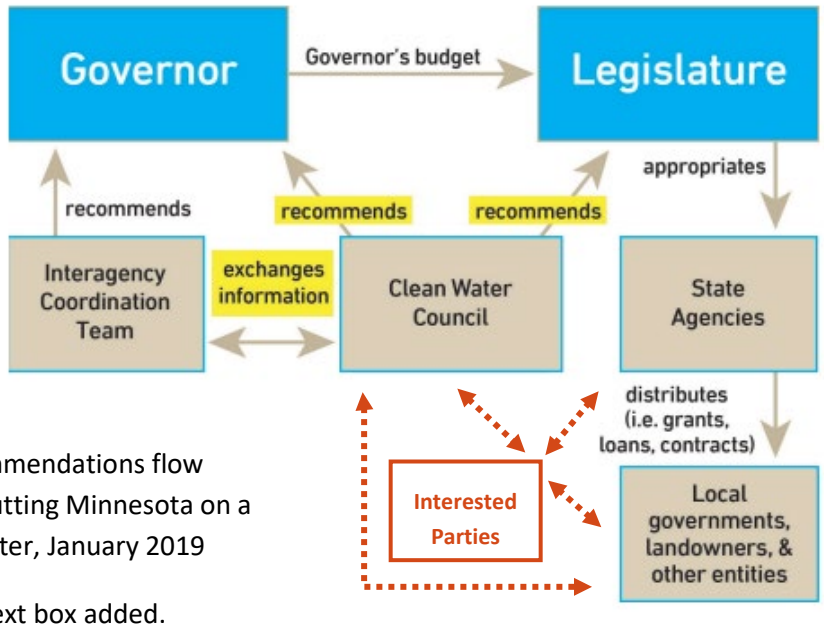
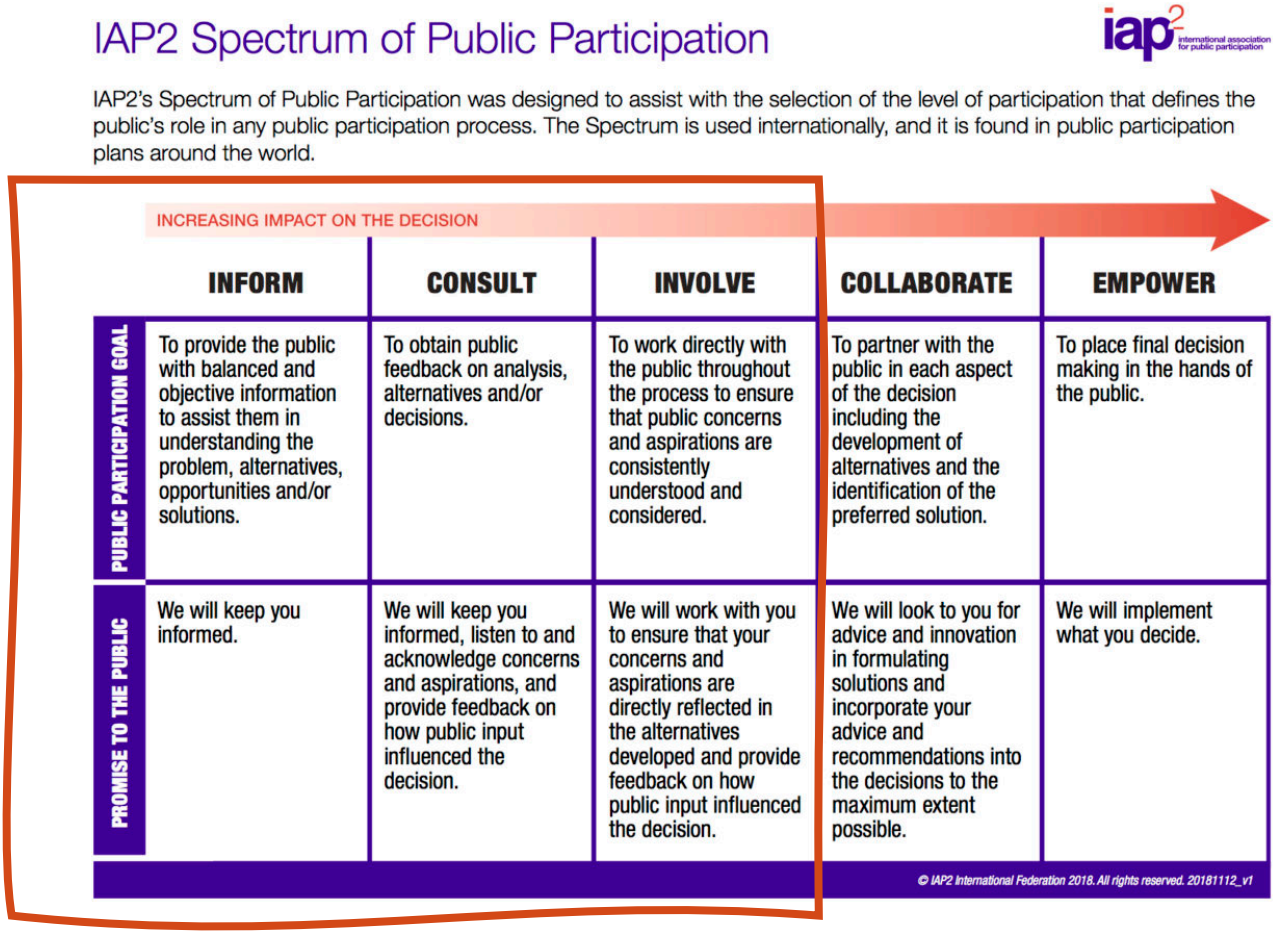


