

Clean Water Council Meeting Agenda

Monday, July 20, 2026

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

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

****Please allow at least 15 extra minutes to travel due to construction in the area****

9:00 Regular Clean Water Council Business

- **(INFORMATION ITEM)** Council member 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 June minutes
- **(INFORMATION ITEM)** Council updates
 - Chair update
 - Staff update
 - Policy Committee update
 - Budget and Outcomes Committee update

9:30 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.

9:45 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Review of public input outcomes

Considerable effort has gone into soliciting and receiving public input over the last couple of months. Before we hear from the Budget and Outcomes Committee regarding the draft list of program priorities, we will take time to review outcomes from the June 15 meeting and subsequent survey in order to appropriately respond. The ad hoc engagement sub team will be reconvened to assist in responding to comments. Please consider joining to help close the loop with those who took time to share their feedback with us.

10:30 BREAK

10:45 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Draft priorities list

At their July meeting, the Budget and Outcomes Committee developed a list of priority programs to be considered for increases, protected from decreases, or as a candidate for a decrease. We will review how this list was developed, provide an overview of the contents, and then open it up for discussion. If there are programs you feel should be added to the list or removed, please share at this time.

12:00 LUNCH

12:30 (DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEM) Draft priorities list continued

Any final adjustments to the list should be offered at this time. A motion to approve the draft list and rationale is requested by the end of the meeting.

1:45 (INFORMATION ITEM) Next steps

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

Clean Water Council
June 15, 2026, 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, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Justin Hanson, Holly Hatlewick, Bonnie Keeler, Peter Kjeseth, Annie Knight, Chris Meyer, Fran Miron, Jason Moeckel, Ole Olmanson, Peter Schwagerl, Glenn Skuta, April Swenby, and Jessica Wilson.

Members absent: Brad Gausman, Rep. Steve Jacob, Sen. John Hoffman, Rep. Kristi Pursell, 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 June 15th meeting agenda by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Chris Meyer. Motion carries unanimously.
- Motion to approve the May 18th meeting summary by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Steve Besser. Motion carries unanimously.
- No Chair update
- Staff update
 - The results from the discussion at today's meeting will be packaged as a survey. This will help to hear from folks who are not in the room today. This survey link will be sent via email, please forward to others as well.
 - The Minnesota Plumbing Board will be having a meeting regarding water reuse, and a few Council members plan to attend (Jen Kader will attend). They will discuss proposed updates to the plumbing code which would essentially prohibit the use of stormwater for reuse. The Council plans to provide comments requesting this position be revisited.

Policy Committee Update (Webex 00:12:00)

The Policy Committee has finalized the update to the chloride deicers policy statement. It is included as an item to review in the meeting packet for June but will be discussed and approved at the July meeting.

Budget and Outcomes Committee Update (Webex 00:14:30)

The BOC has prepared initial considerations regarding priority and funding direction for the proposals presented at the May Council meeting. Additionally, the Council explored a possible budget target for the FY28-29 biennium of \$340 million, based on information from Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB). Initial feedback from Council members is requested to set a working budget target. Additionally, feedback on the initial priority and funding directions.

Discussion/Questions/Comments:

- Steve Besser: The process was good to work through. I think \$340 million is a good target.
- Jen Kader: There will still be time for further discussion on these items. Please speak up if you see any concern now, so we can make time for discussion later.
- John Barten: The Council has a limited amount of money for all these programs, and we have significantly more requests for money than we have dollars. We cannot buy our way out of this problem, and that is why the Policy Committee is trying to resolve some of these issues with what can be done. It is important to know which programs to increase, hold steady, and possibly decrease.
- Steve Christenson: We were thoughtful. Half are in the hold steady for funding, with the other half supporting to increase funding (a few to decrease).

Framing Today's Public Input Discussions, by Jen Kader (Webex 00:31:30)

Council members are working on the first draft budget for the FY28-29 biennium. They are being asked to keep a considerable amount of information present in their mind. By the end of today, the goal is to have worked

collaboratively to develop draft considerations for determining how to prioritize FY28-29 Clean Water Funds (CWFs).

- Clean Water Council and Fund Context:
 - Before the CWFs, in watersheds across the state there was good work happening, but it paled in comparison to the scale of the challenge. The approach was more responsive and opportunity based.
 - There was a lot still to learn regarding our impaired waters. In 2002, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) fully assessed only 5 percent of the state's stream miles, 12 percent of the state's lakes, and they were falling behind in meeting federal deadlines for TMDL studies (the 2015 deadline was more likely to be by 2038 instead).
 - The Legislative Auditor recognized significant underfunding of ability for the MPCA to meet Clean Water Act requirements. Staff was working hard, but it was a funding challenge.
 - The Minnesota Impaired Waters report in 2003
 - The funding gaps at the state level included \$7.1 million a year for assessment, \$5.8 million a year for TMDL study completion within the federal deadlines. These excluded wastewater treatment facility upgrades, and the estimate for restoring just assessed waters was \$600 million to \$3 billion, with a gap of up to \$230 million per year.
 - Local government would need to play lead role in restoration and would need additional funding for capacity building.
 - It was clear that change was needed. There was lots of opportunities to improve the approach to increase assessment, to meet deadlines, coordinate across the state agencies and programs, to build capacity, and to increase strategic implementation.
 - Clean Water Legacy Act
 - Predates the Legacy amendment.
 - Established through Minnesota's Clean Water Legacy Act ([Minn. Stat. § 114D](#)). The Act purpose was to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, streams, and protect groundwater. The Act findings included: water quality is integral to Minnesota's future; Achieving water quality goals requires long-term commitment and cooperation by all state and local agencies, public and private organizations, and individuals; We all have a role to play. This created the Clean Water Council.
 - The Clean Water Council focus:
 - Coordination and cooperation
 - Goals for implementation include TMDLs and federal compliance; Systematic approach to evaluation, technical and financial assistance, implementation for surface waters; and to Protect and restore groundwater.
 - Policies: Regional, multipollutant, or watershed TMDLs or WRAPs. This work is to maximize use of existing resources, use existing regulatory authorities, and promote effective non-regulatory measures. It is to protect, restore, and innovate.
 - The Clean Water Fund was established through the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment in 2008. It created a sustainable drinking water account. It also included the nonpoint priority funding plan. This was to protect vulnerable drinking water sources, guidance for prioritizing which waters to protect and restore, as well as to respond to climate change and intensive land uses and enhance ecosystem function.
 - The Clean Water Fund Recommendations:
 - They must be to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater from degradation and ensure that at least five percent of the clean water fund is spent only to protect drinking water sources.
 - Be consistent with the purposes, policies, goals, and priorities in this chapter.
 - Allocate adequate support and resources for the work identified.
 - Include methods to specify the outcomes to be achieved as a result of funding.
 - The Council's 2024-2028 Strategic Plan:
 - Groundwater is clean and available to all in Minnesota
 - Drinking water sources are safe for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota
 - Minnesotans will have fishable and swimmable waters throughout the State of Minnesota
 - All Minnesotans value water and take actions to sustain and protect it.

- The Council, in partnership with state agencies, put together the water management framework. It is based on an adaptive management cycle: do, check, understand, strategize, and plan (and circulate).
 - Lasting clean water results rely on a proven water management framework that creates a continuous cycle of learning, planning, and action.
 - All five components work together to turn science into measurable improvements on the ground.
 - Sustained commitment to the full process is needed to achieve lasting results for Minnesota's waters.
 - Three case studies were reviewed to show how the water management framework looks in practice.
- FY28-29
 - There have been 63 proposals across state agencies and external proposers
 - Each proposal was evaluated using the new rubric, looking at water quality impact; Measurable outcomes, progress, and feasibility; Alignment with the Council's Strategic Plan; Financial leverage and sustainability; Engagement and community value; Communications.
 - The BOC has proposed initial indications for program priority level and funding directions.
 - Full list of programs with BOC indications is included in the meeting packet (in order by the mean average). Nearly all identified by the BOC as high priority (no lows). For the funding direction, there were 5 new programs, 23 increases, 31 hold steady, and 2 decrease. The hold steady could also include increases in inflation or other expenses.
 - The budget is forecast to be \$342 million based on data from MMB.
 - This is about \$39 million more than FY26-27
 - Inflation of 5-10 percent to hold steady for existing programs could equal about \$15 to \$30 million alone.
 - There are 23 programs seeking increases, along with a few new programs seeking funding.
- Public Input:
 - The Council is still looking at what the public input from FY26-27 provided. There was a public survey in the fall. An Upper Mississippi River Basin field tour. This was used to establish the Council's first Public Participation Plan. It also helped led the BOC to develop a scoring rubric, updated proposal form, and a revised process (moving input earlier). This has been a shift from previous years.
 - We have 202 individual comments, a new record for our budget process. A good number provided overarching comments and considerations for priorities. Many individual programs were mentioned. Meeting packet includes a summary table of the public input.
- Overview of the Workshop:
 - There are four rounds of discussions, then at the end there is a recap. By the end of the day, the goal is to collaboratively develop draft considerations for determining how to prioritize FY28-29 CWFs.

Workshop Discussion 1: Identifying Themes and Key Items (Webex 01:27:45)

In small groups, participants were asked to reflect on the framing presentation and materials shared in advance and identify what they are noticing from the bulk of content.

Shared themes identified:

- Overall, good work is getting done. We are happy with the priorities. We need to leave some space for high innovative potential, for bigger successes down the road.
- Coordination is doing well (local and state governments).
- It is important to reauthorize the funds because there are increasing costs, and this work is needed.
- Hot topics: work needed in specific areas of the state to do more (more sustainable Ag, groundwater and groundwater governance, and private wells). Lots of work to do in these areas still.
- Local connections, collaborations, and priorities came through loud and clear. Groups have come together in a way that was not done before, and the importance to continue to foster these relationships.
- About what we have learned, who is not included yet, how are we adequately taking advantage of that, looking at the capacity and collateral in the support that is taking place.
- Looking back on what is important, and living up to the expectation set years ago.
- We all have a role to play. Reading the public input providing some direct paths to the Council to engage with the Council. Yet, there are areas for growth in how agencies and partners are communicating. Cross communication and how it is communicated to the public as well.
- Drinking water was not represented in the way we expected.

- Big programs that get a lot of support, and how it can align with the scoring rubrics – helps align with all the organizations and viewed as positive feedback.
- Feel good about the Council's efforts and the programs funded. However, the Council still receives questions regarding outcomes and values.
- Regional communication is important.
- We cannot imagine where Minnesota would be now if there had been no CWFs.
- Time and effort to serve on the Council was mentioned. Everyone feels it is important to provide that time and commitment.
- Clean water is important to all.
- Telling our story is important.
- One Watershed, One Plan creates collaboration – which is key.
- Forever Green Initiative and continuing the work with farmers.
- Issue of representation on the Council (no local public health representative or a tenant's protection/rights representative on the Council). There is a lot of representations for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), environmental and conservation NGOs. It would be good to broaden representation as a topic.
- More public education, along with the need to incorporate more behavioral and social science.
- Equity for private well users.
- Council members are pleased to see new ideas come in but need a new era of innovation. Especially for groundwater and nonpoint issues.
- Local capacity came up a few different times.
- When would the CWFs be generated through the general funds (shifting programs out to be supported by general funds).
- Process – looking at how engaging this discussion is to the process (public input). The feedback on public input was important.
- Programs – looking at opportunities for programming (chloride, stormwater and PSIG)
- Accountability
- Scope of water resource management in Minnesota. Particularly, the urgency to get programs accelerated and moving. So, we have long-term durability with these programs. Success that will outlive the end of the amendment.
- Collaboration – shared goals and it is respected
- Outcomes – there is not a standard way to assess the work of the CWFs.
- Funding challenges. Such as everything seems to be a priority. Yet, the CWFs cannot fund everything.
- There are many continuing programs that have increasing funding needs, but where is the on ramp for addressing emerging needs.
- Concerns about the sunset of the amendment. There is a need for transparency for the public to understand the funds and why they are being spent.
- Chloride as an emerging contaminant, and how that is being approached.
- Importance of local insight, local implementation, local knowledge. That connection between local – the top down, bottom-up - implementation chains throughout all these programs.
- Understanding the policy system and funding system – the state and federal resources. CWFs are not the only funds available. How can the programs be resilient to the policy and funding landscape.
- The importance of the connection between research and practice. How are we getting that feedback between research and practice, so we are using the best possible evidence to inform decision-making at that scale.
- Prioritization – how are we holding ourselves accountable for the CWFs long-term goals. Invest in areas that have a social readiness, but that may also steer us away from the harder challenges.
- Publicly managed resources versus privately held lands – and the approach for both.
- We are doing a lot of good things but need the outcomes to connect so voters know it is something worth renewing. The deadline is approaching.
- Systematic and programmatic approach, balance between evaluation and implementation, looking for measurable outcomes.
- Measurement – how are humans (public health outcomes) and to measure and report out on those.
- Collaboration was also a theme, and that has led to progress. The importance of working together.

- Community was another theme as well. We look forward to the future of it and the levels of engagement.

Meeting did not include a report out on “Workshop Discussion 2: Discerning Takeaways and Lessons to Hold Onto” due to time constraints, as those takeaways would be included as initial input for workshop discussion 3.

Workshop Discussion 3: Articulating Next Steps to Put Lessons into Practice (*Webex 01:53:00*)

In small groups, participants were asked to review the key takeaways offered and identify important actions for the Council to take to incorporate those lessons—in this budget cycle and over the coming years.

Shared input of considerations identified:

- Representation from public health, as either a seat on the Council or highlighted throughout programs so the perspective is shared. We did not have a member of Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in our small group. We are interested in that stakeholder perspective.
- Clear on connections back to the Council’s Strategic Plan.
- Point to programs (1W1P), data, in order to acknowledge the process.
- Value of community engagement. Highlight more success stories. It seems to be important to Council members during this process.
- Review the checks and balances, making sure we have fraud prevention with the CWFs.
- Opposing views on the funding – need to be transparent, and make sure to reveal how decisions are made.
- Prioritize programs and outcomes that are durable (will outlast the CWFs).
- Leverage policy and investments from others for making those allocations.
- Half of the implementation dollars should go to continuous living cover.
- Clean Water Council needs more staffing capacity as soon as possible.
- Continue investments in watershed approach.
- Multiyear programmatic investments, to keep funding stable.
- Stay comprehensive and strategic (evolution not revolution).
- Reward programs that demonstrate continuous improvement, learning, and adaptive management.
- Current process is working well.
- Ag system change catalyzation fund. The number one driver of impairment is Ag runoff. Something to work to accelerate a positive change in this area.
- Looking for overlapping programs, to do some consolidation.
- Prioritizing programs that follow statutory requirements for reporting.
- Step prioritization, to isolate the entity that is submitting a request to the water organizations first. These are the CWFs, so there are not too many other funds watersheds can go to. Make sure the funds are more oriented toward the land around the water. Third, research so funds go to folks doing the projects and any extra goes back in a sequential order that makes sense to focus on water.
- Prioritize collaboration because it builds community infrastructure and increases the opportunity for leverage.
- Make sure some funding is available for innovation funding.
- Prioritize programs that focus on implementation with tangible outcomes associated with them.
- Programs that helps tell the story about the CWFs (story understood across different audiences).
- Consider leverage for budget decisions (not necessarily money but leveraging research to improve regulation compliance, with stormwater as the example program). Also, use state dollars to leverage federal dollars.
- Look at how regulations can be strengthened (examples are feedlot and groundwater protection rule).
- Empower local compliance.
- Build local capacity.
- Maintain what we need and invest in a lot of funds specific to innovation, to work towards a systems change.
- Prioritize programs with a track record of leverage funds from outside funding.
- Stay the course with existing programs that have the agility to accommodate new ideas and innovation.
- Prioritize funding for those with strong communication plans (not just to add the logo).
- Reinforce support for Clean Water Council staff support.
- High potential for de-listing of impaired waters (nearly/barely waters).

Further discussion:

- Is delisting the only metric to say we have been successful? Because there has been so many changes as we have gotten into the science of it across the state. I want to make sure de-listing is not the only metric of success. Additionally, SWCDs there has been quite a bit of outcomes (which most states do not have) and we are struggling with the efforts of groundwater and modeling. How do we show outcomes, to capture these for different purposes.
- Hearing comments on leverage, it is something I value too, but I would urge the Council not to limit itself and perhaps be the first funding in on something too. It may be the best place for funding, and the only place, and it is where innovation happens.
- For the Council, please know there are two areas we look at, the budget and the policies. The policies could be far more influential than they currently are. For example, the chloride policy up for adoption is huge. You are experts in the field, and hopefully the legislature takes some weight with it. Other organizations do. My watershed district is intending to follow a chloride action plan because of the Council's policy. You have weight. Communicating about a new policy to other organizations that might help push it forward is huge.
Response from Steve Christenson: Communication is important to note in this comment. We want to make sure we support our Council staff, to get this work out to Minnesotans.
- Don't inhibit through your rules, or your access to funds, and have it in conflict with our governing statutes. So, items are not blocked by the rules of the Council. I just want to make it clear; the statutes should be followed.

Workshop Discussion 4: Establishing Draft Considerations, Priorities (Webex 02:32:00)

This final workshop discussion took place as a large group, building off the previous discussion as an initial draft is developed of key considerations the Council should use in prioritizing how to use Clean Water Funds for the FY28-29 biennium.

Council members and members of the public each had four stickers to place next to the items listed, on what they would like to see prioritized.

At a quick glance during the meeting, items that have the most stickers:

- Watershed approach
- Programmatic, multi-year project-based approach
- Invest in programs and outcomes that are durable and outlast the CWFs
- CWC staffing capacity
- Half of implementation dollars going to continuous living cover
- Overlapping programs with opportunities for consolidation.
- Leverage considerations with decisions
- Groundwater governance
- Local capacity
- Staying on the course with existing programs that have the agility to incorporate new ideas and innovation
- Prioritizing programs with strong communication plans (not just the logo)
- Investments in systems change
- Implementation
- Telling the CWFs story
- Public health representation
- Staff support for Council
- Funding available for innovation

Overall, there are groupings and themes happening across these items. It is a lot of work people have put into it today. Further work will place this information into a survey, to help identify items rising to the top priorities.

Further Discussion:

- I am pleased that we had the opportunity to participate in the process. I think it is always good to get public input. It is hard to do that. I have more clarity in how this Council works, its relationship to the legislature, and its influence on the legislature. This is the one I will always recommend coming to before going to the legislature. I liked the structure of this meeting, and the ways you encouraged input from the public.
- As someone who has been watching the Council from the beginning, I've been amazed at the degree of commitment and see that the Council members take their roles seriously.

- The Council has been willing to shift and change and listen.
- We appreciate the time and effort that Council members put into this process. We rely on this group to think things through. It is clear that is happening. We appreciate bringing it to the public, to open up to this process as well.
- Thank you for everyone's involvement. We would not have the same results for water quality improvements. Our work has been widely funded with CWFs.
- This work is hard. For anyone who thinks it is easy, it is not. When I go to other states, they are envious of what Minnesota does have, so I do not take it for granted. I am cognizant of that issue. We are lucky we are here to even debate these topics. It goes back and forth: local to state to federal and back again to federal to state to local. Information and data moves back and forth. It is a unique process. We want to acknowledge the greatness of the past movements and look towards the future. From the G16 to now, the work has been incredible. I could not imagine it would have moved to this level. A great group of people who worked together for the Clean Water Council to have come to fruition.
- We did the Legacy Act in 2006, and the Legacy Amendment in 2008. For the amendment there were a few different groups: Hunting and fishing groups, water groups, park groups, and the art groups. Most of the leg work for this amendment was done by the arts groups. They had the best network of people around the state for support, and they talked with people. It is interesting, the number one argument for the amendment was drinking water. This work is important for the whole legacy amendment.
- The G16 was the group of stakeholders that came together to figure out what to do about the impaired waters. Many of the perspectives represent then are reflected in the makeup of seats of the Council.
- Dick Brainerd: Shout out to Jen and Brianna on the setup of today's meeting. Thank you. *Response from Jen:* This engagement approach takes a lot of work to do, but it is important and valuable and something the Council has prioritized. Thank you for being a part of it.
- John Barten: Thank you all for your feedback! We appreciate you attending today.

