

Clean Water Council Meeting Agenda

Monday, August 24, 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
- **(INFORMATION ITEM)** Chair and staff updates

9:15 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.

9:30 (INFORMATION AND ACTION ITEM) Policy Committee Update

The Policy Committee Chair will provide a brief overview of current discussions and then seek approval of the draft chloride deicers policy statement for use in a feedback session at the Water Resources Conference.

9:50 (INFORMATION AND ACTION ITEM) Budget and Outcomes Committee Update

While the majority of this meeting will focus on budget elements, this update will cover discussions which took place at the last BOC meeting as well as motions regarding two programs that may have budgetary implications.

10:10 (INFORMATION ITEM) Review of homework outcomes

The BOC acknowledged and appreciated the strong alignment between Council direction and the memo submitted by the Interagency Coordination Team (ICT). With numbers available to discuss for the first time, the budget development process can become less abstract. Council members were asked to review the budget memo offered by the ICT as well as the draft budget amounts for nonagency programs suggested by the BOC and identify what changes they would want to see made. This agenda item will review the outcomes of that review to help introduce how the rest of the day will go.

10:30 BREAK

10:45 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Discussion of draft budget amounts

We will go through the nonagency programs first, and then turn attention to programs for which changes are suggested, beginning with those where increases are desired.

12:00 LUNCH

12:30 (DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEM) Discussion of draft budget amounts continued

Any final adjustments to the draft budget, or direction for deeper conversation for the BOC, should be offered at this time.

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

Reducing Chloride Pollution from Winter De-icing Chemicals

Summarized Policy Statement

The Clean Water Council recommends that the State of Minnesota implement the following actions to reduce chloride pollution from winter de-icing chemicals (salts) in Minnesota's surface water and groundwater.

Highest Priority Recommendations

While all recommendations are important and interconnected, the Clean Water Council identifies the following as especially critical near-term actions for the legislature to consider:

(1) Implement a granular salt fee

A granular salt fee would create a direct market incentive to reduce unnecessary salt use, encourage innovation and efficiency, and generate sustainable funding for chloride reduction efforts, research, training, and remediation.

(3) Investigate feasible approaches for restoration and remediation.

Minnesota currently lacks a practical strategy for addressing the growing inventory of waters impaired by chloride pollution. Research is needed to identify feasible remediation technologies and long-term management approaches.

(5) Incorporate low salt design standards into building and site development.

Many sites are unintentionally designed in ways that require excessive salt use. Updating development standards can reduce long-term winter maintenance needs while improving safety and reducing costs.

(6) Require Smart Salting for state contracts and facilities.

The State of Minnesota should lead by example by requiring best practices and certified applicators for publicly funded winter maintenance activities.

(7) Establish an occupational licensure program for winter maintenance professionals.

Similar to Minnesota's pesticide applicator licensing program, winter maintenance professionals should meet standardized training and competency requirements because their work directly affects public safety and environmental health.

Full List of Recommendations

Incentives & Financial Sustainability

(1) Implement a granular salt fee.

(2) Sustain and enhance funding for the MPCA's Chloride Reduction Program including the Smart Salting training and certification program. *Included here for the grant and technical assistance elements of the program.*

Research & Remediation

- (3) Investigate feasible approaches for restoration and remediation.
- (4) Provide research funds to develop new technology, best management practices, and alternatives to chloride-containing de-icing chemicals.

Standards & Requirements

- (5) Incorporate low salt design standards into building and site development.
- (6) Require Smart Salting for state contracts and facilities.
- (7) Establish an occupational licensure program for winter maintenance professionals.
- (8) Develop standardized labeling requirements for de-icing chemicals sold in Minnesota.
- (9) Expand requirements for proper storage of de-icing chemicals.

Data & Accountability

- (10) Expand and strengthen chloride monitoring statewide

Risk & Liability

- (11) Provide liability protection for certified applicators using best practices.

Awareness & Behavior Change

- (12) Establish a statewide community-based social marketing campaign.
- (2) Sustain and enhance funding for the MPCA's Chloride Reduction Program including the Smart Salting training and certification program. *Included again here for the training program contribution to behavior change.*

These actions are further expanded under the "Recommendations" section.

Additional Considerations

Recommendations 7 (occupational licensure) and 11 (liability protection) are especially important because they address major barriers to behavior change in the winter maintenance industry. Many applicators continue to overapply salt due to liability concerns, inconsistent training standards, and lack of professionalization within the industry. Creating clear standards and protections can support safer and more sustainable practices statewide.

From 2016-2025 a limited liability bill was introduced at the Minnesota Legislature, modeled after a limited liability bill that passed in New Hampshire. Despite many attempts, common ground for the liability language has not been found over the ten-year life of the bill. In light of this, local governments have begun to explore the feasibility of local licensing requirements though a state-level program would ensure consistency and lessen the burden on local governments to deliver a program locally.