Figure 2. Clean Water Fund recommendations flow chart. Original graphic source: "Putting Minnesota on a Clean Water Trajectory", Freshwater, January 2019

*Note, orange dashed lines and text box added.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATON LEVEL



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.

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Figure 3. IAP2 spectrum of public participation. *Orange box outline emphasis added.

- **During the strategy year, the Council operates predominantly at the Involve level as members meet with interested parties they represent and seek broad input.** Techniques could include: Members meeting with individuals and groups they represent, with information and ideas flowing in both directions; attending industry and interested party conferences, meetings, field days, and other opportunities seeking to understand concerns and aspirations.
- **As budget recommendations and policy statements form up or are open for discussion, the Council may Consult people on the Council's priorities or drafts.** Techniques could include: Community comment at Council meetings, written comments, We Are Water program summaries, research that captures local perspectives on water, agency presentations, workshops/presentations from the Council at industry and interested party conferences and meetings.
- **As decisions are made, the Council communicates with interested parties at the Inform level.** Techniques could include: Website, social media, newsletters, interactive storymap, performance reports.

DECISION PROCESS

In designing the process for soliciting input, members of the Council should consider what they want to know, when, and how they will get that information. The Council ought to consider all input equally at all phases of engagement and in whatever form individuals and groups choose to provide it.

The Council ought to program its engagement actions to sync with when the information would be most impactful to the process. Figure 4 shows the budget year coordination with ICT flowchart including outcomes and key dates.

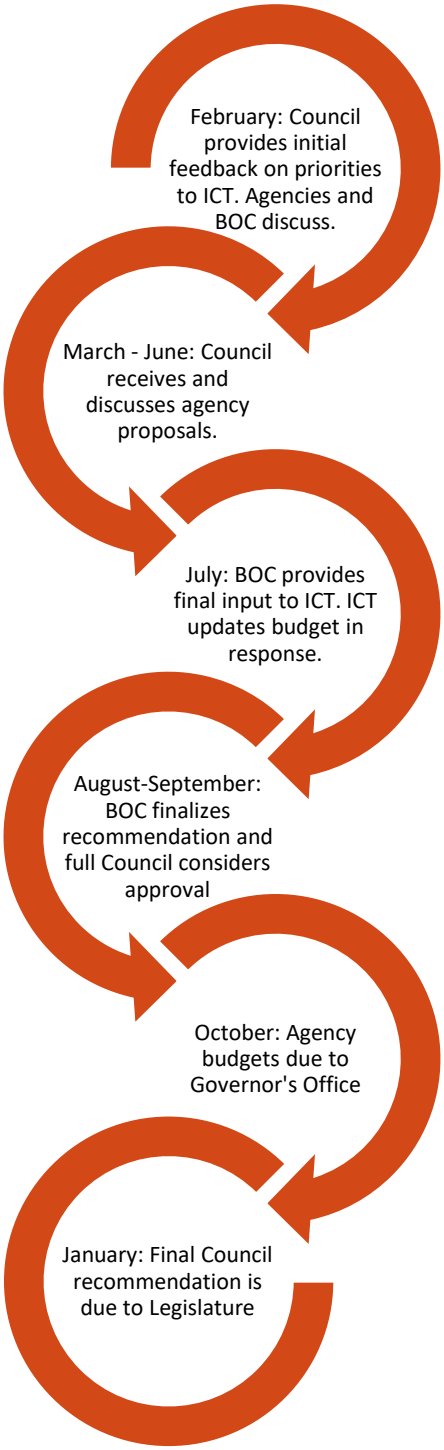
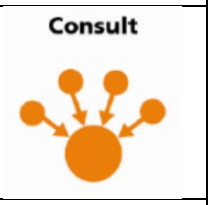