Review of Outcomes from the Day and Next Steps (Webex 02:49:30)

Outcomes from each of the different discussions will be reviewed and incorporated into our future discussions. Please watch for the upcoming survey. Invitations for upcoming events will be shared with the Council members.

Adjournment (Webex 02:55:23)

June 18, 2026

RE: Feedback regarding proposed changes to Chapter 15 of the Minnesota Plumbing Code

Lyndy Logan and members of the Plumbing Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments regarding proposed updates to the Minnesota Plumbing Code. The Clean Water Council strongly supports stormwater reuse as a practice to protect water quality, enhance water sustainability, and promote resilience in the face of weather extremes. We are concerned that proposed changes to the Minnesota Plumbing Code will put millions of dollars of past and current Clean Water Fund investments at risk and remove an important strategy for securing a clean and sustainable water future.

Over several biennia, we have recommended Clean Water Funds be appropriated to advance safe and sustainable water reuse in Minnesota and fund stormwater capture and use projects. These investments have included on-the-ground installations as well as efforts to clarify pathways for water reuse, identify and fill research gaps, align agencies engaged in regulation around reuse, and ultimately create conditions that enable water reuse through clear guidance. Throughout, interest in stormwater capture and use has been a primary driver and was the sole focus of the most recent stage of a multi-year interagency and stakeholder process.

The proposed changes to Chapter 15 of the Plumbing Code—which would ban stormwater as an allowable alternate water source for water reuse—runs completely counter to the intent of these efforts. Prohibiting its use would increase reliance on our aquifers for the 75% of the state that get its water from groundwater, increase energy and costs needed for unnecessary treatment, remove flexibility for meeting requirements regarding stormwater management, and more. Furthermore, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is in the process of advancing the practice with this broad stakeholder group, focused on co-developing clear guidance so stormwater reuse can continue to happen and happen safely. These important conversations should be given time to play out. Stormwater reuse is a widely accepted and viable practice around the world, and it needs to remain an option for Minnesota.

We request that the Chapter 15 ad hoc Rulemaking Committee be reconvened to revisit and modify the proposed rules in light of the overwhelming support for stormwater capture and use in rural and urban communities across the state.

Sincerely,

John Barten
Chair, Clean Water Council

Rich Biske
Vice Chair, Clean Water Council

Input from
previous 2
years

- Last budget cycle
- Strategy year convos
- Field Tour
- Surveys

Proposal
& Rubric

- Values
- Priorities

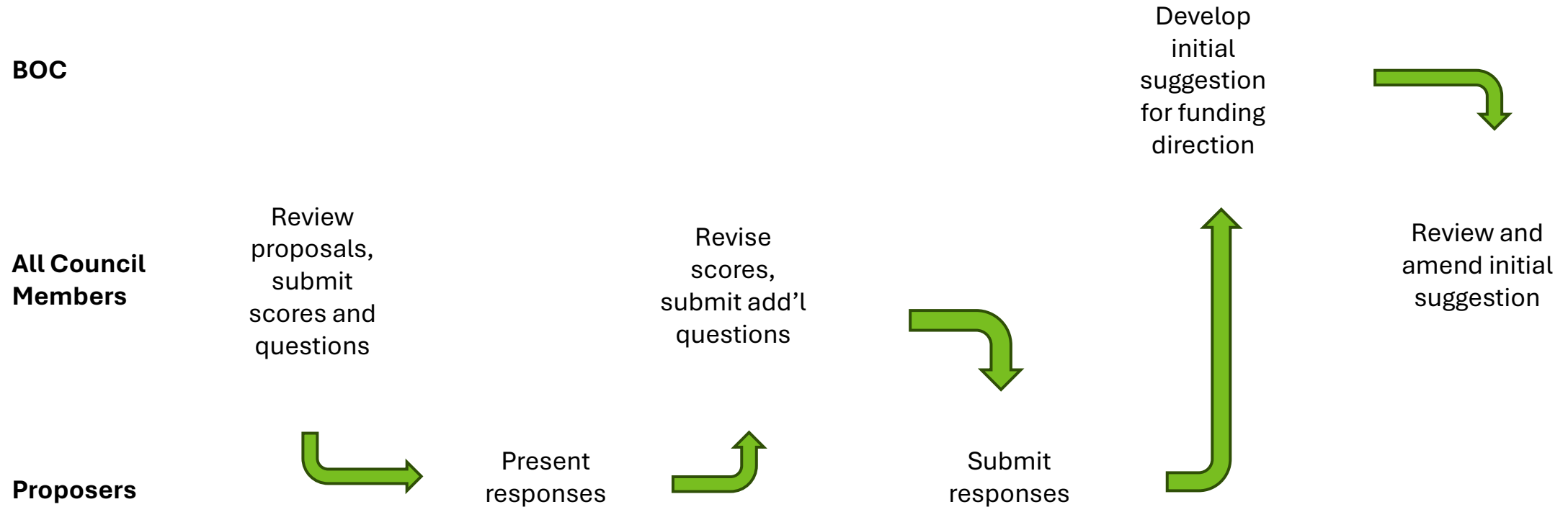
Proposal
review phase
(Feb – June)

Preliminary
Budget
Development
Phase
(June-Sep)

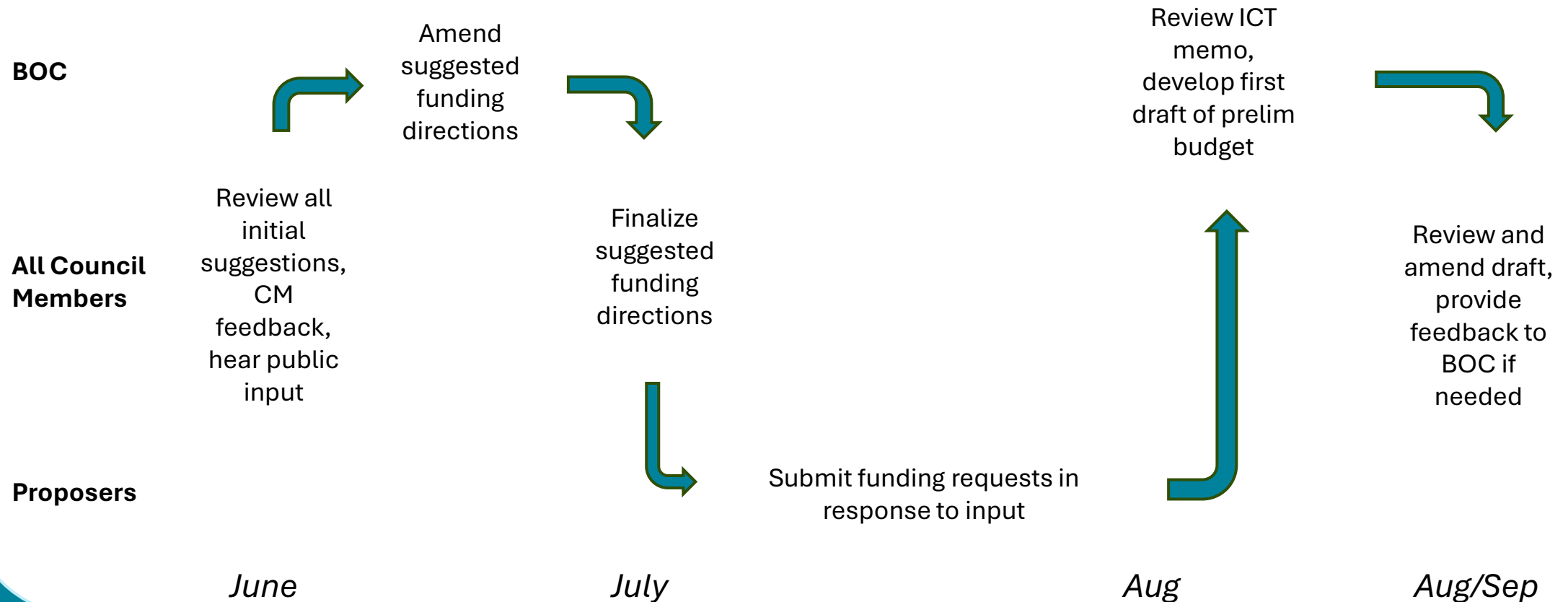
Final
budget
recs
(Jan)



Proposal Review Phase (x4, Feb-June)



Preliminary Budget Development Phase





Summary

July 2026

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has not ensured that producers meet all program standards before receiving Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) certification. Though MDA reports a number of program outcomes, MAWQCP's effect on water quality is not clear.

Report Summary

Program Certification

Statutes establish numerous requirements MDA must follow while administering MAWQCP.

- While MDA's current administration of MAWQCP does not align with all provisions in statute, some statutory requirements may be unnecessary. (p. 23)
- Statutory requirements to protect the privacy of certified producers may inhibit MDA's ability to effectively administer the program. (p. 24)

Recommendations ► The Legislature should update MAWQCP's authorizing statutes. MDA should clarify expectations for communication with regulatory agencies and require MAWQCP staff and certifiers to communicate with these agencies when necessary to administer the program. (pp. 26, 27)

Program Standards

MDA's certification process allows producers to receive MAWQCP certification with "contingencies." These producers agree to implement or maintain certain practices to meet the program's standards.

- MDA certifies producers that have not met the program's standards. Some producers certified with contingencies did not meet program standards years after certification, yet they still received the benefits of certification. (pp. 29, 31)

Recommendation ► MDA should discontinue the use of contingencies in MAWQCP certification agreements. (p. 34)

Background

The Legislature established MAWQCP in 2013 to certify agricultural producers whose practices protect water quality. MDA administers MAWQCP in partnership with program certifiers at Soil and Water Conservation Districts across the state.

MAWQCP is a voluntary program. To get certified, producers apply, and program certifiers review producers' operations and conduct in-person field verifications. Certifiers enter the producers' information into the MAWQCP assessment tool to determine whether they meet the program's standards. If producers meet the program's standards, MDA certifies the producers for 10 years. In addition to the initial assessment, MAWQCP staff conduct reviews mid-way through producers' certification periods to ensure compliance with program standards.

Since MAWQCP was established, MDA has certified over 1,600 producers and over 1.1 million acres of farmland.

- While the program conducts more mid-certification reviews than statutes require, the comprehensiveness of these reviews varies. MDA allows producers to remain certified even if their mid-certification reviews reveal that they do not comply with program standards. (pp. 36, 39)

Recommendations ► MDA should focus its mid-certification reviews on producers at the highest risk of being out of compliance with program standards and ensure producers follow program requirements. The Legislature should revise the requirement to conduct random producer audits. (p. 40)

Program Purpose and Impact

MDA reports on several program measures, including the number of certified producers, number of conservation practices implemented by certified producers, and estimated pollutant reduction.

- MAWQCP's statutory purpose is unclear. Because MAWQCP's purpose is not well defined, identifying appropriate outcome measures is challenging. (pp. 45, 46)

Recommendation ► The Legislature should clarify MAWQCP's purpose and identify intended outcomes. (p. 47)

- MAWQCP's effect on water quality is not clear. Pollution reduction estimates capture projected impacts of conservation practices, rather than the actual impact, and MDA's data on reduction estimates have significant limitations. MDA does not collect data that would allow the agency to measure MAWQCP's actual impact on water quality; however, measuring MAWQCP's impact on Minnesota's lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater may not be feasible. (pp. 48, 51, 52)

Recommendations ► MDA should address limitations in the agency's data on conservation practices and pollutant reduction estimates, and consider ways to incorporate water quality monitoring for a selection of certified producers. (p. 54)

- Producers who responded to our survey reported that MAWQCP offers many benefits to them and few drawbacks. (p. 55)

Summary of Agency Response

In a letter dated July 8, 2026, Commissioner Thom Petersen said that MDA agrees “with many of the recommendations outlined by the report” but has “several points of clarification that we feel are important to include.” Notably, he said MDA agrees with the recommendations that the Legislature update several aspects of MAWQCP's authorizing statutes and that MDA (1) clarify expectations regarding communication with other regulatory agencies and (2) strengthen its policies for MAWQCP.

On the other hand, the commissioner said that MDA does not support discontinuing all contingencies, since they are “a critical part of each certification agreement.” However, he said MDA has and “will continue to make strides to limit the use of contingencies.” Regarding the recommendation to address limitations in the agency's data on program outcomes and consider ways to incorporate water quality monitoring, the commissioner said the agency “reports outcomes using the same methodologies applied by other state agencies, which incorporate monitoring frameworks that account for the many variables influencing ground and surface water.” Overall, the commissioner said “We acknowledge there are ways to improve this program and are incredibly proud of MAWQCP and all it has done to further our state's commitment to enhancing water quality and conservation.”

Agency	Program	Constituency	Commenter	Comment summary notes
UMN	Stormwater Research Program		David Piliplak, PE	Essential stormwater research that help consultants support clients. Cutting edge research to design and maintain stormwater BMPs that are effective and efficient. Science-based training and outreach to make sure local work uses best info available.
	Voyagers National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Legislature	Sen. Grant Hauschild	Importance of these waters for tourism, fishing, boating, and northern MN economy. Project is delivering real results. Leverage is valuable.
	Voyagers National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Legislature	Sen. Jennifer McEwen, Rep. Lish Kozlowski, Rep. Pete Johnson	Importance of these waters for tourism, fishing, boating, and northern MN economy. Project is delivering real results. Leverage is valuable.
	Voyagers National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Legislature	Sen. Rob Farnsworth, Rep. Cal Warwas	Importance of these waters for tourism, fishing, boating, and northern MN economy. Project is delivering real results. Leverage is valuable.
	Voyagers National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Legislature	Rep. Skraba	Importance of these waters for tourism, fishing, boating, and northern MN economy. Project is delivering real results. Leverage is valuable.
MPCA	Chloride Reduction Program	Watershed Districts	Capitol Region Watershed District	Chloride pollution from road salt one of the most significant and detrimental issues. Need state coordination and financial support. Enhanced funding support requested.
MPCA	Chloride Reduction Program	Watershed Districts	Nine Mile Watershed District	Chloride pollution from road salt one of the most significant and detrimental issues. Need state coordination and financial support. Enhanced funding support requested.
MDA	AgBMP Loans	SWCD	Rock SWCD	Wait list of 22 that have applied for \$2.3M with 2026 repayments at ~\$480,000. Long wait time to be funded with current rate. Demand high thanks to low interest. Additional funds requested.
MDA	AgBMP Loans	SWCD	Fillmore SWCD	Essential financing tool for water quality efforts. SE MN especially vulnerable. Continued investment in education, technical assistance, and financial assistance will protect drinking water, improve soil health, and support farm profitability.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Watershed Districts	Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District	Two priorities of the WD (water quality and flood control) aided by the program. "One of the clearest ways the Council can...support implementable clean water for the communities we serve."
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Business	WSB Engineering	Essential stormwater research that help consultants support clients. Cutting edge research to design and maintain stormwater BMPs that are effective and efficient. Science-based training and outreach to make sure local work uses best info available.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Watershed Districts	Mississippi Watershed Management Organization	Essential stormwater research that help consultants support clients. Cutting edge research to design and maintain stormwater BMPs that are effective and efficient. Science-based training and outreach to make sure local work uses best info available.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Watershed Districts	Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District	Chloride pollution major concern. WD has taken actions but concentrations still increasing. 10 waterbodies already impaired. Need more action and support and this program helps make that happen.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	UMN	John Gulliver	Funding for stormwater research is critically limited, and what MN is able to do is only because of the MSRC. This research is needed to inform the actions of many across the state, who would otherwise be relying on outdated information.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Cities	City of Duluth	Essential stormwater research that help consultants support clients. Cutting edge research to design and maintain stormwater BMPs that are effective and efficient. Science-based training and outreach to make sure local work uses best info available.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Watershed Districts	South Washington Watershed District	Essential stormwater research that help consultants support clients. Cutting edge research to design and maintain stormwater BMPs that are effective and efficient. Science-based training and outreach to make sure local work uses best info available.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Friends of the Mississippi River	FGI is a nationally respected research effort to design new, economically viable "Continuous Living Cover" cropping systems. It aligns with the Nutrient Reduction Strategy (which has CLC as a pillar of success) and drinking water protection goals, as well as the Council's own strategic plan. Leverages additional funding 7:1, and sustained investment is needed to scale up acreage.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Community Letter of Support for Forever Green	Nutrient Reduction Strategy notes central role of Continuous Living Cover in meeting long-term water quality goals. CWC support of funding has been longstanding and prescient. The work is reaching a critical inflection point and continued support is needed. FGI is internationally recognized, and CLC crops provide multiple benefits. FGI invests in farmers of today and crops of tomorrow, along with supply chain development. Successfully breeding and commercializing new crops requires dedicated researchers and supply chain specialists, so long term funding is needed.
MDA	Forever Green	SWCD	Community Letter of Support for Forever Green	Nutrient Reduction Strategy notes central role of Continuous Living Cover in meeting long-term water quality goals. CWC support of funding has been longstanding and prescient. The work is reaching a critical inflection point and continued support is needed. FGI is internationally recognized, and CLC crops provide multiple benefits. FGI invests in farmers of today and crops of tomorrow, along with supply chain development. Successfully breeding and commercializing new crops requires dedicated researchers and supply chain specialists, so long term funding is needed.
MDA	Forever Green	Business	Community Letter of Support for Forever Green	Nutrient Reduction Strategy notes central role of Continuous Living Cover in meeting long-term water quality goals. CWC support of funding has been longstanding and prescient. The work is reaching a critical inflection point and continued support is needed. FGI is internationally recognized, and CLC crops provide multiple benefits. FGI invests in farmers of today and crops of tomorrow, along with supply chain development. Successfully breeding and commercializing new crops requires dedicated researchers and supply chain specialists, so long term funding is needed.
MDA	Forever Green	Farmers	Community Letter of Support for Forever Green	Nutrient Reduction Strategy notes central role of Continuous Living Cover in meeting long-term water quality goals. CWC support of funding has been longstanding and prescient. The work is reaching a critical inflection point and continued support is needed. FGI is internationally recognized, and CLC crops provide multiple benefits. FGI invests in farmers of today and crops of tomorrow, along with supply chain development. Successfully breeding and commercializing new crops requires dedicated researchers and supply chain specialists, so long term funding is needed.
MDA	AgBMP Loans	Business	First Farmers & Merchants Bank	Helps our farm customers with low interest money to be able to replace structures, purchase equipment and fix-up facilities to help reduce runoff, reduce soil erosion and help maintain a more ecological friendly environment. Well over 100 loans for multiple millions of dollars. Only complaint is there isn't enough money to help everyone who is interested. Backlog currently through 2027.
BWSR	WBIF	Watershed Districts	Local Government Roundtable	WBIF is the mechanism that will deliver on the investments and long-term vision established by the Clean Water Council, building on years of planning, monitoring, and data collection by turning those investments into on-the-ground action. This program is working as intended, and planning is nearly done across the whole state. Value is already being seen for the planning, and WBIF is the funding stream that makes implementation possible. Legacy amendment recognized role of local leadership in implementation. Sustained funding is requested.
BWSR	WBIF	SWCD	Local Government Roundtable	WBIF is the mechanism that will deliver on the investments and long-term vision established by the Clean Water Council, building on years of planning, monitoring, and data collection by turning those investments into on-the-ground action. This program is working as intended, and planning is nearly done across the whole state. Value is already being seen for the planning, and WBIF is the funding stream that makes implementation possible. Legacy amendment recognized role of local leadership in implementation. Sustained funding is requested.
BWSR	WBIF	Counties	Local Government Roundtable	WBIF is the mechanism that will deliver on the investments and long-term vision established by the Clean Water Council, building on years of planning, monitoring, and data collection by turning those investments into on-the-ground action. This program is working as intended, and planning is nearly done across the whole state. Value is already being seen for the planning, and WBIF is the funding stream that makes implementation possible. Legacy amendment recognized role of local leadership in implementation. Sustained funding is requested.
MDH	Private Well Initiative	SWCD	Fillmore SWCD	PWI program helps to ensure drinking water is safe for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota. In SE MN nitrate continues to be a significant concern for private well users. Funding through this initiative helps us connect residents with testing, education, technical assistance, and resources that directly support public health and groundwater protection. Continue to support the PWI and related drinking water protection efforts.
MDH	Private Well Initiative	SWCD	Wabasha SWCD	The Wabasha SWCD is in process of completing a well inventory for Wabasha County and providing information to update the Minnesota Well Index. Local well owners have been responsive to our efforts, and regional efforts have raised awareness of private well management. Many have discovered that they had contaminants exceeding standards. Without funding from the PWI, we would not be able to complete the work that has been necessary on current regional efforts.
MDH	GRAPS	SWCD	Sherburne SWCD	In this most recent round of CWF funding, we have received heartfelt gratitude from township boards and residents who appreciate our continued efforts to promote education and awareness in their communities. This funding lets us reach those we hadn't yet and strengthen relationships, leading to countless conversations about drinking water quality and what's needed to safeguard it. CWF is helping us meet growing demand and support healthy waters and local communities.

MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Sue Rich (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
	General	Watershed Districts	Bois de Sioux Watershed District	CWF programs are maximized to supplement costs of a variety of large scale projects, but opportunities to utilize CWF for the most impactful projects are limited and, in many cases, prohibited by administrative separation of flood control projects vs water quality projects. In the Red River Valley, water quality is dependent upon flood control. Encourage Council members to consider expanded users of CWFs in recognition of areas like the Red River Basin where water quality is directly influenced by flooding.
	General	UMN	Dr. Amy Kireta, UMN Duluth	Suggest increase to scoring for Engagement and Community Value in the rubric. Not only is this best practice to co-create projects that are most needed, but is critical for gaining community support and trust as funding becomes more scarce.
MPCA	Chloride Reduction Program	Watershed Districts	Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission	Lakes and streams in the BCWMC continue to be threatened by high chlorides, primarily coming from winter deicing activities. Of the 14 priority waterbodies, six are impaired for chloride. Despite sustained local efforts, chloride levels continue to increase. Stronger statewide coordination, expanded technical support, and increased financial investment are needed to accelerate progress toward protecting the health and ecology of Minnesota's lakes rivers, and streams. Please increase support for the program and advocate for enhanced funding for reduction efforts within Council priorities.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Riverton	We recently amended our Wellhead Protection Plan. Without the assistance of MDH and MN Rural Water Association staff, the process would have been very difficult and we would have needed a consultant to complete the work. Small cities like ours do not have the staffing of financial resources to do so. We are eager to begin implementation. Technical and financial assistance allows communities like ours to continue to protect our source of drinking water.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture	Thank you for the ongoing support the CWC has provided. The funding supports important research and demonstration work, outreach and incentives for farmers. Please continue to provide this important funding!
MDA	Forever Green		Tammy Kimbler	Live in the Minnehaha Creek and Mississippi watersheds. The Councils support for Forever Green is critical to the future of agriculture and the watersheds it relies on and empties into throughout the state. My work at The Land Institute to advance continuous living cover crops would not be possible without our partnership with Forever Green. Encourage you to increase FGI funding so farmers have more viable alternatives that benefit and protect our waters.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Professor Robert Stupar, UMN	Thank you for past support of FGI. This program is valuable to the future of the agricultural economy and ecological conservation of our state. I'm a researcher involved for several years in the development of winter annual and perennial crops for MN farmers. Particularly excited about how these crops can reduce erosion and protect waterways. More work is needed, and federal support for this type of research has suffered vast reductions. An increased budget would be a game changer for research and results delivered to the state.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Gabe Holmes (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Jenna Hawkes (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDH	Private Well Initiative	SWCD	Root River SWCD	The PWI helps the Root River SWCD ensure drinking water is safe for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota. With MDH, we completed Township Nitrate Testing to pinpoint high nitrate areas in the county, partnered with the Tap-In program to offer free testing and RO systems for affected homeowners. Suggest it has a priority in funding reflective of importance of protecting drinking water.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of East Bethel	The City of East Bethel has worked with the MDH Source Water Protection Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2017. It has helped protect our drinking water and provide guidance for planning in the area. The team at Minnesota Rural Water Association has also greatly assisted us with technical knowledge and support throughout the whole process. We benefited from a \$10,000 Implementation Grant to help fund much needed emergency back-up power for two of our municipal wells and submitted grant requests for additional funding. Without this funding support, our city would be greatly hindered financially and lacking in a lot of knowledge involving the protection of our drinking water supply. We hope funding continues.
BWSR	WBIF	SWCD	East Otter Tail and Wadena SWCDs	Respectfully urge the CWC to maintain and ideally increase funding for WBIF, one of the most effective and efficient mechanisms MN has for delivering measurable water quality improvements on private lands. Builds on the locally-led watershed-based approach that aligns local governments, state agencies, and stakeholders around shared watershed priorities based on sound science, local knowledge, and concerns. This reduces duplication and improves targeting of resources. WBIF becomes on-the-ground conservation to improve and protect water quality. These funds are heavily leveraged by local partners and often serve as a catalyst. Increasing WBIF funding would allow more high-priority projects to move forward and accelerate measurable progress. WBIF success is also rooted in trust. Stable and reliable funding is necessary to sustain long-term watershed progress. Funding instability slows progress, disrupts partnerships, and reduces effectiveness. WBIF has allowed EOT SWCD to increase in cost share from 15 projects and \$39,000 in 2019 to 72 projects and nearly \$330,000 invested. Wadena SWCD has seen similar increases, demonstrating how WBIF has enabled SWCDs to dedicate staff time to priority efforts. More projects are being implemented, larger benefits are being achieved, and plan priorities are being translated into measurable conservation outcomes.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Dean Borgeson (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Fairmont	We have applied for multiple Source Water Protection competitive grants for real-time monitoring of turbidity and nitrate for Dutch Creek, a major contributor to our surface water drinking water source, the Fairmont Chain of Lakes. In 2023, we worked with MDH on adoption of a Surface Water Intake Protection Plan. The Source Water Protection Implementation Grants have helped raise awareness for drinking water protection, and a new project with MDH grant funding will create floating treatment islands to help reduce nitrogen and phosphorus in tile water before entering the Chain of Lakes. Please give a priority level in funding reflective of the importance of protecting drinking water.
MDA	Forever Green		Beth Dooley	As a James Beard Award winning food writer and cookbook author, I have engaged with FGI CLC by writing cookbooks with recipes and stories about the impact of these crops on our ecosystem, our health, our rural communities, and in addressing food insecurity and food justice. These foods are delicious and nutritious and their impact on clean water cannot be understated. Given the rising cost of research and uncertainty around federal research funding the support from CWF is extremely important. With more funding, we'll see more of these foods in our stores and in our kitchens.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Moorhead Public Services	Moorhead Public Services has successfully used grants from the the SWP Program for various projects to improve infrastructure and supply high-quality drinking water for Moorhead and Dilworth. The support received ensures our water supply resiliency and redundancy are maintained through the completion of projects such as Wellhead Protection Plan implementation and updates, installation of monitoring sensors at our surface water intake, security updates for well houses and portable generator docking stations, well televising, and full water supply rehabilitation. Source Water Protection staff also took time at public hearings to speak in support of protecting source water as a series of parcels near our DWSMA were up for rezoning, complementing the grant-funded efforts in safeguarding water resources. SWP Program provides a direct benefit to the communities we serve.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Nielsville	We have worked with the SWP Program since we began preparing our first Wellhead Protection Plan in 2005. These activities have helped us to take concrete actions to safeguard drinking water sources. Received a SWP Grant in 2022 which enabled us to protect our two wells with six foot chain linked fences with doors and replace two doors on our well house. As a city of 78 residents this support is welcomed.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Professor Jessica Gutknecht, UMN	I have been heavily engaged in FGI for the last 10 years. In that time I've seen how much advancement of novel, environmentally friendly cropping systems, and the university capacity to support them, has been made possible by your support. Thank you! With many funding sources at risk and with recent developments in FGI cropping system advancement, now is a great time to support increased funding for the initiative.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Amy Teller, UMN	I do social science research on CLC systems, meaning I learn from growers, value chain businesses, and other partners about how CLC crops fit into and forward the visions they have for this work and communities. My work helps FGI continually improve how they advance CWC agriculture and be accountable and responsive to the people supporting and adopting these crops. Federal funding uncertainty makes state funding even more crucial. Encourage an increase in funding so CLC can be advanced more rapidly and responsibly.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Grace Doyle, UMN	I am a PhD student working with FGI to ease ergonomic barriers to the adoption of CLC systems. CWC Support has been instrumental to the accomplishments FGI has made in the sustainable agriculture sector. With the rising cost of research and high uncertainty around federal funding, the past 1.5 years have been challenging for sustainable agriculture research at a time when it is more important than ever. Increasing funding would make an impactful difference to the progress we can make in addressing water quality and soil health challenges connected to agricultural practices.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Allyson Petry (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Laura Domyanchich-Lee (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.

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MDH	Source Water Protection		Country Estates Mobile Home Park	Country Estates Mobile Home Park has partnered with the Source Water Protection program to develop our Wellhead Protection Plan. Through this effort, identified several vulnerabilities in our system, and now have a plan in place to address them. We are also now eligible for financial assistance, which we hope to secure to make improvements. With continued support, we will be able to enhance the reliability of our system and improve the quality of service for the residents.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	Hibbing Public Utilities	Hibbing Public Utilities has worked very closely with MDH staff since 2020. MDH has already assisted us in submitting an implementation grant and continues to support us pursuing other available grants, including from outside sources. In 2025 alone HPU was awarded funding several times by the MDH to help protect our drinking water. One of our main water sources was next to a local mining operation and has since become unusable due to mine dewatering activities. It is now more important than ever to protect what drinking water supply we currently have available. Pursuing funding opportunities helps the utility by keeping rates lower for a community that already has a poverty rate of 16.2% which is 7% higher than the rest of the state.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Frank Forcella, retired USDA and UMN professor	Past CWC support has been critical to FGI. CLC crops are extremely useful for preventing soil erosion and enhancing water quality. Attraction for pollinating insects is also clear. The novel FGI ag systems contribute positively to the environment while maintaining or enhancing economic outcomes for farmers and food/feed suppliers. Sustainable aviation fuel as well, which is becoming increasingly of interest. MN can lead the nation in developing perennial field crops. FGI's past success more than justifies enhanced funding for this work.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Dr. Yesuf Assen Mohammed	Thanks to CWF support, interest in winter oilseed crops has grown significantly among stakeholders, including industry partners, policymakers and agricultural organizations. This growing attention reflects the tremendous potential of these crops to deliver agronomic, economic and environmental benefits. Despite this progress, we are facing significant challenges in securing federal funding. Continued and increased support from the CWF is critical and would have a substantial impact on outcomes.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Cora Gertjeanssen	Thank you for past support. The cost of research is increasing, and research and development are essential to Forever Green's work. Increased uncertainty around federal funding makes CWF support that much more valuable. With more resources we could fund more projects and accelerate progress. Please consider an increase.
MDH	Private Well Initiative	Counties	Dodge County	We have worked with MDH on a variety of groundwater-related initiatives over the years, supporting implementation related to goals in the Dodge County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Greater Zumbro River Watershed Plan, and the Cedar-Wapsipicon Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan. Most recently, the PWI has provided valuable funding for private well testing, developing a well inventory, and enhance our understanding of local groundwater quality and drinking water supply. This is helping us effectively target limited resources to areas of greatest need, providing a strong foundation for informed decision making and future protection efforts.
MDH	Source Water Protection		Garness Trinity Lutheran Church	Our church applied for a Source Water Protection Transient Grant to reduce nitrogen levels in our drinking water. We wouldn't have been able to do this work without the grant helping us. Suggest a priority in funding level that reflects the importance of clean drinking water.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Wabasha	We have worked with the SWP Program since 2011. Our first Wellhead Protection Plan has helped us take steps to safeguard our drinking water sources and educate the public. We have received nearly \$50,000 in grants to better understand our DWSMA, seal old wells, collect data on and build a map for storm sewers, and rehabilitate infrastructure. Suggest a priority in funding level that reflects the importance of clean drinking water.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	As the CWF enters its final quarter of funding, it is imperative that Council agencies receiving CWF investments focus on outcomes, results, and system change. Monitoring and planning completed to date should inform implementation, and CWF-supported programs should adjust to monitoring results and demonstrating effectiveness. TNC recommends establishing a transparent process that clearly explains how proposals will be ranked and scored using publicly available criteria. The following are suggested: 1) show high potential for early restoration and delisting or prevention of impairment, 2) show high potential for long-term water quality and conservation benefits, 3) statewide significance for recreation, drinking water, economic interest, cultural or community significance, 4) proven outcomes and cost-effectiveness, 5) contribute to system change past 2034, and 6) significantly leverage policy and investments by others to achieve water quality goals. TNC supports strategic capacity-building investments across CWF programs to ensure continued effectiveness, accountability, and long-term impact. Additionally, CWF investments should continue to support emerging, innovative, and holistic approaches to scale for the long term. The Fund has enabled meaningful progress across the state, supporting strong partnerships and advancing measurable outcomes for water quality and public health. At the same time, emerging challenges, evolving priorities, and remaining gaps in implementation underscore that this work is not yet complete. Continued and strategic investment will be essential to sustain momentum, address unmet needs, and ensure that the benefits of clean water are realized for all Minnesotans now and into the future.
BWSR	WBI	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends that the Council add requirements for standardized reporting for watershed-based implementation funding across Minnesota.
MPCA	CWC Admin	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends approximately \$1.5M to strengthen Council staffing capacity in response to the growing complexity and scope of its work.
MDA	MULTIPLE	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC emphasizes importance of capacity investments within agricultural programs, including funding for new MDA positions focused on advancing manure BMPs, nutrient management, and producer support.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends approximately \$8M for Source Water Protection, a core priority that requires sustained funding.
BWSR	MULTIPLE	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends increased investment in Critical Shoreline (\$6M), Wetland Restoration (\$6M), and Floodplain (\$4M) easement programs.
DNR	Nonpoint Source Restoration and Protection Activities	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC considers this a model implementation program, and recommends increased investment (\$6M).
DNR	Native Mussels	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends increased investment (\$2M) to support integration with watershed implementation activities and advance MN's long-term goal of restoring and protecting aquatic ecosystems.
MPCA	Chloride Reduction Program	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends increase investment (\$2M) to address increasing chloride levels throughout Minnesota.
BWSR	Legacy Partners Grant Program	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends increased investment for the Legacy Grants program, specifically as it relates to grants to Tribal partners.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends increased investment (\$3M) on recognition of the growing intensity of precipitation events, increasing MS4 regulatory requirements, and the role of stormwater runoff driving impairments in Minnesota's lakes and streams.
BWSR	Conservation Drainage Management and Assistance	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends increased investment (\$3.5M) to continue to modify existing drainage infrastructure for improved environmental performance while maintaining agricultural productivity.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends continued investment to enable scalable outcomes.
BWSR	Tillage and Erosion Survey Project	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends this program be modified to evaluate efficacy of multiple soil health and technical assistance programs across MN with improved coordination and data sharing.
BWSR	Soil Health	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	Given the leverage of federal funding, TNC recommends that this program be adjusted to include more performance standards for each participating entity.
Olmsted	SE Groundwater and Soil Health Initiative	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends this program and its success be used to set program standards for other soil health programs.
MDA	MAWQCP	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends the program provide more information on water quality outcomes at the watershed scale and describe improvements link to the program. Increase technical assistance within the private sector of trusted advisors.
MDA	Conservation Equipment Assistance	Environmental Organizations	The Nature Conservancy	TNC recommends continued investment given high ROI for cost per acre of soil health practice implemented.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Kelsey Gustafson (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Mary Tkach (FMR Every Action)	Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase. I worked on public health and environment throughout my life. The public has the desire and you have the power to make a very positive impact. Help us move FGI forward.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Nicki Weber (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Theresa Walls (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Anne Rogers (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Kay Slama (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.

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MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Ellen Rogers (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Stacy Enzmann (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Marsha Macey (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Karen McKenzie (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Kristen Stoeckeler (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Dennis Cuchna (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Colleen O'Connor Tolberman (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Guff Van Vooren (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Mark Neuman-Scott (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Anja Madsen (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Marsha Studer (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Battle Lake	Battle Lake is a small, lake-centered community in Otter Tail County. Our Public Water System has worked with the Source Water Protection Program since preparing its first Wellhead Protection Plan. The program's technical assistance has helped us understand local drinking water risks, prioritize protection strategies, and take practical steps to safeguard our municipal wells. We have also received multiple grants for implementation. For a small city with limited resources, this assistance makes a real difference. Continued investment in this program directly benefits communities like ours. It helps local governments protect public health, reduce long-term risk to drinking water supplies, and make responsible use of limited public funds.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Mankato	Mankato uses both groundwater and wells under the direct influence of surface water. We have used multiple Source Water Protection Grants to obtain lab accreditation for nitrate analysis, develop a nitrate monitoring program, and perform preventative maintenance of the ion chromatography instrument. We also have received multiple grants to seal numerous wells in our DWSMA, protecting drinking water for Mankato and other neighboring systems. Suggest a funding priority for the Source Water Protection program that reflects the importance of clean drinking water.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Edgerton	The SWP program helps us decrease nitrates in our water. CWFs have allowed us to provide cost share to landowners to reduce nitrate loading to our aquifer and most recently is helping us to potentially install solar on a high priority parcel within the wellhead area to further reduce nitrates. We have worked hard over the last 20 years to reduce nitrates from a high of 18-18ppm to our current levels of 5.5-8ppm, under the 10ppm safe drinking water standard. CWFs have been a key factor in helping us achieve this goal. Suggest a priority in funding of the program reflective of the importance of clean drinking water.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of St. Cloud	Have worked with the SWP Program for more than 15 years. Our planning activities have helped us take concrete actions, and financial assistance received through the grants have allowed us to purchase necessary equipment for monitoring, implement an early warning system, optimize water treatment, complete outreach about stormwater management, implement Adopt-a-Storm Drain and Storm Drain Art programs, implement a stormwater pond treatment effectiveness project, and coordinate with Minneapolis and St. Paul to prioritize stormwater-influenced potential contaminant sources. Suggest a priority in funding of the program reflective of the importance of clean drinking water.
MDH	Voyagers National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Townships	Kabetogama Township	The grant dollars the VNCPWJPB has received from the CWF over the years have been greatly appreciated and critical in our efforts to successfully complete sewer infrastructure projects in the Voyageur Park communities of Crane Lake, Ash River, Island View and Kabetogama. Our Township Board of Supervisors supports the funding request of the program.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Avon	Have worked with the SWP program since beginning on our Wellhead Protection Plan in 2011. We have received several Source Water Protection Grants to help us implement our plan, including: outreach and education to thousands of area residents and youth, install equipment to better understand water usage and aquifer impacts, install security at our wellhouse, and pull a pump to televise the well casing and determine its suitability as a long-term well for City. Suggest a priority in funding reflective of the importance of clean drinking water.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Onamia	Have worked with the SWP program since beginning on our Wellhead Protection Plan in 2014. We have received several Source Water Protection Grants to help us implement our plan, including: purchase and installation of a natural gas backup generator for service during power outages, seal the City's old creamery well, conduct exploratory borings to locate a source to construct a new municipal well in order to replace a well with high ammonia levels, connect a low-income homeowner to City water services, and seal a private well that posed a risk to the City's aquifer. Suggest a priority in funding reflective of the importance of clean drinking water.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Richmond	Have worked with the SWP program since beginning on our Wellhead Protection Plan in 2025. Working with the program has allowed us to target and prioritize threats to our drinking water source. It has also created funding opportunities for us to partner with local organizations on projects that benefit our community. Suggest a priority in funding reflective of the importance of clean drinking water.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Dr. Anthony Brusa, UMN	As a recipient of the most recent round of Forever Green funding, your support is allowing my team to move forward with development of a genomic resource that will greatly accelerate the development of new agronomic traits for Forever Green crops. By more rapidly identifying novel genetic variants, our tools will enable large scale screenings of important traits without needing a large amount of field space for our work. This work will benefit plant development efforts, bringing us closer to adoption of winter oilseed crops for Minnesota growers. This support comes at an important time as costs rise and federal funding has been sharply cut. Please consider an increase to further enable funding of agronomic research in pursuit of cleaner waters for people in Minnesota.
MDH	Contaminants of Emerging Concern	MDH	Jane de Lambert, Environmental Health Supervisor	The Drinking Water Ambient Monitoring Program and Contaminants of Emerging Concern Program have worked together on pesticide and PFAS analysis at public water systems. This monitoring helps ensure users of public water systems have safe drinking water by understanding both source water and finished water (and the efficacy of treatment systems then to remove emerging contaminants). If the CEC program did not exist there would be a notable gap in our ability to assess threats to drinking water.
MDH	Private Well Initiative	Counties	Olmsted County	We've worked with the PWI since 2021 to provide water testing services across SE MN. We support providing an avenue to ensure that private well owners have access to local and economical testing options to give peace of mind as they draw from their tap. Through the PWI, we developed TAP-IN Safe Drinking Water Program and maintain a collaborative of SWCDs, local public health, and environmental services staff across 9 SE MN counties. In the two rounds of funding, have offered testing to hundreds of households and offered one-on-one consultation to connect users to resources to address issues. When testing exceeds limits, the program assists with funding for mitigation for those experiencing financial hardship. Additional funding to support the State's workplan to address nitrate contamination of drinking water has allowed the TAP-IN collaborative to provide free water testing to 2,580 households and provide mitigation support to hundreds of users, of which 280 have been referred to MDA's program to receive a free water treatment system. We ask continued support for PWI to expand current programming.
MDH	Private Well Initiative	SWCD	Olmsted County	We've worked with the PWI since 2021 to provide water testing services across SE MN. We support providing an avenue to ensure that private well owners have access to local and economical testing options to give peace of mind as they draw from their tap. Through the PWI, we developed TAP-IN Safe Drinking Water Program and maintain a collaborative of SWCDs, local public health, and environmental services staff across 9 SE MN counties. In the two rounds of funding, have offered testing to hundreds of households and offered one-on-one consultation to connect users to resources to address issues. When testing exceeds limits, the program assists with funding for mitigation for those experiencing financial hardship. Additional funding to support the State's workplan to address nitrate contamination of drinking water has allowed the TAP-IN collaborative to provide free water testing to 2,580 households and provide mitigation support to hundreds of users, of which 280 have been referred to MDA's program to receive a free water treatment system. We ask continued support for PWI to expand current programming.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Jim Anderson, UMN	CWF support has been essential to the progress FGI has made, advancing new CLC species from early development to commercialization. At the same time, research costs continue to increase and federal funding has become increasingly uncertain. Maintaining momentum and expertise requires stable and expanded state investment. Respectfully encourage an increase in funding.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Dr. Hannah Rusch, UMN	As a researcher, it is exciting to see all that has been made possible through state funding of the FGI. This summer I will be starting a new project looking to build and compile knowledge of how three FGI winter annuals crops impact water quality in SE MN when incorporated into corn/soybean rotation. Urge you to continue to advance FGI work to the benefit of the environment, rural livelihoods, and entrepreneurship in our state.
MPCA	Wastewater/ Stormwater TMDL Implementation	Cities	Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition	This is among our top priorities as the program provides essential technical assistance to cities, integrates stormwater and wastewater data with WRAPS, and maintains the MN Stormwater Manual—a resource relied upon by thousands. Without this support, cities with limited capacity could fall short of meeting requirements.
MPCA	Chloride Reduction Program	Cities	Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition	Chloride impairments represent one of the most significant and growing water quality challenges for cities. Support continued funding paired with policy recommendations that provide financial support and flexibility for meeting chloride discharge reductions.
MPFA	Point Source Implementation Grants	Cities	Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition	The PSIG program is a lifeline for communities that must upgrade stormwater and wastewater treatment infrastructure. These are often mandated improvements that cannot be delayed, yet costs are well beyond what local utilities can cover. This also leverages Clean Water Revolving Fund dollars, stretching state dollars further.