Recommendations 2 (MPCA Chloride Reduction Program funding) and 4 (research funding) also represent areas where the Clean Water Council can have particularly strong influence in the near term through funding recommendations and program support. Expanding research, technical assistance, and Smart Salting training capacity can deliver immediate and measurable reductions in chloride use while supporting broader long-term implementation of the Council's recommendations.

Problem Statement

Chloride pollution from the application of de-icing salt for winter maintenance of roads, parking lots, and sidewalks disrupts aquatic ecosystems, alters food webs, damages soil, damages infrastructure, and contaminates groundwater and drinking water. Many waterbodies in the state have elevated levels of chloride pollution, with trends continuing upward. Further, a study by the University of Minnesota and referenced in the Statewide Chloride Management Plan found that about 70% to 78% of salt applied in the Twin Cities for winter maintenance is either transported to groundwater or remains in the local lakes and wetlands.

Chloride is considered a “permanent” pollutant because it does not degrade over time through typical environmental processes. Additionally, there is no practical way to remove chloride once it enters a waterbody, so it accumulates over time. As the adage goes, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” making source control the most practical and cost-effective strategy. Addressing chloride pollution will require a broad range of knowledge building, behavior change, implementation activities, and policy measures. At the same time, a remediation pathway must be investigated to address the existing and growing inventory of waters impaired by excess chloride.

Winter de-icing salts are among the primary sources of chloride pollution in Minnesota waters. The Minnesota Statewide Chloride Management Plan addresses pollution caused by de-icing chemicals, fertilizers, and water softeners. The Clean Water Council has an independent policy statement related to reducing chloride pollution from water softening to address the Wastewater Treatment Plan (WWTP) pollutant stream.

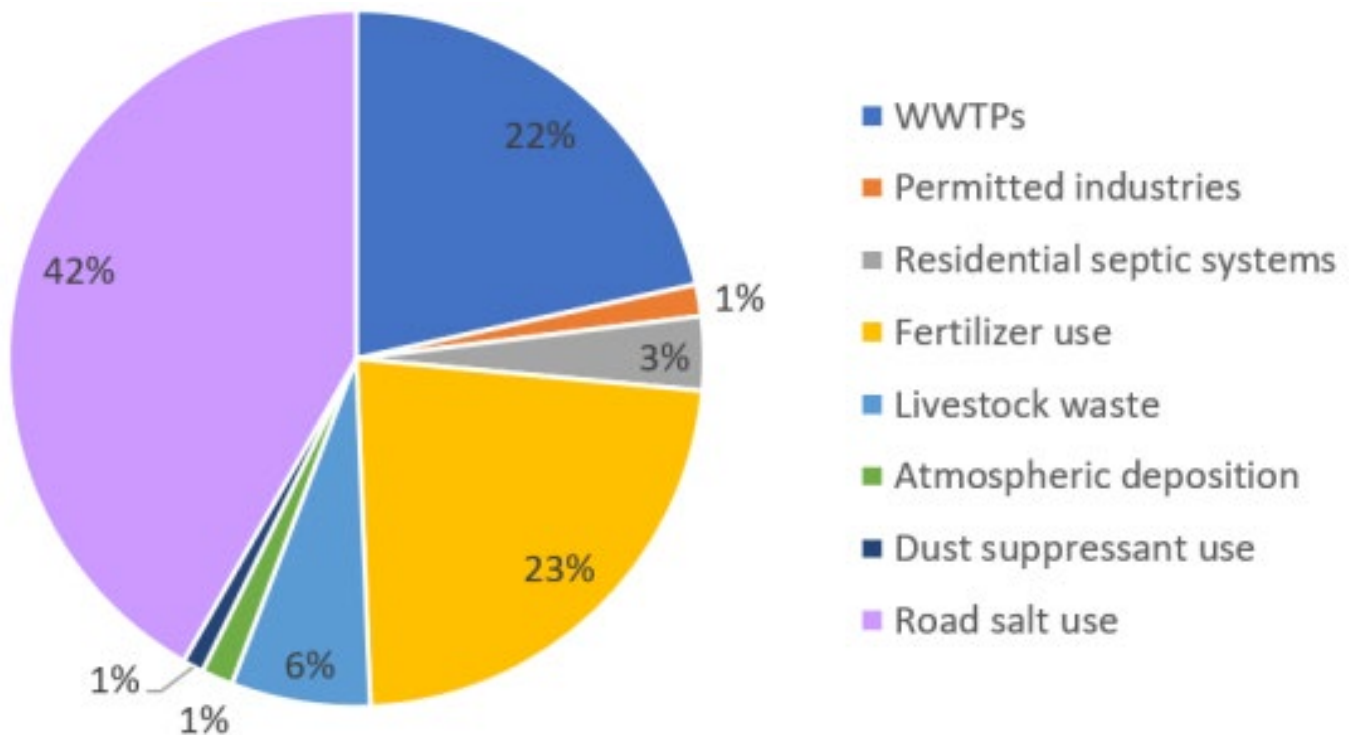


Figure 4: Fraction of annual chloride contributions from major point and nonpoint sources for State of Minnesota (Overbo et al. 2019)