Figure 4. Budget year (even-year) coordination flowchart with ICT.

Table 1. Process outline.

Strategy Year (odd-numbered years)	
Description	**Engagement level (primary)**
Quarter 1 • The Administrator submits the policy and budget recommendations to the Governor and Legislature in January. • Clean Water Council reviews the Public Participation Plan. • Clean Water Council closes the loop with interested parties that provided input in the budget recommendation process, shares the report with interested parties, and notifies them of next opportunities for input. The Administrator prepares communication for distribution. Members forward the content to their constituencies. • Clean Water Council testifies at committee meetings. • Clean Water Council adjusts recommendations as needed based on final budget forecast.	
Quarter 2 • Clean Water Council members kick-off engagement with the interested parties they represent broadly, informing them of process, how to participate, and asking for input. All Minnesotans are invited to provide input at this early stage and respond to questions such as: o What is your vision for 10 years from now? o What is your hope for water resources in Minnesota? o What do we need more of? o What do we need less of? o What are your concerns related to water resources in Minnesota? o What do you want the Clean Water Council to know? • The Administrator develops tools to facilitate communication and engagement, including newsletters, press releases, social media, surveys, etc. • The Clean Water Council identifies conferences and meetings where it can provide updates, solicit input, share the public participation plan and (later in the year) preview its priorities going into the next budget year. • As is needed, the Administrator works with interested Members to submit conference abstracts.	
Quarters 3 and 4 • Members bring input from individuals and groups they represent to the regular Council meetings. • The Administrator facilitates discussion helps to outline Council priorities based on what each member brings as well as what is heard from interested parties. Themes from this exercise are referenced in subsequent meetings as the next budget and policy recommendations are developed. • The Clean Water Council also seeks input from We Are Water program coordinators and researchers and other indirect sources to seek to better understand local perspectives. The Council continues to invite people to react to prompts and encourage people to provide verbal or written testimony.	

• The Council presents its public participation plan and a preview of its priorities at industry and interested party conferences and meetings where it seems input. Presenters share an after-action review with the Council.	
Late Quarter 4 • The Council crystallizes themes and priorities in preparation for the budget year. These themes are shared with interested parties for them to react.	
Budget Year (even-numbered years)	
Description	**Engagement level**
Quarter 1 • Clean Water Council shares priorities with the ICT, kickstarting the proposal process. The Administrator develops communication materials to close the loop with interested parties, sharing the priorities, an overview of the budget-setting process, and opportunities to engage next. • Clean Water Council annually reviews the Public Participation Plan.	
Quarter 2 • Clean Water Council receives proposal presentations from agencies. The Council and ICT consider input as they form up their proposals. • Clean Water Council members consult with individuals and groups they represent. • The Council considers all feedback and synthesizing work from the past year, taking care to weigh all input equally regardless of when or how it was received.	
Quarter 3 • The BOC and ICT exchange budget proposals. The committee and Council describe how input received to-date was used or not used. • The Council consults interested parties on the budget and policy recommendations, then makes a decision. • The Administrator prepares communications to share with interested parties after the initial draft recommendations are developed, detailing outcomes, how it may adjust based on budget forecasts, and opportunities to be engaged in the coming months.	
Quarter 4 • Clean Water Council makes adjustments to its recommendations based on updated budget forecast information, makes a decision, and shares the final version with interested parties. When the final budget decision is made, it's accompanied by a report that evaluates the engagement process and closes the loop with interested parties. The report describes the fate of input received and how it influenced the decision as well as where input landed – it could be acknowledged, answered, or referred to agencies/policy committee/BOC, as appropriate. The report describes how input was used or not used.	

*Cycle repeats with strategy year. All input and wisdom are carried forward into subsequent cycles.