BWSR	WBIF	Cities	Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition	With all 81 watersheds on track to have approved 1W1P management plans, continued support for a robust WBIF program is critical. This allows local governments to implement the highest-priority projects identified in their state-approved plans.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Cities	Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition	Applied research on stormwater BMPs directly informs how cities design and operate stormwater infrastructure. This program has produced actionable results. Continue to support so we have access to cutting-edge, locally relevant guidance.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Cities	Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition	For cities, the CWF is often the essential catalyst that makes complex stormwater and water quality projects financially viable. Funds the technical expertise we need, supports compliance, and enables us to participate meaningfully in watershed-scale planning and implementation.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Lewiston	We have utilized the program multiple times to ensure our system can provide clean, quality water to our residents. Through this program we have sealed multiple wells in the DWSMA and are preparing to install a generator at our well site to guarantee water will always be available--tasks we would not have been able to accomplish without this funding source. This program makes our jobs easier, and the staff at the State and MRWA are top notch!
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Cesar Medina, UMN	I analyze data for our alfalfa breeding projects. Alfalfa is incredibly valuable for its high forage quality and its direct and positive impact on watershed health. The costs associated with acquiring and translating this data into actionable decisions has risen significantly. An increase in funding would allow us to accelerate solutions across FGI's diverse crops. Thank you for your ongoing support.
MDA	Forever Green	Farmers	Carmen Fernholz	As a farmer I was one of the early collaborators with FGI and have watched it evolve over 15 years. Because of the issues and challenges to ag that this research is working at solving, continued support through research dollars is critical. Long-term research is needed, and the results sometimes take a while to become known. Living in western MN I see quite vividly the need for CLC to protect our soil and water. As a farmer I see this as one of the most viable means to introduce a third crop and create a more robust financial safety net. Please increase funding to assure viability for the future.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Fernanda Dias, UMN	My research helps create new food and ingredient markets that can improve the economic viability of these environmentally beneficial crops. Continued support is particularly important now as research costs have increased and federal funding is more uncertain. This makes it hard to sustain long-term innovation programs. Additional funding could accelerate the development of value-added products, expand pilot-scale validation, and more. Respectfully encourage an increase in funding.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Remer	MN Rural Water Association and MDH staff directly assisted our city with the development of our Wellhead Protection Plan Amendment, which outlines the critical, actionable tasks our city can take to protect our drinking water sources. Grant funding we were then eligible for has delivered tangible safety upgrades for our public drinking water wells. We have also received funding that will allow us to team up with the Region Five Development Commission to create a Comprehensive Plan that includes city, climate, and drinking water planning into a single cohesive strategy. This will allow us to have critical conversations about how external factors affect our current infrastructure, proactively identify risks, and take action before problems arise. Encourage continued funding.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Madeleine Luskey, UMN	It's been incredibly encouraging to see compounding interest in building markets for CLC crops. As market interest grows, two things remain crucial: the foundational R&D at the heart of FGI and supporting farmer adoption of these crops. Public support is more important than ever as research funding becomes scarce. Ask that you increase funding for FGI.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Dr. Maciej Kazula, UMN	FGI's progress in developing CLC crops would not have been possible without the sustained support of the CWF. Winter oilseeds fill a critical gap in row-crop systems by providing cover when soils are most vulnerable to erosion and nutrient loss. They keep nutrients out of MN waters and support pollinators. They do not compete with food crops. Additional funding is needed as research costs rise and federal funding becomes uncertain.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Dr. Bekah Schulz, UMN	Desire for the CWC to continue and increase funding for the FGI. You support has allowed this work to happen, and continued support is needed now more than ever as research costs increase.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Chatfield	We meet with SWP program staff every year, and the program has helped us get grants to help with our work to keep water clean. Through this program we have partnered with the FGI initiative and have planted Kernza and now Winter Caneline inside our DWSMA. Have also partnered with the SWP Program to have meetings with local ag producers and other government agencies to reduce nitrate in our drinking water. It has been indispensable in our efforts to protect our municipal water supply.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Fishing	Conservation Community	With the sunset of the Legacy amendment approaching in 2034, these recommendations are consequential to ensure the best possible results from these unique resources. Encourage recommendations emphasize investments in projects and programs that have a track record of being, or can easily be, measurable with demonstrable outcomes. Good results come from the use of CWFs, but the uncertainty of future availability should provide some urgency to support highest and best use.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Hunting	Conservation Community	With the sunset of the Legacy amendment approaching in 2034, these recommendations are consequential to ensure the best possible results from these unique resources. Encourage recommendations emphasize investments in projects and programs that have a track record of being, or can easily be, measurable with demonstrable outcomes. Good results come from the use of CWFs, but the uncertainty of future availability should provide some urgency to support highest and best use.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Lakes and Streams	Conservation Community	With the sunset of the Legacy amendment approaching in 2034, these recommendations are consequential to ensure the best possible results from these unique resources. Encourage recommendations emphasize investments in projects and programs that have a track record of being, or can easily be, measurable with demonstrable outcomes. Good results come from the use of CWFs, but the uncertainty of future availability should provide some urgency to support highest and best use.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Environmental Organizations	Conservation Community	With the sunset of the Legacy amendment approaching in 2034, these recommendations are consequential to ensure the best possible results from these unique resources. Encourage recommendations emphasize investments in projects and programs that have a track record of being, or can easily be, measurable with demonstrable outcomes. Good results come from the use of CWFs, but the uncertainty of future availability should provide some urgency to support highest and best use.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Environmental Organizations	Minnesota Agriculture Resilience Initiative (MARI)	With less than 10 years of CWFs remaining, MARI encourages prioritization of recommendations that support systems-level changes in technical assistance needed to support farmers in adopting the regenerative ag practices necessary to meet clean water goals. We also support the development of netter indicators and monitoring across programs and agencies to track efficacy of these approaches. Regenerative systems are complex, highly context specific, and require years of experimentation, learning, and adjustment. Technical assistance is vital. To that end, we recommend: 1) support emerging, innovative, and holistic TA programs and practices; and 2) expand and enhance education, training, and resources for TA providers. Several examples and specific programs are included in the letter.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Farmers	Minnesota Agriculture Resilience Initiative (MARI)	With less than 10 years of CWFs remaining, MARI encourages prioritization of recommendations that support systems-level changes in technical assistance needed to support farmers in adopting the regenerative ag practices necessary to meet clean water goals. We also support the development of netter indicators and monitoring across programs and agencies to track efficacy of these approaches. Regenerative systems are complex, highly context specific, and require years of experimentation, learning, and adjustment. Technical assistance is vital. To that end, we recommend: 1) support emerging, innovative, and holistic TA programs and practices; and 2) expand and enhance education, training, and resources for TA providers. Several examples and specific programs are included in the letter.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Business	Minnesota Agriculture Resilience Initiative (MARI)	With less than 10 years of CWFs remaining, MARI encourages prioritization of recommendations that support systems-level changes in technical assistance needed to support farmers in adopting the regenerative ag practices necessary to meet clean water goals. We also support the development of netter indicators and monitoring across programs and agencies to track efficacy of these approaches. Regenerative systems are complex, highly context specific, and require years of experimentation, learning, and adjustment. Technical assistance is vital. To that end, we recommend: 1) support emerging, innovative, and holistic TA programs and practices; and 2) expand and enhance education, training, and resources for TA providers. Several examples and specific programs are included in the letter.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Northfield	Providing safe drinking water to residents and businesses of Northfield is an essential service. Protecting Northfield's water source is an essential component of providing safe drinking water to Northfield and that has been aided through the Source Water Protection Program.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Erin Meier, Green Lands Blue Waters, UMN	CLC agriculture is particularly important for addressing water quality concerns, reducing nitrate leaching and soil erosion. MN's 2026 Nutrient Reduction Strategy states its importance to achieving MN's clean water goals. FGI's research infrastructure is at the core of this. Environmental urgency is meeting funding urgency. We are at a critical time as we create productive ag systems that nurture and provide opportunity rather than extract.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Dr. George Annor, Food Science Undergrad Program, UMN	My research focuses on development of food products and markets that encourage adoption of crops that reduce nutrient losses and protect MN's waters. Increased funding for FGI is needed as research costs rise and federal funding becomes more uncertain. Additional support would allow us to expand and accelerate the program.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Dr. Senyu Chen, UMN	My work focuses on the interaction between soybean cyst nematode (SCN) and pennycress. Pennycress is being developed as a winter oil seed for MN, with strong potential for environmental benefit. However, pennycress is a host for SCN, the most destructive pest for soybean. It is critical to understand how to scale up pennycress without this potential impact. More research is needed, but costs are increasing and the number of projects within the FGI continue to increase. Additional funding for the FGI is requested.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Environmental Organizations	Minnesota Environmental Partnership	Appreciate the Council's revised process and commend it for being significantly more transparent and openly deliberative. This is an important moment for the CWF, as this round will have completed 20 of the 25 years of funding. Yet, more progress is needed. It is time to reexamine and refocus the allocation of limited CWF resources. Council should prioritize funding for programs that address challenges at scale and over time, not just 1-2 year increments. Need to fund programs or practices that are capable of meeting state water goals. The NRS is refreshingly clear in calling for a shift in how we address nutrients, and we support a substantial increase in funding for developing and implementing a wide range of living cover options. Several CWF programs have previously been funded in part or whole by fees. The Council should examine whether substitution has taken place and act to restore these programs' traditional reliance on fees.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Jake Jungers, UMN	The research model developed by FGI is the most impactful I've seen. Colleagues around the country are blown away by the Clean Water Council and MN's commitment to innovative agriculture and water conservation. Thank you! Additional funding is needed to account for decreased federal funding. CWF support gives MN researchers a leg-up against the competition, making now an ideal time to increase FGI funding.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Walid Sadok, UMN	My research focuses on improving freezing tolerance in perennial and winter-hardy crops, something necessary for CLC in Minnesota. Research costs have increased substantially and there is growing uncertainty for federal funding. Sustained and increased support is needed at this time and help us shorten the timeline from research and discovery to on-farm adoption.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Chase Krug, UMN	My work focuses on helping to move siltflow (a perennial oil seed crop) closer to commercial viability while maintaining the environmental benefits associated with perennial agriculture. Research costs have increased and federal funding is uncertain. Increased funding could allow us to accelerate the breeding process, expand field evaluations, and more, helping to advance the goals of CLC ag.
Olmsted	Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative	SWCD	Olmsted SWCD	Groundwater is especially susceptible to contamination in our karst region in SE MN. EPA declared nitrate contamination in groundwater in SE MN an imminent public health threat in 2023. SWCDs are the "boots on the ground". The efforts underway through this program are making a difference. We support the application and continued strong partnership with BWSR.

MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Ann Kirby, UMN	This work isn't happening in this way anywhere else. Thank you! Circumstances have changed in recent years—federal research landscape is far more constrained and farmers are facing mounting challenges. CWF support is critical to advancing solutions. Additional funds could help expand and deepend research, increase farmer adoption, and provide technical assistance. Request increase.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Lois Braun, UMN	Our work with hazelnuts would not happen without the support through the FGI. More than a quarter comes from FGI grants. The rest is multi-state, multi-institutional federal funding, which is becoming more competitive. Proposal writing is time intensive—chasing down fewer federal dollars is time not spent doing the research. Additional funding is needed to support staff, research, testing, and equipment.
MDA	Forever Green	Farmers	Ben Penner	I grow CLC crops on my farm and operate a custom farming operation planting CLC for my neighbors. These are a win-win-win: we can increase our level of entrepreneurship while reaching environmental goals and making our farms more productive. CWF support is crucial right now due to rising costs of research and uncertainty of federal funding. Please increase funding support.
MDA	Forever Green	UMN	Dr. Matthew Ott, UMN	Public funding of research into finding solutions for challenges related to rural economies, clean lakes and streams, fuel prices, and climate change is a bit tight these days, but there is a lot of bang for the buck in terms of the private sector also making investments in parallel to public teams working on this research. Please consider increasing support.
	Voyagers National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Counties	Commissioner Jason Sjoblom, Koochiching County	Please continue funding for the VNP Clean Water Project. Many clean water projects have been accomplished in St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, improving water quality throughout the watershed from east to west. As more people flock to water-based areas, it is crucial to continue funding to benefit clean water goals.
	Voyagers National Park Water Quality Protection Program		Rob Scott, Crane Lake Water and Sanitary Board	The success of the Clean Water Project is directly related to the funding approved by the CWC. The ability to improve the sewer systems and infrastructure ensures immediate and long-term water quality will be sustained. It is not fiscally feasible to do this work at the local level—external funding is needed. Thank you for your ongoing support.
MDA	Forever Green	Farmers	Land Stewardship Project	Support increased funding for the FGI. Previous funding has been instrumental, especially for key programs like the Environmental and Economic Clusters of Opportunity (ECCO) program that help de-risk these crops. Need to scale these crops across the state and region.
Olmsted	Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative	Farmers	Land Stewardship Project	Strong support to expand this program to more counties in SE MN. We continually hear from farmers outside of Olmsted that they wish they had access to this innovative program for their own farms.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Cities	City of Richfield	This program has helped us successfully implement our Wellhead Protection Plan and make significant strides in protecting public health and our drinking water supply, including sealing a contaminated well and moving residents in a mobile home cooperative to a safe source. This was made possible by working with the SWP program.
		Environmental Organizations	Freshwater	We appreciate the strategic and transparent process being used. The rubric is an excellent tool—we hope water quantity is given ample consideration as a co-benefit. For criteria to use moving forward, we encourage you to prioritize proposals that (examples of programs for each in the letter): 1) fill gaps in clean water needs not addressed by other funding sources, 2) are designed to address future water challenges using a regional and cross-sector approach, 3) provide foundational scientific knowledge, and 4) help landowners reduce agricultural pollution.
UMN	Stormwater Research Program	Business	Barr Engineering	Essential stormwater research that help consultants support clients. Cutting edge research to design and maintain stormwater BMPs that are effective and efficient. Science-based training and outreach to make sure local work uses best info available.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Chandra Raeker (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Tyler Pulkabek (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Kasey Pulkabek (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Jeremy Sheldon (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Shawna Bonaime (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Gary Kelzenberg (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Susan Austin (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	William Dustin (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Brett Smith (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Steven Gray (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MDA	Forever Green	Environmental Organizations	Deb Alper (FMR Every Action)	Forever Green is an internationally respected research and commercialization effort designed to develop new, perennial crops and winter annual crops (cover crops) that protect our environment while enhancing farm prosperity. Forever Green crops greatly improve water quality, soil health, habitat and climate resilience, while helping farmers and our rural economy thrive. Please designate as high priority and deserving of an increase.
MPCA	Chloride Reduction Program	Environmental Organizations	Sue Nissen and Randy Holst, Stop Over Salting	Minnesotans are repeatedly shocked to learn about our growing chloride pollution challenge. The good news is there is a clear pathway to reduction: this program. But it needs more funding. Reducing salt use is the only answer, and this transformational program makes it easier to do. Please increase support.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Farmers	Minnesota Farmers Union	Over the past year there has been a reduction in federal conservation assistance, and we are currently in a challenging agricultural economy with low crop prices and high input costs. In this context, Minnesota farmers are relying even more on the CWF's working lands programs for the funding and technical assistance needed to improve their operations with changes that promote water quality.
MDA	MAWQCP	Farmers	Minnesota Farmers Union	MFU strongly supports voluntary incentives and MDA's MAWQCP. This is a budget priority for us.
MDA	Conservation Equipment Assistance	Farmers	Minnesota Farmers Union	The Soil Health Financial Assistance Program is an innovative approach to reducing risk in implementing new practices. This is a budget priority for us.
MDA	Forever Green	Farmers	Minnesota Farmers Union	New markets for oats and CLC crops, as well as farmer learning and supply chain development, are needed to accelerate adoption. This is a budget priority for us.
MDA	MULTIPLE	Farmers	Minnesota Farmers Union	Over the past year, Minnesota has lost approximately one third of its NRCS staff. Supporting local technical assistance, such as that provided through the MDA's MAWQCP, is essential for both maintaining and increasing agricultural conservation practices across the landscape. This is a budget priority for us.
BWSR	MULTIPLE	Business	Jen Wahls	There are too many easement programs. Must be tied to Landscape Stewardship Plans and 1W1P. These need to be permanent and need consistent rates. Lots of training and overhead. "Working lands" needs strict criteria.
MDA	MULTIPLE	Business	Jen Wahls	AgBMP Loans and Conservation equipment assistance should be combined.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Business	Jen Wahls	Pesticide Testing of Private Wells and the Private Well Initiative should be combined. Turn testing over to MDH and work with MN Well Owners Organization.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Business	Jen Wahls	Where local technical teams (e.g. Local Forestry Teams) or workforce (e.g. Consulting foresters) are present, utilize existing service providers and systems that are delivering programs efficiently.
MULTIPLE	MULTIPLE	Business	Jen Wahls	Accomplishments need to be accounted for at a landscape scale. Need to also understand overhead costs and compare those to existing processes. Need consistency from BWSR and SWCDs on developing set rates and in program delivery.
MDH	Source Water Protection	Business	City of Le Sueur	Our Wellhead Protection Plan and two SWP grants to implement it have allowed us to take concrete steps to protect our drinking water sources. We were able to locate an abandoned well buried 13 feet beneath an electric transformer. We hired a well contractor to raise the casing above grade so it could be sealed in the future. Please have a priority in funding reflective of importance of clean drinking water.
BWSR	MULTIPLE	Watershed Districts	Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District	BWSR Clean Water Fund administration is not aligned with governing watershed statutes as to what is eligible for coverage in grants, loans and other reimbursable costs for WATERSHED PROJECTS, including preliminary scientific work performed by Civil Engineers to identify and evaluate best projects to meet prioritized, targeted, and measurable criteria. We ask the Clean Water Council to provide for reimbursement of all costs to date not covered by BWSR for these activities due to a structured rule denying access—for all Watershed Districts.

Public Input Workshop Summary and Outcomes

July 15, 2026

On Monday, June 15, nearly 30 people joined the Clean Water Council in a day-long workshop as Council members prepare to draft initial funding priorities for the FY28-29 biennium. Together, they worked to identify themes or key points from public input, articulate lessons the Council could learn from input received, and draft next steps to put those lessons into practice.

This document provides an overview of the meeting purpose, structure of the day, the questions asked, and how participants engaged in providing responses. Then, outcomes from the discussions are included.

Meeting purpose and background

The June 15 Public Input Workshop was held as a part of the Council's regular monthly meeting. Over the previous four months, the Council meetings each focused on a subset of proposals, with Council members focusing on learning about and understanding each one individually. This included scoring proposals using the Council's new scoring rubric, asking questions of proposers, building their understanding of each proposal's purpose and functions, and reviewing how the proposals related to each other, state statute, and the Council's Strategic Plan.

This meeting was an important pivot point in the Council's budget process as this was the first time Council members were asked to consider all of the proposals for the FY28-29 biennium as a package. It marked the beginning of the prioritization process wherein members will identify which programs to increase funding for, which to hold steady, which to consider for decreases, and how to address new proposals. Before engaging in those prioritization discussions, this meeting allowed for a focus on public input received to date and invited interested parties to engage in determining how to move forward. Essentially, with more funding requested than is available, Council members will have difficult decisions ahead of them. This meeting created space for interested parties to work alongside Council members in determining key considerations to keep in mind as budget priorities are set.

Of course, not everyone is able to participate in a day long workshop. To that end, the workshop was one of a three-part approach focused on creating an influx of input at this critical juncture.

- 1) Leading up to the meeting, invitations for public input were sent, inviting people to share their thoughts whether they were general or program-specific. Over 200 comment letters and emails were received—a record number, nearly double the previous record set in the FY26-27 budget development process. A good number provided overarching comments and considerations for priorities, and 24 programs were mentioned by name. Each was summarized in a table for ease of review and included verbatim in the meeting packet as well.
- 2) The June 15 meeting provided an opportunity to review those comments, and focused primarily on the discussions about how to move forward. Nearly 30 people participated in the room or online.
- 3) Meeting outcomes were distilled into a survey in order to capture input from anyone interested in sharing which considerations developed by the workshop participants should carry the most weight. More than 300 people filled that survey out. See the survey report for more information.

Meeting structure

Council members and public participants were mixed together for the entirety of the meeting. There were nine tables in the room with 5-6 participants at each, and a group online that fluctuated in size over the course of the day, but generally had 4-5 active participants.

Following the close of normal business, the public input workshop began. In order to provide context, review information covered in the last four months, and make sure all participants felt supported in their ability to engage, Administrator Jen Kader gave an overview presentation to kick things off. This presentation covered:

- Clean Water Council and Fund context
 - o History
 - o State statute
 - o Strategic plan visions
 - o Water Management Framework
 - What it is
 - Illustrative examples of how it works
- FY28-29

- Proposals received
- Budget forecast
- Public input
 - How past public input shaped the process
 - Overview of submissions for the meeting, including high-level takeaways

From there, the interactive portion of the meeting began. The workshop was broken down into four distinct discussions meant to build on top of each other, using the “What? So What? Now What?” framework.

- **Round 1: Introductions.** Participants were asked to share their name, who they were there representing, and what inspired them to say “yes” to participating in this workshop *or* what they were hoping to get out of today.
- **Round 2: What?** Participants were asked to consider the information they could review in advance as well as the content of the morning’s presentation, responding to the following prompt: what are you noticing? What is standing out to you or catching your attention? Each person was asked to take 3 minutes to individually write down their own thoughts. After the 3 minutes was up, they were asked to share what they had written down, asking questions or building on each other’s responses, and adding more thoughts as they went. Before moving on to the next discussion, they were asked to group their comments by theme and prepare to report out so others in the room could benefit from the discussions they had at their table.
- **Round 3: So What?** Reflecting on what they heard from the other tables as well as their own discussions, participants were asked in this round to identify key takeaways from those observations, lessons to be learned, or implications for the Council.
- **Round 4: Now What?** In this last discussion, participants were asked to go one step further and identify ways to put outcomes from the “So What?” conversation into practice. Specifically, they were asked to identify responses from each of the following categories:
 - The remaining FY28-29 budget *process*: Things the Council should attend to in the budget process between now and the publishing and distribution of the biennial recommendations report.
 - Considerations for how to prioritize funds for the FY28-29 budget: Things Council members should keep in mind as they determine which programs to add or increase funding for, which to protect from decreases, and which to consider for decreases. The report out focused on just this final section, and before the close of the workshop, participants were each given four dots to

use to identify which identified considerations should carry the greatest weight.

- FY27 and beyond: Things the Council should look into or explore following this budget cycle.

Following the final step, participants were invited to reflect on the day and share their overall observations or reactions. Public participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity and stated they felt heard. Council members expressed gratitude for the time and input given by public participants. On the whole, public participants and Council members alike felt this was time well spent—for the budget process, for relationships, and for the future of the Clean Water Fund and Council.

Final meeting outcomes

The input from rounds 1-3 were meant to build towards the final round for how to put lessons learned into practice. To that end, this section of the report will focus just on providing a summary of the final round.

Remainder of this budget process

There were 20 responses for this portion of the discussion, which were organized across five themes. As these are largely discreet statements that could be categorized but would likely lose meaning if summarized, they have been included below verbatim.

Budget and funding

- Recognize that "hold steady" necessarily includes inflationary increases
- Use "0" base budgeting for each program and then determine how much program should get
- Evaluate substitution and fee revenue. Eg Nitrate monitoring used to be N fees

Decision-making and prioritization

- Use NRS to align priorities
- Are there programs that could be sunset?
- prioritize programs that focus on implementation
- Synthesize all info gathered and share guiding ideas/principles to ICT
- Prioritize programs with a history or stated goal of collaborative activity
- Analyze how new proposals fit into or complement existing programs
- Prepare a graph showing the rubric scores to show how rubric ranks program priority

Engagement and collaboration

- Be sure to solicit the perspectives of the quieter people on the Council
- Dig into disagreement
- CWC report out on outcomes from today's meeting
- Maintain flexibility and respond to input and engagement

Governance and coordination

- Re-evaluate the rubric while it is still in people's minds. Update the application.
- Recommend that all grants go through an agency--CWC doesn't have the staffing for direct requests
- CWC rep at ICT?
- Utilize 1W1P info in conjunction with funding requests for watershed-specific opportunities and CECs

Outcomes and accountability

- The council should define is meant by measurable outcome based on the statute
- Actual tangible outcomes and ask each program to explain to the Council what those are and how do they contribute

Considerations for how to set FY28-29 budget priorities

Responses for this segment (listed verbatim in the appendix) were merged in order to get to a reduced number of parallel statements to include in a survey (part three as described above). What was 41 statements in the room were summarized into the following 11* statements:

- 1) Invest in implementation programs that are science-based and locally relevant
- 2) Invest in programs that improve water quality across Minnesota at the scale the challenge requires
- 3) Invest in programs with outcomes that are resilient and durable for the long term
- 4) Invest in maintaining and enhancing the current adaptive, watershed based, program focused approach to improving water quality
- 5) Invest in programs that leverage past research, fill identified gaps, and promote the ability to try new approaches to address water quality concerns
- 6) Invest in program and local staffing capacity needed to meet Clean Water Fund goals
- 7) Invest in programs that increase the likelihood for future success, such as research, workforce development, education and outreach, collaboration, etc.
- 8) Invest in programs that will produce near-term measurable results in water quality

- 9) Invest in programs that leverage outside funding
- 10) Invest in programs that consider equity and public health in program delivery
- 11) Invest in capturing and telling the story of how Clean Water Funds have enhanced water quality outcomes for Minnesota

(In verifying the list with Council leadership before publishing the survey, a 12th item was added to the list as something that seemed to be missing. That item was: “Invest in programs that prioritize clean water outcomes and enhance habitat and ecosystem services, improving conditions for fish and wildlife.”)*

FY27 and beyond

In considering the needs for future Council work, participants identified a variety of topics, issues, or opportunities that they felt deserved some intentional focus. The verbatim responses are included in the appendix, and a summary of the responses is included below:

- **2034:** Consider needs and prepare for 2034.
- **Council structure:** Reevaluate the roles on the Clean Water Council to ensure diverse groups and perspectives involved in this work are represented. Specific perspectives mentioned as absent or underrepresented include: Tribal representation, private well considerations, and public health.
- **Enabling conditions and adaptive management:** Create the enabling conditions for success by supporting collaboration, conducting research and collecting data, advancing effective policies, identifying gaps, leveraging funding, and building the long-term stability needed to scale successful approaches and achieve lasting outcomes. Incentivize adaptive management to learn from what is as well as what is not working.
- **Engagement:** Strengthen and broaden engagement by intentionally bringing more voices to the table, further expanding participation beyond interested parties who have historically engaged with the Clean Water Council. This includes taking time to discover who else needs to be at the table. Parties mentioned include: Tribal representatives, diverse sectors, businesses, community organizations, youth, rural and urban communities, legislators, public health leaders, and the general public. Leverage trusted networks and partners to increase outreach, provide meaningful and low-barrier opportunities for public input, and ensure Council representation remains diverse, inclusive, and reflective of the communities impacted by water decisions.
- **Future budget process:** Continue to improve the budget development process, with small changes (such as requiring an estimated % budget change in the initial

proposal) and large changes (a separate process for considering new proposals) that continue to enhance process function and outcomes. As a part of this, clarify the relationship between the agencies and Council to demonstrate the back and forth and need for clear guidance from the Council.

- **Legislature:** The Council should strengthen relationships with legislators and build their knowledge and understanding of Council work, process, and history. This includes legislators in general as well as the legislators appointed to service on the Council. In particular, the process taken this year and the extent of public engagement should be shared with legislators.
- **More funds for implementation:** Consider opportunities to shift more funds towards implementation, whether that is further prioritizing that component of the water management framework or improving overall program and administrative efficiencies.
- **Outcomes:** The Clean Water Fund is supporting good work, but lacks consistent or standardized ways to track and aggregate outcomes from that work. Increased attention to determining outcomes (rather than outputs) is needed, and an interagency dashboard to display those outcomes and other efforts to communicate them should be developed.
- **Policy:** Policy work is an important part of what the Clean Water Council does, but this can be elevated and enhanced. Whether it is communicating out policy statements, increasing policy innovation with bold directives from the Council, or supporting a dedicated water policy board at the Legislature--this is an area where dedicated focus could yield results for Minnesota's waters.
- **Water reuse:** Promote water reuse.
- **Storytelling:** We have the opportunity to celebrate our state's waters and clearly communicate the impact of Clean Water Funds. But who is responsible for the storytelling? How do we build that in as a part of the systematic Water Management Framework cycle?

“Dotmocracy” exercise

The final activity within the workshop, as described above, was a voting exercise wherein each participant was given four sticky dots to distribute across the items listed for the FY28-29 budget considerations. While those look different than the summarized versions shared in the survey, it is important to still acknowledge the input shared by participants in the room. In order from most dots to least (not including those that did not get any), participants placed dots on the following items:

1. Consider ag systems change catalyzation fund (14)

2. Prioritize funding to programs with strong communication plans—more than just logo placement (12)
3. Watershed approach (11)
4. Stay the course with existing programs with agility to incorporate new ideas and innovation (11)
5. Programmatic, multi-year vs. project-based (10)
6. Consider leverage when making budget decisions. Not just money, but leveraging research to improve regulation and compliance. (Stormwater is the example. UMN becomes Center of Excellence through EPA.) This also changes the attitude of the regulated community because they see how the state is developing tools and guidance to help them. (10)
7. Invest in systems change (9)
8. CWC needs more staffing capacity ASAP (9)
9. Invest in programs and outcomes that are durable, that will outlast the CWF (7)
10. Telling the story of the Clean Water Fund (7)
11. More staff support at CWC (7)
12. New Public Health council member (6)
13. Groundwater governance: equity for private well users (5)
14. Build local capacity (5)
15. Half the implementation dollars should go to CLC (4)
16. Implementation (4)
17. Look for overlapping programs and assess opportunities to consolidate (3)
18. Prioritize collaboration because it builds community infrastructure and increases the opportunity for leverage (3)
19. FY28-29 Prioritize programs with track record of leveraging dollars with outside funding (3)
20. Make sure that some funding is available to fund innovative projects, some of which might fail, but some of which might be big opportunities (3)
21. Reward continuous improvement, adaptive management (2)
22. Delisting potential (2)
23. Leverage policy and investments by others (1)
24. Groundwater research and modeling (1)
25. Require/incentivize education, training, workforce development in funded programs? (1)
26. Groundwater governance: look at how regulations can be strengthened. Feedlots, GW protection rule. (1)
27. Stepped priority process:

1) Entity (water entities), projects/programs, watersheds WMOs (on the ground entities doing the work)

2) SWCDs (ONLY water related projects), look at request if already funded by department of ag

3) RESEARCH requests --only if money is left over

Next steps

It is important to Council members that input received translates into some sort of outcome for the Council. Both of the committees as well as the Council as a whole will have an opportunity to review the outcomes from the whole workshop as they consider future work plans, topics to address, or needs.

In the meantime, some of the next steps are already underway. As noted earlier, the outcomes from the workshop related to how to prioritize funds for the FY28-29 budget were immediately distilled into a survey. The outcomes from that survey have been described in a separate report.

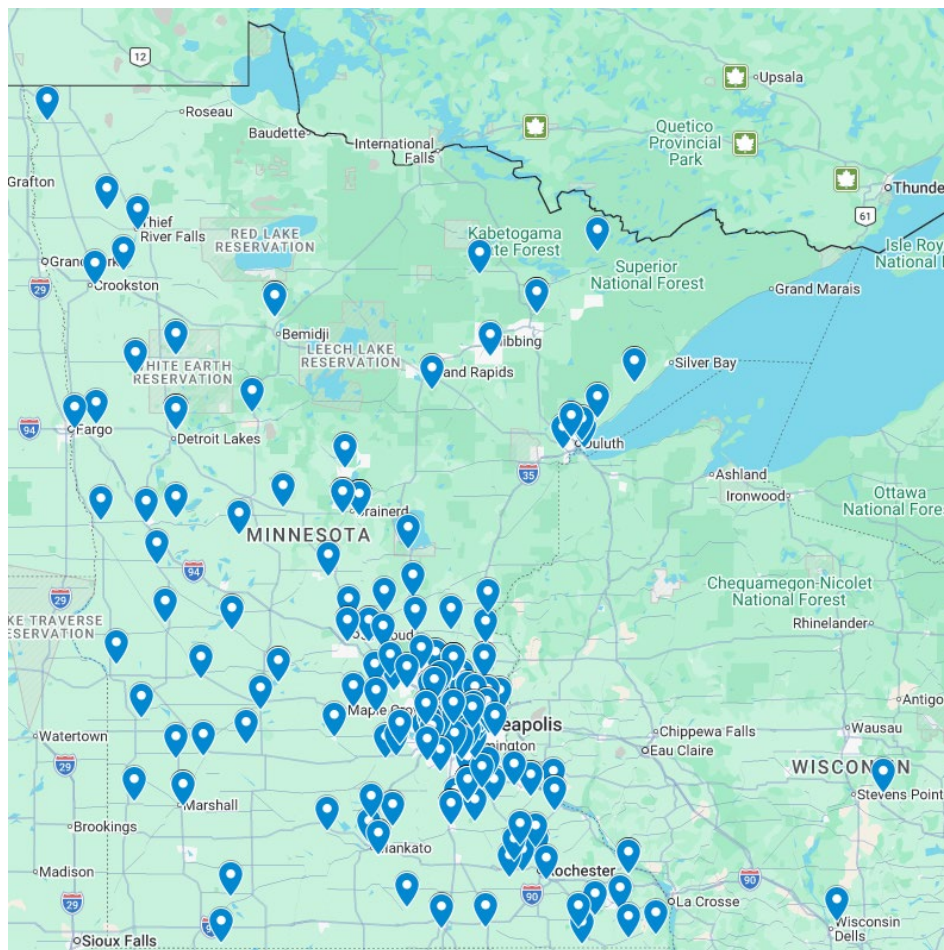
Following this budget process, the Council plans to “close the loop” and provide a summary of how input was used and how it helped to influence the final outcomes. Continued engagement is encouraged and welcomed as the Council works to set preliminary (September) and final (December) budget recommendations.

Considerations survey summary

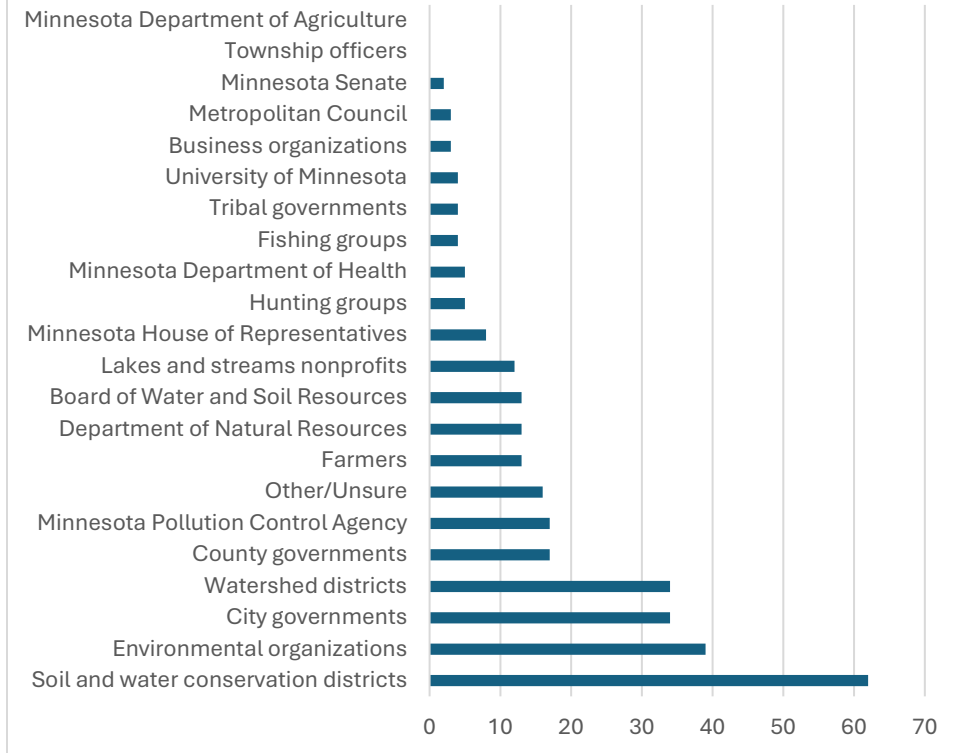
July 15, 2026

As a part of the final activity in the June 15 Clean Water Council meeting, participants were asked to draft “considerations” for how to set priorities for funding for the FY28-29 biennium. Those considerations were intended as just that—things for Council members to bear in mind as they make their recommendations. What was drafted was distilled down to 12 individual items, which were then put into a survey so people beyond just those in the room could share which they felt should carry more weight.

The survey was posted on June 24 and was open until July 7. Upon close of the survey, 308 people responded, representing 171 zip codes and all but two of the constituent groups.



Response Count



Each person had the option of voting for their top 5 considerations. The outcome of that ranking is below:

Consideration	Total Count
Invest in programs that prioritize clean water outcomes and enhance habitat and ecosystem services, improving conditions for fish and wildlife	191
Invest in implementation programs that are science-based and locally relevant	185
Invest in programs that improve water quality across Minnesota at the scale the challenge requires	166
Invest in programs with outcomes that are resilient and durable for the long term	165
Invest in maintaining and enhancing the current adaptive, watershed based, program focused approach to improving water quality	146
Invest in programs that leverage past research, fill identified gaps, and promote the ability to try new approaches to address water quality concerns	138
Invest in program and local staffing capacity needed to meet Clean Water Fund goals	125
Invest in programs that increase the likelihood for future success, such as research, workforce development, education and outreach, collaboration, etc.	103
Invest in programs that will produce near-term measurable results in water quality	87
Invest in programs that leverage outside funding	68
Invest in programs that consider equity and public health in program delivery	66
Invest in capturing and telling the story of how Clean Water Funds have enhanced water quality outcomes for Minnesota	58

Respondents could also offer an “other” for anything that was missing. Responses for that item included the following:

- GET RID OF PFAS
- #1 #2 #3 #4 #5 - only invest in programs that include measurable outcomes. So you'll need to finance benchmarking at the beginning, and then testing thereafter.
- I think more research is essential. As I mentioned once at a CWC meeting, a reasonable investment in research that is expected to result in improved water quality would be 10% of the total budget, assuming that the research goal is to learn how to make the CWC investments in would make CWC projects at 10% (or more) effective.
- Invest in concrete long term capital projects that protect water
- Be tough on the mining proposals for northern Minnesota. Why is that question not on your priority list?
- Invest in foundational data and support systems that facilitate data sharing, collaboration, and decision making.
- Invest in programs that deliver quantifiable environmental benefits in terms of documented pollutant reductions (e.g. PSIG program)
- Invest in programs that minimize flooding.
- Ensure investments are cost effective and best value
- Systems change
- Find way to standardize Impaired Waters data over the years to be able to properly assess our progress and failures over the years.
- Soil Health!
- Invest in readying the state for climate change adaptation.
- Invest in programs that fund needed infrastructure that clean up the water
- Invest in cover crops Invest in reduced tillage agriculture invest in small grain cultivation
- Work with the Ag community (real/actual farmers, not environmental groups posing as farmers), not against it.
- continued funding and development of the continuous nitrate network.
- Expand current programs with more dollars, or even to reevaluate programs to move the limited budgets to programs that make the best impact
- Continue to invest in the Watershed Based Implementation Funding.
- Invest in keeping staff long-term to reduce turnover and re-training expenses
- There is too much money spent in staffing. The goal of this money was not to hire more people and have more job titles. The purpose of this funding was to implement. Monitoring is great - but what do you expect to change if the only thing you are doing with the money is hiring people to sit at a desk to facilitate and organize and make rules.
- Programs that are aimed at protecting our water Aquifers for the long term.

Rationale

Respondents had the option to elaborate on their decision-making process, sharing why they chose the items they did. 28% of respondents chose to do so. Their responses have been summarized below:

Ecosystems

Clean Water Fund investments should focus on protecting and restoring the full health of aquatic ecosystems, not solely achieving chemical water quality targets. Many highlighted the importance of considering biological and physical integrity—including habitat, wildlife, fish communities, vegetation, and overall ecosystem function—as essential components of clean water success. Participants called for greater emphasis on nature-based solutions, watershed-scale approaches, and strategies that address root causes of degradation rather than relying only on short-term chemical treatments. Overall, respondents stressed that sustaining healthy ecosystems is fundamental to supporting human uses of water, including recreation, industry, and long-term community needs.

Infrastructure

Continued support for point source implementation is still needed. There is a multi-year backlog, these projects are increasingly expensive for local communities, and focused effort here can do some of the most important work to improve Minnesota's waters.

Financial leverage

Clean Water Fund investments should leverage other resources (other state, federal, private sources) in order to maximize overall impact. This can also help support broader, multi-benefit projects that improve water quality while also advancing habitat restoration, soil health, groundwater protection, and ecosystem resilience.

Local leadership and support

Respondents strongly emphasized that successful clean water efforts depend on empowering local leaders, partnerships, and watershed-based organizations to identify priorities and implement solutions. Many highlighted the importance of continuing support for Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF), One Watershed One Plan (1W1P), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and other local entities that work directly with communities, landowners, and partners. Participants noted that local organizations understand unique watershed needs, build trust with landowners, and are best positioned to deliver targeted, effective conservation practices. Stable funding and staffing capacity were viewed as essential to sustaining this locally led approach, leveraging additional resources, and ensuring long-term

progress toward Minnesota's clean water goals. Respondents emphasized that the state's role should be to support, coordinate, and provide resources for local action rather than replace local decision-making.

Longevity

Respondents expressed concern over the longevity of impacts from Clean Water Fund investments. Primarily, they want assurance that the funds are addressing root causes rather than short-term fixes, and that voluntary practices are not removed after the initial incentive period passes. Additionally, they want to know that investments being made now will improve water quality for future generations.

Measurable outcomes

Respondents consistently emphasized that Clean Water Fund investments should be accountable for delivering measurable, verifiable results. Many called for stronger monitoring, benchmarking, and reporting to demonstrate that funded practices produce lasting water quality improvements and to justify continued public and legislative investment. Participants stressed the importance of defining clear performance measures, evaluating projects over time, and prioritizing proven, on-the-ground implementation that can demonstrate meaningful progress toward clean water goals. Several also advocated for directing funding toward shovel-ready, high-impact projects, leveraging additional resources, and focusing on practices with durable, multiple benefits rather than unproven approaches. While some respondents expressed frustration with funding perceived as supporting administration over implementation, the overarching theme was that transparent measurement, accountability, and demonstrated outcomes are essential to maintaining trust and ensuring the effectiveness of Clean Water Fund investments, especially with efforts towards reauthorization on the horizon.

Outreach and engagement

Participants called for broader investments in education and workforce development for diverse audiences—including government officials, local leaders, farmers, businesses, students, and the general public. They acknowledge the crucial role of local staff for relationship building, and encourage increased funding to help expand and sustain their reach and impact. Several respondents also stressed the importance of long-term environmental education, particularly in schools, to foster informed stewardship and address the root causes of water quality challenges.

Policy

Strengthening policy, water governance, and accountability is needed to improve clean water outcomes. Key recommendations from respondents included establishing clearer definitions of measurable outcomes, increasing program accountability, and empowering the Clean Water

Council to provide stronger direction to agencies and the Legislature. Some respondents called for stronger regulatory approaches to addressing contamination concerns rather than relying on incentive-based, voluntary approaches. One encouraged the creation of a dedicated body at the state legislature focused on water policy, and another noted that some environmental review and permitting decisions should be shifted to higher levels of government with greater technical expertise. Together, respondents viewed policy leadership as critical to complement implementation efforts.

Scale

Minnesota's water quality challenges require solutions implemented at the scale of the problem. Many called for expanding investments in practices and programs that can produce statewide, measurable results, particularly by advancing systemic changes in agricultural practices rather than relying primarily on incentive-based approaches. Participants stressed that the state already has strong research, monitoring, and conservation programs, but that greater resources are needed to implement proven practices where they are most needed and at sufficient scale. They also highlighted the importance of addressing major, widespread drivers of water quality degradation—including land use, wetland loss, stormwater runoff, and public education—to achieve lasting improvements across Minnesota.

Science-based

Respondents emphasized that Clean Water Fund investments should be guided by science-based decision-making and watershed-specific data to maximize long-term water quality outcomes. Many called for greater investment in applied research, diagnostic monitoring, project targeting, and post-implementation evaluation to ensure conservation practices address the root causes of impairments and deliver measurable results. Participants also highlighted the importance of supporting watershed-based, nature-based, and biologically informed approaches over short-term fixes, while remaining open to innovation grounded in scientific evidence. Overall, respondents stressed that funding should prioritize strategies that are data-driven, cost-effective, and tailored to local conditions to achieve durable improvements in water quality.

Staffing and capacity

Appropriate staffing and capacity--especially at the local level--is viewed by respondents as being foundational to achieving clean water outcomes. They emphasized that local staff, including those at Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and watershed organizations are essential for project development, implementation, landowner outreach, public engagement, and sustaining watershed partnerships. Many noted that limited staffing capacity is a key barrier to completing projects and achieving the best outcomes, while also highlighting the need for workforce training, education, and operational support. Although a few respondents suggested

limiting investment in state agency staffing, the overall sentiment was that strengthening staffing capacity and reducing administrative burdens are critical to successful implementation and long-term water quality improvements.

Storytelling

Storytelling is essential for demonstrating the value and long-term impact of Clean Water Funds, particularly as the 2034 reauthorization approaches. Respondents stressed the importance of investing in professional, strategic communications to effectively reach Minnesotans statewide. They noted that the story should go beyond individual waterbody improvements to highlight broader outcomes, including increased participation, long-term protection, multiple benefits, leveraged funding, and lasting community impact. Strong storytelling was seen as key to building public understanding, sustaining support, and protecting future funding for clean water initiatives.

“Anything else?”

The final question invited participants to share final thoughts with Council members. 23% of respondents included something in this field. Those comments have been summarized below.

Watershed-based implementation and local capacity

A dominant theme was strong support for continuing and expanding Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF), One Watershed One Plan (1W1P), and local conservation partnerships. Respondents emphasized that long-term, predictable funding allows local governments, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and watershed organizations to build relationships, develop projects, and implement practices effectively. Local staffing capacity was repeatedly identified as essential to turning plans into measurable improvements.

Accountability, measurement, and demonstrating results

Many respondents called for clearer accountability, stronger monitoring, and better reporting to demonstrate the impact of Clean Water Fund investments. They encouraged having future investments tied to measurable outcomes, transparent reporting, and evidence that projects are producing lasting water quality improvements. Concerns were raised about whether funded practices continue after grants end and whether investments are producing measurable improvements. Respondents also stressed the importance of communicating results to the public ahead of Legacy Amendment reauthorization as demonstrating tangible results was viewed as critical for maintaining public trust and continued funding.

Pollution prevention, accountability, and regulatory approaches

Respondents called for stronger pollution prevention and accountability measures, emphasizing that Clean Water Fund investments should complement—not replace—regulatory action and polluter responsibility. Many supported policies that address pollution sources directly and create lasting system-level change.

Science-based decision making and research

Respondents supported science-based approaches that connect monitoring, research, and implementation. They called for better data to target investments effectively while ensuring research efforts translate into action and measurable improvements.

Long-term ecosystem health

Respondents emphasized that clean water investments should focus on protecting entire ecosystems, including habitat, biodiversity, groundwater, forests, wetlands, and aquatic life—not only chemical indicators. Nature-based solutions and source- or root cause-focused strategies were preferred over short-term treatments. Investments should address root causes of degradation and support resilient ecosystems that benefit both people and wildlife.

Funding priorities and investment efficiency

Respondents expressed differing views on how funds should be allocated, but many agreed that investments should maximize impact. Support was strong for projects with clear benefits, leveraged funding opportunities, and approaches that address priorities at meaningful scales. Some respondents raised concerns about funding being directed toward agency staffing, research, or administration rather than implementation.

Public engagement, education, and Legacy Amendment support

Respondents stressed that demonstrating the value of Clean Water Fund investments through clear communication, education, and storytelling will be essential to maintaining long-term public support.

Infrastructure and emerging challenges

Respondents identified infrastructure needs—including drinking water systems, stormwater management, wastewater systems, and PFAS treatment—as areas requiring investment. Emerging challenges such as AI data centers, groundwater availability, and climate-related impacts were also raised. There is a need to anticipate future water challenges and invest in infrastructure and planning that protect water supplies, public health, and Minnesota's long-term water security.

#	Program	Proposer	Brief Description	26-27 Amount	Proposed Change	Mean (Range)	BOC priority	BOC direction	Notes
46	CWC Administration	MPCA	This program funds the operation of the Clean Water Council and related expenses, including reimbursements, per diem, communications and engagement expenses, overhead, and staff.	\$922,000	Increase	43.8 (37-50)	High	Increase	Explore: what could be contracted vs. FTE? Support for FTE also.
18	Watershed Based Implementation Funds	BWSR	WBIF accelerates progress toward Minnesota's clean water goals by funding actions prioritized through local watershed and groundwater plans. This approach provides a dependable, equitable funding source that enables local and Tribal governments to target measurable outcomes and implement high-impact projects efficiently. By integrating local expertise with statewide data, WBIF increases consistency, reduces administrative burden, and ensures resources are used where they achieve the most benefit. Funded activities protect and restore surface waters, safeguard groundwater and drinking water sources, and improve water quality outcomes across diverse Minnesota watersheds.	\$88,100,000	Increase	43.6 (26-50)	High	Increase	Need to be realistic about how much is possible as a total.
40	Forever Green Initiative	MDA	The Forever Green Initiative (FGI) develops Minnesota-specific winter annual and perennial crops that provide continuous living cover to protect and restore surface and groundwater quality. Through integrated research, farmer adoption support, and market-building efforts, the program accelerates adoption of cropping systems that reduce nutrient loss, enhance soil health, and support farm profitability. Clean Water Fund support advances research, implementation, and partnerships that expand these crops across Minnesota's agricultural landscape. The program serves farmers, rural communities, and the public by promoting agricultural systems that deliver durable environmental and economic benefits.	\$5,000,000	Increase	43.3 (33-50)	High	Increase	Appreciation for leverage, split of interest in moderate or full increase. NRS connection.
36	Source Water Protection	MDH	Source water protection planning and implementation supports the efforts of local public water systems to identify issues that threaten their source of drinking water as well as opportunities and activities that help to protect it. Implementation of priority activities are supported with financial and technical assistance. Emerging water quality threats are identified through ambient monitoring of drinking water sources and finished water.	\$7,540,000	Increase	43.1 (35-50)	High	Increase	
33	WRAPS	MPCA	WRAPS Updates provide the scientific basis to LGUs for prioritizing and targeting watershed planning and implementation via 1W1P. WRAPS Updates can include, but are not limited to, stressor identification reports, TMDL reports, in-depth water body characterization, modeling, and enhanced studies, like lake protection reports. WRAPS Updates contain pollutant reduction and waterbody protection goals to guide the creation of a comprehensive watershed management plan and resulting protection and restoration implementation activities. WRAPS scientifically inform water quality permit programs to assist with appropriate level of regulation. Beyond the work the program does, MPCA's Watershed Program carries We Are Water for the CWC/CWF.	\$14,500,000	Hold Steady	43.1 (35-49)	High	Hold Steady	
17	One Watershed, One Plan	BWSR	The program funds evaluations and amendments of comprehensive watershed management plans developed through the One Watershed, One Plan program. The program supports voluntary, multi-jurisdictional partnerships among local and tribal governments to develop and implement prioritized, targeted, and measurable actions that protect and restore quality surface and groundwater. Plans guide use of state funds to high priority areas based on available data. By FY28-29, all initial 10-year plans will be complete. Maintaining plans through evaluation and amendments ensures plans stay relevant and useful, reflect new data, and engage local partners who were not part of the original planning process.	\$1,000,000	Hold Steady	43.1 (29-50)	High	Hold	
4	Legacy Partners	BWSR	The Clean Water Legacy Partners program funds implementation of high-priority projects that protect, enhance, and restore Minnesota's lakes, rivers, streams, groundwater, and drinking water sources. By advancing actions identified in state, local, and Tribal water management plans, the program delivers measurable water quality improvements in impaired and vulnerable waters. The program serves Tribal nations, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and local partners, expanding implementation capacity, strengthening collaboration, and ensuring Clean Water Fund investments reach diverse communities and priority waters statewide.	\$ 1,000,000	Increase	43.1 (27-50)	High	Increase	2 med

1	Surface and Drinking Water Protection Restoration (Projects and Practices)	BWSR	This project-specific competitive grant program provides Clean Water Funds to local governments to support the implementation of high priority surface and groundwater projects derived from state approved, locally adopted water management plans.	\$ 6,000,000	Increase	42.8 (36-49)	High	Increase	Drinking water impact, question of how high, 1 med
7	Southeast Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative	Olmsted County	This program will collaboratively address rising nitrate trends in groundwater on a regional scale by working with farmers to implement soil health practices on private land in SE MN where karst geology is prevalent and groundwater is susceptible to contamination. Protecting groundwater is imperative because it serves as our drinking water supply and sustains local industries and communities. Research confirms that converting traditional row crops to small grains, cover crops, and perennial hay and grazing systems reduces nitrate leaching, retains nitrogen, and limits erosion. The program could also be expanded statewide.	-	NEW	42.8 (34-50)		Merge	Interest in seeing continued conversations with BWSR. Maintain Olmsted innovations, possibly make competitive.
34	WRAPS	DNR	This program adds geomorphology, hydrology, and connectivity data to the WRAPS process and supports the Watershed Health Assessment Framework (WHAF), supplementing MPCA's biomonitoring and water chemistry data to promote robust watershed health assessments and bridge gaps in watershed science. MPCA and local water managers use DNR data to help identify root causes of water quality problems, compare restoration and protection strategies, and implement resilient, multiple-benefit solutions. The WHAF encourages resource managers, scientists, landowners, and others to explore extensive spatial data at nested watershed scales, without using desktop GIS. Users can save and share custom views, ecological health scores, and more.	\$4,750,000	Hold Steady	42.7 (33-50)	High	Hold Steady	
31	Private Well Initiative	MDH	The Private Well Initiative proposes a comprehensive approach to ensuring safe drinking water for the more than 1.1M Minnesotans who rely on private wells. Building on the work of existing state and local programs, the initiative improves understanding of contaminant occurrence in private wells; expands education, outreach, and technical assistance for well users; and strengthens partnerships with partners. The program increases public access to private well water quality data, develops model policies to better protect well users, is establishing a statewide well testing program, and supports targeted efforts to address nitrate contamination in southeast Minnesota.	\$6,000,000	Increase	42.6 (36-50)	High	Increase	
42	Stormwater Research Program	UMN	The program will lead to the development of new and revised stormwater practices and management techniques that are used on both public and private properties to prevent, minimize and mitigate the impacts of runoff to Minnesota's water resources. The program accomplishes this by investing the majority of the funds (~70%) into research through competitive or direct pass-through processes. Research is and will be conducted by a variety of Minnesota's academic institutions, public agencies, and private industry and by collaborations of all three. The program also provides technology transfer; training, outreach, and Extension education to Minnesota professionals, practitioners, and policy leaders.	\$1,600,000	Increase	42.3 (34-50)	High	Increase	1 hold steady. Interest in at least restoring to previous levels
59	River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment	MPCA	Minnesota monitors and assesses surface waters to meet Clean Water Act requirements and support water protection and restoration. The state evaluates water quality every two years, identifies impaired waters, and reports results to the U.S. EPA. Monitoring includes intensive watershed studies, trend and pollutant monitoring, and 10-year lake and stream assessments using physical, chemical, and biological data. The program coordinates partners, supports volunteer monitoring, manages and shares data, tracks long-term and climate trends, and produces reports and analyses to inform water quality management and policy.	\$18,900,000	Increase	42.3 (32-48)	High	Increase	Concern about degree of increase on such a large program. Support for nitrate sensor network.
3	Conservation Drainage (Multipurpose Drainage Management)	BWSR	This program provides financial and technical assistance to Minnesota's Public Drainage Authorities and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to facilitate planning, design, and installation of conservation practices on drainage systems that will result in water quality improvements. These practices promote retention of rainfall and runoff on the land, soil erosion reduction, and water quality improvement in drainage systems and receiving waters while maintaining agricultural production. The program is implemented through partnering with the state's public drainage system authorities, principally counties and watershed districts. The state's investment leverages local investment as the grants require a 10% local match.	\$ 2,000,000	Increase	42.3 (31-49)	High	Increase	

32	Chloride Reduction Program	MPCA	The MPCA Chloride Reduction program provides assistance, grants, training, and education & outreach to communities, permittees, and partner organizations to help reduce chloride at its source and protect water quality. Chloride is a permanent pollutant—it does not break down over time—so preventing it from entering the environment is the most effective and cost-efficient strategy for protecting both surface water and groundwater from chloride contamination.	\$1,300,000	Increase	42.1 (37-49)	High	Increase	2 members as hold steady (with one as potential increase), 1 medium. Connection to policy needs/ legislative action. Scale of challenge noted. Other state funding sources?
35	GRAPS	MDH	GRAPS serve an important purpose in the Water Management Framework aggregating existing state information and data to characterize groundwater and drinking water at a watershed scale. The information sharing begins with the generation of a GRAPS report providing the foundation of what is known regarding potential risks, monitoring data, along with the identification of strategies for LGUs to adopt to protect and restore groundwater and drinking water resources. Prior to the GRAPS initiative it was difficult for LGUs to obtain state agency data resulting in limited protection across the state.	\$3,500,000	Hold Steady	42.1 (36-48)	High	Hold Steady	Explore additional funding sources. One Increase.
6	Enhancing Landowner Adoption of Soil Health Practices for DW & GW Protection	BWSR	This program provides an opportunity for a large acre and participant increase in cover crop and soil health practice adoption. To reduce nitrate from leaching into our groundwater and running off into our surface waters, a shift in the cropping system is required. One component of this shift is the recommended use of cover crops to scavenge excess nitrogen from the soil. Cover crop adoption improves groundwater and surface water quality and benefits drinking water supply areas. Clean Water Funds will be made available to plant cover crops, provide payments to reduce risk, and purchase specialized interseeding equipment in one or two targeted areas within the state. This initiative can leverage existing NRCS financial assistance programs and will be implemented by SWCDs with partnership opportunities for Tribal governments.	\$ 9,486,000	Increase	42.1 (25-50)	High	Increase	
27	Nitrate in Groundwater	MDA	The MDA leads nitrate monitoring and reduction activities across Minnesota, with emphasis on areas with vulnerable groundwater. This work is done in partnership with the agricultural community and local governments. Funding supports activities that identify sources of nitrate contamination and evaluate and implement practices at the local level to reduce nitrate in groundwater. In addition to promoting, demonstrating, and encouraging adoption of fertilizer BMPs, the program engages in strategic efforts to increase vegetative cover in vulnerable areas; works with farmers and crop advisors in local advisory teams; conducts computer modeling to evaluate practices; monitors groundwater, provides technical support, and supports on-farm demonstration projects.	\$6,200,000	Increase	41.9 (35-48)	High	Increase	
22	Technical Assistance	MDA	The program helps to ensure accurate, scientific information is available to address water quality concerns in agricultural areas. Funding is used to evaluate conservation practices, demonstrate practices that protect water, share information about research and new technologies, and enhance outreach and education to the agricultural community and local partners. Technical assistance activities fill an important need for field demonstration and validation of practices to protect water quality. The MDA uses on-farm, edge-of-field monitoring to assess sediment and nutrient loss at the field scale and evaluate the effectiveness of conservation practices. These activities generate high-quality data and practical insights that inform WRAPS, 1W1P, as well as statewide models and decision-support tools.	\$3,200,000	Increase	41.7 (36-47)	High	Increase	
23	Native Mussel Restoration	DNR	Native freshwater mussels play a key role in contributing to clean waters in Minnesota. However, many mussel species are no longer present in sufficient numbers to repopulate rivers and streams. The DNR will use its expertise to propagate (grow) mussels and restore populations in Minnesota rivers. We propose to improve techniques and scale up production of mussel species and place them into their natural habitats. Funding will support collection, rearing, distribution, monitoring costs, and identification of new species and locations for restoration. These efforts will benefit Minnesotans by contributing to fishable and swimmable waters across the state.	\$700,000	Hold Steady	41.7 (30-49)	High	Increase	2 medium, 2 hold steady. Question of what capacity for increase there is.

38	County Geologic Atlas Part B	DNR	County Geologic Atlases provide information about the region's geology and groundwater: location and depth of aquifers, direction of water flow, pollution sensitivity, connections to surface waters, and other characteristics like natural quality and age of groundwater. This information is essential for local planning and environmental protection efforts. Water supply planning, source water protection, and well sealing programs are examples of local programs that need geologic and groundwater information. Other typical uses include providing information for permit applications, resource management, monitoring needs, and emergency response to contaminant releases.	\$200,000	Hold Steady	41.5 (26-50)	High	Hold Steady	1 med priority. DNR supports consistent funding with current capacity.
10	MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program	MDA	MAWQCP is a first-of-its-kind, voluntary initiative that supports the adoption of conservation practices on a field-by-field and whole-farm basis, whether the land is owned or rented. The program uses a comprehensive risk assessment process that evaluates every parcel and cropping scenario to identify and mitigate potential impacts to water quality. Producers work one-on-one with local agronomic and conservation professionals to assess risks and implement proven practices that protect water quality. This level of individualized, whole-farm evaluation and direct technical support is unmatched by any other program in the nation and provides a uniquely effective approach to protecting Minnesota's water resources.	\$ 7,000,000	Increase	41.5 (24-50)	High	50/50 Hold or Increase	3 med
44	Future of Drinking Water	MDH	This initiative arose from a 2016 Clean Water Council policy recommendation and companion appropriation. While the federal Safe Drinking Water Act provides a basic level of protection for customers of public water systems, this activity engaged local and national experts to develop an action plan that goes beyond current regulatory requirements to address emerging threats and ensure long-term safe public and private drinking water in Minnesota. With the release for the <i>Minnesota Drinking Water Action Plan</i> in 2025, the initiative now focuses on implementing the Plan and providing regular updates on progress and where there are key risks to address.	\$500,000	Hold Steady	41.3 (33-49)	High	Hold Steady	
29	Enhanced SSTS Program Support	MPCA	This is critical funding that supports SSTS programs at the state and county levels. State staff provide technical assistance to counties and support compliance for some of the most difficult enforcement cases that counties ask the MPCA to take over. Base funding is provided to support County implementation of their local SSTS program requirements (M.S. 115.55) including issuing permits, conducting inspections, identifying, and resolving non-compliant SSTS, and revising and maintaining SSTS ordinances. Additional funding is made available to counties for grants to homeowners to repair or replace noncompliant SSTS (septic systems).	\$6,881,000	Increase	41.2 (35-50)	High	Increase	1 hold steady
53	Lake Biological Monitoring and Assessment (formerly Lake IBI)	DNR	The program supports MPCA and Federal Clean Water Act evaluations by conducting biological surveys and aquatic life assessments for lakes. Fish-based Indices of Biological Integrity were developed and used to evaluate fish communities in 1,056 lakes within 47 watersheds to identify impairments, stressors and exceptionally healthy lakes. Monitoring has expanded to 13 northwestern watersheds. Standards to assess coldwater fish habitat in over 500 lakes have been developed, with assessments beginning once rules are promulgated. The program serves Minnesotans by informing watershed protection and restoration efforts, and by monitoring conditions and trends statewide.	\$3,050,000	Hold Steady	41.2 (35-47)	High	Hold Steady	
51	Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning	DNR	The Minnesota DNR's groundwater monitoring program collects long-term aquifer level data through a statewide network of 1,257 observation wells. This program provides essential information on groundwater trends, sustainability, and groundwater-surface water interactions to protect drinking water, water supplies, and groundwater dependent ecosystems. By analyzing water level changes alongside climate, land use and water demand, the program supports planning that prevents water shortages and protects lakes, streams, wetlands, trout streams, and calcareous fens. The program serves state and local water managers, communities and resource professionals by supplying reliable data, modeling and shared tools for sustainable groundwater management.	\$4,700,000	Hold Steady	41.2 (33-50)	High	Hold Steady	
58	Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern	MDH	MDH advances science-based public health responses to contaminants of emerging concern by strengthening health-based guidance development, water analysis, and laboratory quality assurance. Health Risk Assessment develops drinking water guidance, conducts risk assessments, engages stakeholders, and collaborates with state and federal partners. The Public Health Laboratory develops analytical methods and improves detection at lower concentrations. The Minnesota Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program ensures that accredited laboratories performing analytical water testing are accountable to standards that support defensible and accurate data. Clean Water Funds protect human and ecological health amid evolving contaminant risks.	\$11,850,000	Hold Steady	41.2 (32-50)	High	Hold Steady	

49	Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Program*	PFA	Through the Clean Water Council and the Clean Water Fund Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) framework, specific impaired and threatened water bodies are identified where pollutant reductions are needed to meet water quality standards. Watershed restoration and protection strategies are developed to guide implementation activities. The PSIG program provides grants to help municipalities construct wastewater, stormwater, and drinking water treatment projects when the Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) determines that higher levels of treatment are necessary to meet water quality goals. These include projects to meet Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements and water-quality-based effluent limits for phosphorus, chlorides, and other pollutants.	\$16,440,000	Hold Steady	41 (31-50)	High	Hold steady	
13	Working Lands and Floodplain Easements	BWSR	The program goal is to restore and protect riparian and floodplain areas across the state to improve and enhance water quality and wildlife habitat through limited term and perpetual easements with private landowners. The land targeted for this program is existing row crop agriculture within a riparian area or a mapped floodplain. Landowners have options to restore the easement to native vegetation or continue to generate income through uses that do not include row crop agriculture, with payment structure based on the proposed easement length and use.	\$ 2,000,000	Increase	41 (27-50)	High	Increase	
16	AgBMP Loan Program	MDA	This program provides low-interest loans (<3%) to farmers, rural landowners, and agriculture supply businesses to implement BMPs that prevent, reduce, or eliminate a water pollution problem. The program is administered by local governments and has very low transaction costs; revolving loan repayments fund additional projects. Demand for AgBMP loans greatly exceeds available resources and additional funding would allow for expanded projects and practices that help protect and restore water quality.	\$ 4,000,000	Increase	40.7 (35-48)	High	Increase	
55	Stream Flow Monitoring	DNR	Stream flow information is essential for understanding the state of Minnesota's waters. Clean Water funding has allowed the DNR to expand the network of stream gages that support planning and implementation for clean water protection and restoration. Specifically, stream flow data are needed to calculate pollution loads for Total Maximum Daily Load studies and pollution reduction plans. Through the Legacy Amendment the DNR will continue to maintain at least one stream gage in each of the 81 major watersheds to provide water quantity information in support of the State's long term water quality trend monitoring efforts.	\$5,650,000	Hold Steady	40.7 (35-46)	High	Hold Steady	
50	Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program*	PFA	Minnesota has many areas with significant numbers of noncomplying septic systems in close proximity that are polluting surface waters and groundwater. Local governments interested in community solutions submit projects to MPCA for ranking on the Project Priority List based on the density and condition of existing systems. The program provides technical assistance grants to help communities evaluate potential alternatives and prepare a community assessment report which is submitted for review to MPCA, and construction financing (loans and grants) for projects when they are ready to proceed.	\$200,000	Hold Steady	40.7 (31-50)	High	Hold Steady	
60	Groundwater Assessment	MPCA	reliable data on Minnesota's groundwater resources. Groundwater monitoring and assessment helps the MPCA, and its local and state partners, understand groundwater quality and investigate potential sources of contamination. The groundwater assessment program is responsible for: - Monitoring and evaluating the presence and concentrations of non-agricultural pollutants, including contaminants of emerging concern; - Modeling the interaction between groundwater and surface water;	\$2,000,000	Increase	40.5 (34-47)	High	Increase	Question about whether the lapse of the PFAS Blueprint funding means the increase is a supplant. 3 hold steady.

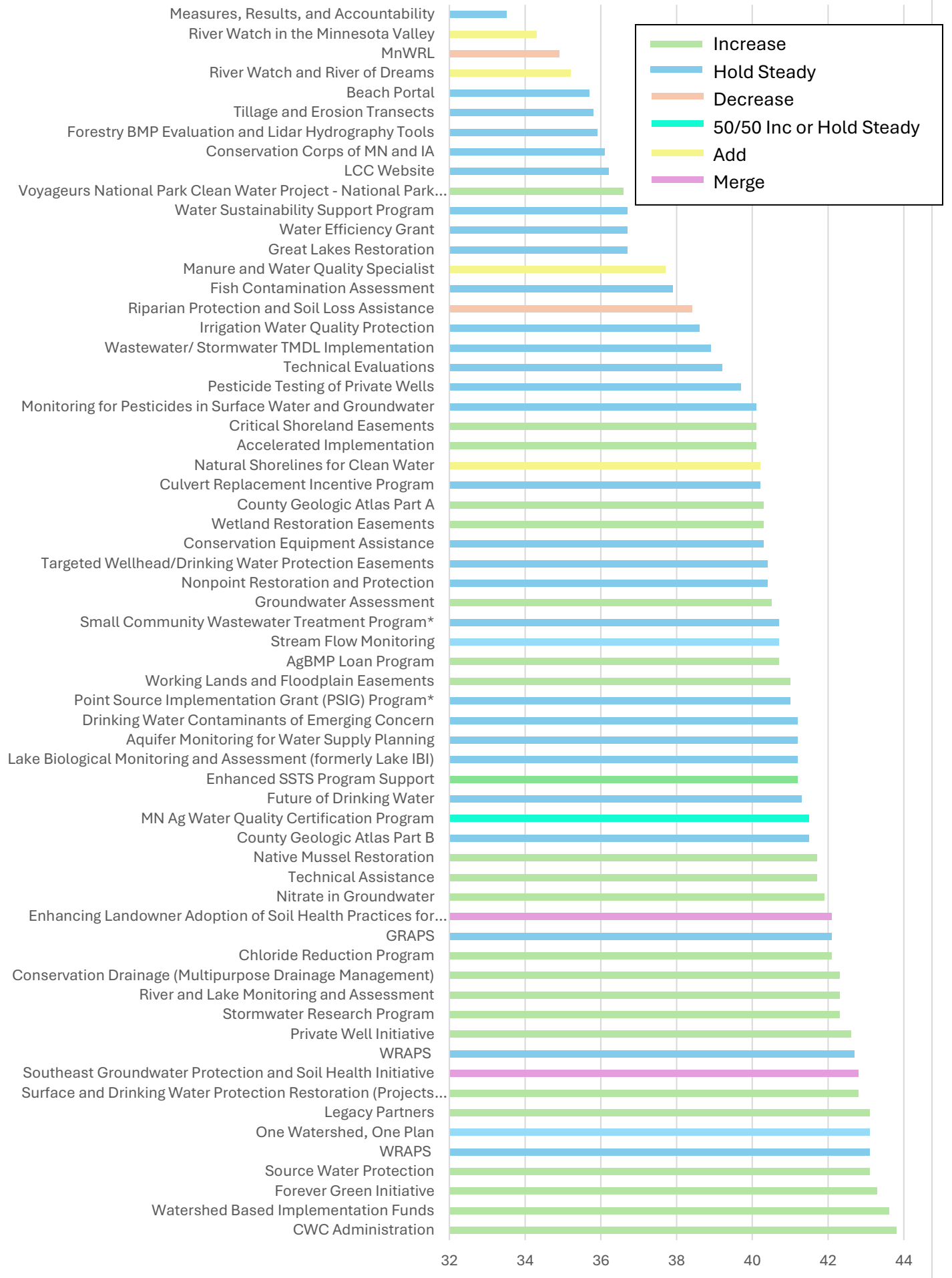
21	Nonpoint Restoration and Protection	DNR	This program supports the protection and restoration of water quality in streams and lakes through direct technical assistance, training, and tools to help local water managers prioritize, target, scope, design, construct or adopt recommended approaches, and quantify the anticipated and actual outcomes - from sediment and nutrient load reductions to multiple co-benefits. In partnership with other agencies and organizations, DNR Nonpoint staff work directly with local governments, local conservation groups, and landowners to help them compare implementation options and better understand approaches that address the root causes of water quality problems and improve watershed health.	\$4,350,000	Hold Steady	40.4 (33-47)	High	Hold	
14	Targeted Wellhead/Drinking Water Protection Easements	BWSR	The program goal is to ensure that the land use within a DWSMA is conducive to protecting or improving the drinking water that is impacted by the land use in areas that are vulnerable to contamination and protect the land via RIM easements or agreements with local units of government for fee title acquisitions.	\$ 5,000,000	Hold Steady	40.4 (28-48)	High	Hold Steady	
15	Conservation Equipment Assistance	MDA	This program supports MDA's Soil Health Financial Assistance Program (SHFAP), which provides grants to producers, producer groups, and local governments to purchase or retrofit equipment that promotes soil health practices. By expanding access to equipment for cover cropping, reduced tillage, managed grazing, and similar practices, the program improves soil structure, increases infiltration, and limits disturbance. These improvements directly protect water quality by reducing erosion and curbing sediment and nutrient runoff into Minnesota's waterways.	\$ 3,500,000	Hold Steady	40.3 (32-47)	High	Hold Steady	
12	Wetland Restoration Easements	BWSR	This program restores and permanently protects previously drained wetlands and adjacent uplands via RIM easements on private lands across the state for water quality and habitat benefits. The program utilizes a ranking and selection process and is locally implemented by SWCD staff. Restored wetlands benefit society by storing floodwaters, filtering pollutants, serving as a carbon sink, and providing habitat.	\$ 5,000,000	Increase	40.3 (29-50)	High	Increase	
37	County Geologic Atlas Part A	UMN	connection of aquifers to the land surface and to surface water. Geologic atlases provide maps and databases that are essential for improved ground and surface water management. This foundational data supports drinking water management, domestic and industrial supply, irrigation, and aquatic habitats. Atlases enhance education, provide technical assistance for management and regulation, and facilitate wise use of natural resources. They support permitting, land-use planning, wellhead protection, remediation, nutrient management,	\$800,000	Increase	40.3 (25-50)	High	Increase	1 med, 1 Hold Steady
9	Culvert Replacement Incentive Program	DNR	The program helps Minnesota communities modernize the state's more than 65,000 road-stream crossings by providing design expertise and funding natural channel and floodplain designs using the geomorphic approach. The program delivers three primary benefits. It ensures cleaner water by reducing soil erosion and allowing natural areas to filter pollutants. It supports healthier ecosystems by restoring fish passage and habitat. It also strengthens infrastructure, lowering maintenance costs and reducing the risk of washouts during floods. Ultimately, the program encourages local governments to adopt these high-performing designs as the standard for all future road projects.	\$ 2,800,000	Hold Steady	40.2 (30-50)	High	Hold Steady	Some appetite for more investment if capacity is there.
63	Natural Shorelines for Clean Water	DNR	We are proposing an integrated system to address the mounting challenges on Minnesota's most heavily used lakes. About half of Minnesota's natural shorelines have been altered or degraded, diminishing ecological function and lake water quality, as lawn-down-to-the-lake shorelines allow 7-9 times more pollutants to enter a lake than naturally vegetated shoreline. These pollutants accumulate in lakes, creating serious water quality problems. This proposal includes a Lake Steward program administered by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers and a lakeshore conservation easement program managed by Minnesota Land Trust for permanent protection of critical shoreland on popular lakes at risk for land use change. Another element of this overall effort will be submitted to the LCCMR to support a program to develop a certification and extension program for protection and restoration of natural shorelines.	NEW	NEW	40.2 (28-50)	High/Med	Fund	50/50 split on the priority level.
2	Accelerated Implementation	BWSR	This program is used to enhance the capacity of local governments to accelerate implementation of projects and activities that supplement or exceed current state standards for protection, enhancement, and restoration of water quality in lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater. Activities include 1) increasing technical assistance through regional technical service areas (TSAs), 2) technical training and certification, 3) inventories of potential restoration or protection sites, and 4) developing and using analytical infrastructure of the agency such as the targeting tool Prioritize, Target, and Measure Application (PTMAApp) and eLINK as well as funding to local governments to support staff participation in training and increased capacity to deliver priority water quality projects.	\$ 8,700,000	Increase	40.1 (33-47)	High	Increase	3 Hold steady, 5 increase
11	Critical Shoreland Easements	BWSR	The program goal is to protect lands adjacent to public waters with good water quality but threatened with degradation. Using the RIM program, conservation easements are acquired to protect existing high quality shoreland areas. The highest priority areas are targeted through science-based conservation methods.	\$ 1,000,000	Increase	40.1 (31-50)	High	Increase	

56	Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater	MDA	Funding supports the purchase and maintenance of laboratory instruments that provide greater capacity for pesticide monitoring throughout the state. Clean Water funding allowed the MDA to increase the number of detectable pesticides, increase the sensitivity of detection of certain pesticides, and increase the overall number of samples analyzed on an annual basis. This expansion allowed the MDA to test additional public water supply wells, lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands, including samples collected on Tribal lands. Data generated support pesticide management decisions to ensure	\$740,000	Hold Steady	40.1 (29-47.5)	High	Hold Steady	
57	Pesticide Testing of Private Wells	MDA	This program provides homeowners and the public with information about pesticide occurrence in private drinking water wells located in geologically vulnerable areas. Earlier phases of the program analyzed up to 133 pesticide compounds in private wells across agricultural areas with vulnerable groundwater. Those results identified the herbicides cyanazine and atrazine--and their degradates--represent the greatest pesticide-related risks to private well users. Building on these findings, upcoming sampling will prioritize these compounds, along with nitrate and select neonicotinoid insecticides and fungicides in vulnerable aquifers, to ensure continued monitoring of contaminants most likely to affect groundwater quality.	\$1,000,000	Hold Steady	39.7 (22-48)	High	Hold Steady	
20	Technical Evaluations	BWSR	State law requires evaluations be conducted on restoration projects completed with funds from the Clean Water Fund (M.S. 114D.50). As provided by law, BWSR is the responsible agency for Clean Water Fund restoration evaluations. This proposal is a continuation of the required restoration evaluations that were initiated in 2012. These evaluations assess project performance to ensure and improve conservation outcomes across the state. DNR and BWSR elected to combine administration and reporting for three statutory requirements in a single Legacy Fund Restoration Evaluation program.	\$200,000	Hold Steady	39.2 (35-45)	Medium	Hold	2 high priority
48	Wastewater/ Stormwater TMDL Implementation	MPCA	Funding for these program areas advances point source water pollution reductions by supporting point source implementation work, notably 1) integrating the watershed approach and pollutant restrictions into point source stormwater and wastewater discharge permits; 2) incorporating stormwater and wastewater point source discharges into TMDL projects and watershed restoration and protection strategy (WRAPS) reports; 3) supporting technical assistance for wastewater and stormwater permittees in achieving pollutant reductions; and 4) creating more opportunity for water quality pollutant trades.	\$3,200,000	Hold Steady	38.9 (29-48)	High	Hold Steady	
26	Irrigation Water Quality Protection	MDA	Funding supports an irrigation water quality specialist through a contract with the University of Minnesota Extension to address water quantity and water quality issues in Minnesota's irrigated regions. The specialist conducts applied research, develops technical guidance and publications, provides education and outreach on irrigation and nitrogen BMPs, and contributes to the development of irrigation scheduling tools for Minnesota irrigators. Farmers, crop advisers, and SWCD staff benefit from expanded education, training, and direct technical support, and the practices help reduce nitrate leaching losses from irrigated crop production to groundwater.	\$310,000	Hold Steady	38.6 (24-48)	High	Hold	1 medium, like the prevention component. Small but mighty program.
19	Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance	BWSR	This program supports soil and water conservation districts in providing technical assistance to landowners, conducting ongoing monitoring and compliance tracking, and assisting with local enforcement of the Minnesota buffer law. This work is the foundation of ongoing compliance with the buffer law and needed to fund the SWCD efforts prior to any handoff for potential enforcement by a county or watershed district (enforcement entities receive Riparian Aid not CWF dollars).	\$4,000,000	Hold Steady	38.4 (31-49)	Medium	Reduce	
52	Fish Contamination Assessment	DNR	The program analyzes fish tissue to detect mercury and other contaminants. The information collected is then used by the MPCA to determine whether lakes are impaired for these contaminants, and by MDH in establishing fish consumption advisories. Fish consumption advisories are for the Minnesota public to determine how much wild caught fish can be safely eaten from Minnesota waters.	\$1,100,000	Hold Steady	37.9 (29-46)	High	Hold Steady	Encouragement to look at game (ducks, geese, etc.)
45	Manure and Water Quality Specialist	MDA	Funding will support a manure land application and water quality specialist to develop and promote BMPs and update guidance, with a focus on regions at elevated environmental risk, including SE and Central Minnesota. Data from the USDA and MDA indicate that nutrients from manure are frequently under credited when farmers calculate the total amount of nitrogen applied to the crop, resulting in overapplication of commercial fertilizer. Improving manure crediting accuracy--and ensuring manure is applied at the right time, in the right place, in the right amount, and from the right source--will reduce nitrate leaching from manured fields to groundwater and decrease manure related runoff to surface water. The UMN's current manure program would benefit from additional staff capacity dedicated to land application technologies, producer support, and technical assistance. The position will strengthen statewide efforts to improve nutrient management, protect vulnerable water resources, and support farmers in implementing practical, science-based BMPs.	\$-	NEW	37.7 (16-46)	High	Fund	Likely starting around the same as the Irrigation Water Quality Specialist position.

24	Great Lakes Restoration	BWSR	This grant funding provides support to SWCDs in the Lake Superior Basin to leverage Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) or other federal Great Lakes funding to implement prioritized projects consistent with the GLRI's Action Plan, already identified through WRAPS, and Comprehensive Watershed Management Plans developed through 1W1P.	\$1,000,000	Hold Steady	36.7 (28-50)	Split H/M	Hold	1 increase
8	Water Efficiency Grant	MC	The program provides grants to assist municipalities in the 7 county Twin Cities metro area as they implement water demand reduction and water efficiency measures to ensure the reliability and protection of drinking water supplies and support resiliency of water suppliers. This program provides funding to residents in the region that currently get their drinking water from a municipality to purchase water efficient appliances which reduces the demand on ground and surface water sources. It also provides funds to communities that supply water to improve the efficiencies of their systems and facilities, also reducing water use and demand on our valued water resources.	\$ 1,400,000	Hold Steady	36.7 (27-43)	Medium	Hold Steady	
28	Water Sustainability Support Program	Met Council	The Twin Cities metro region's steady population growth, increased groundwater pumping, changing land use, and variable climate is challenging our ability to meet demands for current and future water supply. This program supports efforts and programs to: ensure supplies of potable water are adequate for the region's current and future population, protect and enhance surface water quality, ensure uninterrupted economic growth and prosperity, avoid conflict over water sustainability, foster collaboration to address regional water challenges and limitations, conduct investigations into groundwater and surface water interaction, looks at ways to minimize impacts from this on both our drinking water and surface waters, and support the residents of the metropolitan area.	\$2,750,000	Hold Steady	36.7 (23-45)	Medium	Hold	2 high priority
30	Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project - National Park Water Quality Protection Program	Voyageurs National Park Clean Water JPB	These projects protect and restore water quality at the primary public access points to Minnesota's only national park and the nation's only water-based national park. FY28-29 funding of \$7,400,000 will support implementation of sanitary sewer system expansions, system upgrades and planning efforts, and related water quality protection infrastructure in remaining high-risk areas adjacent to Voyageurs National Park and downstream waters connected to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The proposed projects reduce nutrient loading, pathogen contamination, and groundwater degradation while protecting drinking water, recreational waters, and nationally significant aquatic resources.	\$1,500,000	Increase (\$7,400,000)	36.6 (20-45)	High	Increase	Caution about increasing to the 7.4M amount. Support of an increase of some amount though.
47	LCC Website	LCC	The LCC has been tasked with developing and maintaining a website that shows how revenues generated by the Legacy Amendment and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund are utilized. It is required by law.	7000	Hold Steady	36.2 (15-50)	High	Hold Steady	Required by law.
25	Conservation Corps of MN and IA	BWSR	Since 2012, BWSR has contracted with CCMI for delivery of services (restoration, maintenance, training, and other activities) to provide additional capacity to Minnesota's local governments. This funding request also includes delivery of service to provide additional capacity to Tribal nations. Prior to FY26-27, the funding was legislatively directed in appropriation language and previously used Surface and Drinking Water Protection/Restoration Grants or Accelerated Implementation funding sources.	\$1,500,000	Hold Steady	36.1 (26-50)	Medium	Hold	2 high
54	Forestry BMP Evaluation and Lidar Hydrography Tools	DNR	The Guideline Monitoring Program monitors the implementation of forest management guidelines (FMGs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) at logging sites across Minnesota's forested watersheds. We analyze data on FMG/BMP implementation to identify risks to water quality and provide training and advising for forest managers and loggers to implement sustainable forestry practices. The Lidar Hydrography Program generates Minnesota's official statewide elevation data through lidar technology, enabling precise mapping of the state's landscape features that influence surface water movement and infiltration to groundwater. Specializing in 3D data collection and terrain analysis, the team develops authoritative digital contours, elevation models, hydrography, and watershed boundaries.	\$1,400,000	Hold Steady	35.9 (14-47)	High	Hold Steady	3 mediums. Interest in having GF pay. Could have tighter tie to clean water outcomes.

43	Tillage and Erosion Transects	BWSR	The Tillage and Erosion Transects survey is a comprehensive, long-term program to systematically collect data on high residue cropping systems and cover crop adoption to produce county, watershed, and statewide estimates of soil erosion caused by water and wind. This valuable information can then be used by local and Tribal government staff to help them reach their water quality goals by using the information to both identify critical areas, and to select and prioritize potential projects based on a more accurate estimate of projected impacts.	\$850,000	Hold Steady	35.8 (12-45)	High	Hold Steady	
41	Beach Portal	MDH	Beach monitoring determines if beach water is safe for recreational activities and minimizes the risk of waterborne illnesses. Funding from the 2024-2025 CWFs established Minnesota Beach Portal (launching summer 2026), the first centralized source for statewide beach monitoring results and trends. This proposal will optimize the portal through evaluating and expanding its functionality, ensuring Minnesotans can access beach alerts for anywhere in the state. This proposal aligns with the vision of the Clean Water Council that Minnesota will have fishable and swimmable waters throughout the state. Furthermore, it makes Minnesota aware of crucial issues impacting water quality.	\$600,000	Hold Steady	35.7 (15-46)	Medium	Hold Steady	1 low, 1 high
61	River Watch and River of Dreams	Red River Board	The Red River Basin River Watch (RW) and River of Dreams (ROD) programs provide hands-on watershed education for K-12 students across the Red River of the North Basin. The programs connect youth to local rivers through field-based learning, water quality monitoring, and creative exploration. Their purpose is to build environmental literacy and stewardship by increasing understanding of non-point source pollution, its impacts, and key watershed health concepts. By engaging students, educators, and communities, the programs support improved water quality awareness, long-term protection of MN's waters, and development of the next generation of informed watershed stewards.	NEW (\$350,000)	NEW	35.2 (17-48)	High	Fund	Question if this should be funded directly or if it would be a grant program within the MPCA, who has directed funding to them in the past when the legislature directed it. Or BWSR Com \$\$.
39	MnWRL	MDA	The Minnesota Water Research Digital Library (MnWRL) is a user-friendly, searchable inventory of water research relevant to Minnesota. It provides access to peer-reviewed articles, technical reports, and CWF-supported documents, including MPCA WRAPS, and BWSR 1W1P reports. MnWRL enables water managers, researchers, and residents to easily find and share research information that informs science-based decisions to protect, conserve, and restore Minnesota's water resources. By centralizing thousands of publications, MnWRL improves transparency, reduces duplication, and accelerates adoption of BMPs statewide.	\$100,000	Decrease	34.9 (26-45)	High	Decrease	(Update to application: MDA supports decrease for this program).
62	River Watch in the Minnesota Valley	Friends of the Minnesota Valley	River Watch is a hands-on learning program operated by Friends of the Minnesota Valley for students in 28 high schools and in some middle schools during the 2025-2026 school year. Beginning with an in-classroom lesson aligned with state Science standards, students make 2 trips per semester to a river or stream to conduct water quality monitoring using a multi-function electronic probe and other tools. Macroinvertebrate surveys are conducted during the stream visits. Data is reported through the MPCA Citizen Science Portal. Most work is in the Minnesota River Basin, two High Schools serving Latino and Indigenous students in Minneapolis participate.	NEW (\$150,000)	NEW	34.3 (17-48)	High	Fund	Likewise would want to see this overseen by a state agency. Need to explore what this would look like.
5	Measures, Results, and Accountability	BWSR	This funding provides the required oversight and accountability for the Clean Water Funds that MN Board of Water & Soil Resources administers to measure, track, and communicate the results of projects, ensuring effective and high-quality investments of funds with measurable water quality results. Central to these efforts is eLINK, the agency's grant management system, which features grants tracking from application to reporting, contract management, and tracking of outcomes, including pollution reduction estimates. BWSR also administers a grant reconciliation process, through which staff conduct field visits with grant recipients to ensure compliance with state policies, guidance and fiscal best management practices.	\$ 2,500,000	Increase	33.5 (12-44)	High	Hold Steady	3 inc (1 moderate), 2 med

Programs by mean average evaluation score, ascending



Outcomes from the July 10 BOC meeting

July 15, 2026

The July 10 meeting of the Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) served as the first opportunity for Council members to begin sharing program priorities in comparison to each other. The outcome of this meeting is included later in this document, and is intended to serve as a starting point for the discussion in the meeting of the full Clean Water Council on Monday, July 20. In that meeting, this list and rationale are expected to change, with the goal being clear direction from the Council as to where to focus funding in the draft budget amounts being shared from proposers.

BOC Process overview

With nearly half of the programs seeking an increase for the FY28-29 biennium, BOC members were asked to identify their top 5-10 programs they would most want to see an increase for. They were asked to think not only of their own preferences, but what they heard from interested parties, what was shared through the survey regarding prioritization considerations, the rubric scores, and needs and opportunities to restore and protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.

Each member was asked individually to share their top ten. This was tracked in a spreadsheet, with a tally for each time a program was mentioned. The list was then sorted to show greatest agreement at the top. At that point, members were invited to share *why* the program was a part of their top ten, which was recorded in the “Rationale” column.

Initial discussions were started regarding which programs to consider for a decrease, and which “Hold Steady” programs to protect from a decrease. However, those discussions were held after members needed to start leaving and at the end of the meeting, so it is recommended that the conversation restart at the Council meeting on July 20.

BOC meeting outcomes

The outcomes from the top ten exercise are included below, showing program name, the support level indicated during the proposal review process, frequency of support (out of eight members present), and the rationale offered in the meeting. For the purpose of provoking discussion in the July 20 meeting, they have been split here into tiers: Tier 1 as those programs which were included in at least half of the BOC members’ top ten list, Tier 2 as those still identified but by fewer than half the BOC members. Programs listed through the budget process as being supported for an increase but were not named in anyone’s top ten are included as a Tier 3. A proposed direction to

accompany those tiers is included in the descriptions, again to support the start of discussion in the meeting.

It should be reiterated that, with more eyes and perspectives engaged in the broader Council meeting, this grouping is anticipated to change as a result of the July 20 meeting. Disagreement regarding any of these is welcome.

Tier 1

- Programs included in the top ten list for at least half of the BOC members present on July 10
- Possible direction to proposers: Emphasize increases here first, but do not wipe out total available for increase.

Program name	Council Priority	BOC top 10	Rationale
Forever Green	High	8	High public support Fits first five considerations from survey Potential source of ag systems change and innovation Appreciation for leverage Great communication and outreach from program High rubric score mean average
WBIF	High	7	High Public support High rubric score mean average Strong alignment with strategic plan Enables local and tribal governments to pursue measurable outcomes Community-driven plans Honor the past investments of developing the plans Science-driven Strong relationship to top considerations Implementation--the outcome of the water management framework Focus on that program over time with developed plans--need funding Tremendous amount of collaboration cultivated by this program
Clean Water Council Admin	High	6	Got highest rubric score Council has taken on a more proactive approach--need increase capacity to maintain this Public engagement increase in staff roles 2034 horizon
Merged BWSR/Olmsted Soil Health	High	5	Financial leverage of historic soil health funds Innovation of soil health funds Implementation on the ground
Critical Shoreland Easements	High	4	Permanent impact of CWF dollars Shorelands are disappearing--proactively protect what we have Protection cheaper than restoration

			Protect Upper Miss--crown jewel and Drinking water source for about 25% of Minnesotans Nature-based solutions Fish and wildlife benefits Science-based High alignment with priority considerations High impact for lower investment
Working Land and Floodplain Easements	High	4	Long-term impact past 2034 Produces direct, tangible impact for groundwater, wildlife Storage to reduce flooding, slow runoff Build climate resilience High impact for lower investment
Wetland Easements	High	4	Long-term impact past 2034 Produces direct, tangible impact for groundwater, wildlife Storage to reduce flooding, slow runoff Build climate resilience High impact for lower investment
Source Water Protection	High	4	Preserve what we can now before contaminated Drinking water protection specifically Important to local public water systems Strong public support
Conservation Drainage/Multi-purpose Drainage Management	High	4	Critical to soil health, lake and stream health--drainage impacts a lot more than just the field it is draining from Comprehensive engineering approach that addresses drainage elements to make fixes where appropriate Maintain drainage with conservation, adding opportunities for infiltration and storage Leverages additional funds Addresses upstream inputs to downstream impairments Complementary with other programs, including easement programs Direct and measurable reductions High level of collaboration

Tier 2

- Programs included in top ten by BOC members, but by fewer than half present
- Possible direction to proposers: Still work to ensure meaningful increase but as second priority

Program name	Council Priority	BOC top 10	Rationale
Legacy Partners	High	3	Directly supports implementation in an innovative way Direct support for tribal partners across the state Support in public comments Top ten of rubric mean average Supports established water management plans Support non-competitive tribal grants through an increase

Drinking Water Easements	High	3	Protection cheaper than restoration Science-based Nature-based solutions Long-term impact Add climate resilience Drinking water as a strong reason for public support of the Legacy amendment
Chloride Reduction	High	3	Chloride is an increasing challenge for surface water and groundwater across the state Science-based Want to see it grow further than Smart Salting training Strong public support
AgBMP Loans	High	3	Good use of funding--loans that are paid back and reutilized Helps move adoption and innovation Strong public support
Natural Shorelines (NEW)	High/Med	3	Engagement of stakeholders in implementation, community involvement and stewardship Social program that can help change attitudes Disappearing shorelines Habitat Easement benefits listed above Minnesota Land Trust engagement, adds another option for landowners to engagement in voluntary permanent protection
Nitrate in Groundwater	High	3	Nitrate as a threat to drinking water across the state Challenge for nitrate is greater than the investment received so far Support changes in practices
Native Mussels	High	2	Ecosystem services, support for fish and wildlife Restoring native species to rivers Nature-based solutions Innovation and science-based approach Improve fishable and swimmable
Accelerated Implementation	High	2	Technically- and science-driven High level of innovation Targeted using local input, 1W1P
MAWQCP	High	2	Technical, whole farm planning and assessment Existing program that needs continued support Increasing buy-in and momentum, voluntary Tie-ins with other programs we are providing funding to
Point Source Implementation Grant	High	2	Support municipalities This work continues to be needed
River Watch (both programs)	High	2	Community and youth engagement aspect, connection with the schools Social change, build water literacy Increase funding to diverse audiences

Stormwater Research Program	High	1	Stormwater world's forever green program--research to find the solutions that will work Strong public support and awareness of need Impacts other programs--what is learned here makes other programs stronger Water reuse connection
Surface Water and Drinking Water Protection Restoration	High	1	Strong level of local engagement by multiple partners Drinking water as a strategic plan priority
River and Lake Monitoring	High	1	Without it, we don't know if we have a problem Need it to see outcomes of our efforts Data is valuable to evaluate how we are doing and what is needed
Technical Assistance	High	1	Research on feasibility and effectiveness of solutions we are trying to implement
Manure and Water Quality Specialist (NEW)	High	1	Changes in feedlot rules and regulations are creating an opportunity to work with farmers and address nitrate, particularly in vulnerable parts of the state Economic impact for the state Cover (alfalfa, etc.) to help provide other benefits to the state Ag Irrigation Water Quality Specialist program as a model--has been effective Enhance end results of MAWQCP Support for ag sector during tough economic times
Private Well Initiative	High	1	High rubric score Over 1 million Minnesotans get their drinking water from private wells, supports drinking water for Minnesotans Specific measure named in the CWC strategic plan
Groundwater Assessment	High	1	Groundwater quality assessment, increase for PFAS focus

Tier 3

- Programs not included in a top 10 list from BOC members but were listed as “increase” by the Council during the proposal review process
- Possible direction to proposers: Continue to increase as funds are available

Program Name	Council Priority
Enhanced SSTS Program Support	High
County Geologic Atlas Part A	High
Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project	High