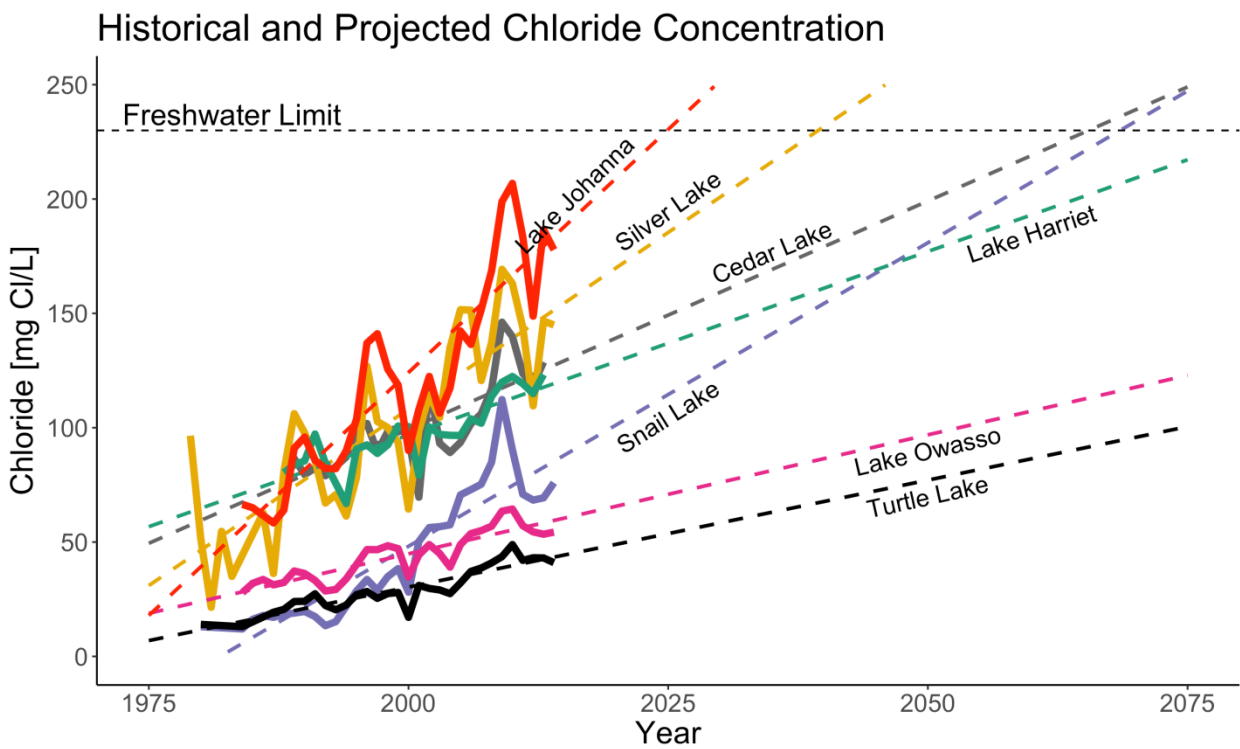
**Please note that Road salt use is actually all de-icing salt applied to roads, parking lots, sidewalks, and trails.*

Statewide, approximately 404,000 tons of de-icer is used annually. It takes just one teaspoon in 5 gallons of water to exceed the water quality standard and become toxic for freshwater fish and other aquatic life under long-term exposure. The de-icing salts applied to hard surfaces eventually wash off and/or infiltrate, contaminating nearby lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater.

One ton of salt costs more than its purchase price.

Cost to Buy	Cost to Society	Cost to Water Resources
\$151/ton	\$1,700-\$17,000/ton	796,178 gallons/ton
Bulk road salt purchase price	Estimated infrastructure damage costs	Water permanently polluted
State Salt Purchase Report (2023-2024 avg.)	MPCA Smart Salting for Roads Manual	Based on 1 teaspoon polluting 5 gallons

The Metropolitan Council published a report (Regional Assessment of Chloride in Select Twin Cities Metro Streams (1999 – 2019) which revealed rising chloride levels in nearly all streams. While the metro has been most heavily studied, chloride pollution is not a metro-only problem. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency published its Milestones report (Water Quality Trends for Minnesota Rivers and Streams at Milestone Sites) in 2014 which identified significant, largely statewide increases in chloride concentrations. Chloride from de-icing salts has been attributed in part to the impaired waters designations for chloride impaired waters in St Louis, Rice, Jackson, Meeker, Le Sueur, Douglas, Lyon, and Kittson counties. A study of chloride impacts to groundwater predicts groundwater in multiple Twin Cities aquifers is likely to reach chronic chloride exposure thresholds by mid-century due to de-icing salt (McDaris, John R et al. “Documentation and Prediction of Increasing Groundwater Chloride in the Twin Cities, Minnesota.” Ground water vol. 60,6 (2022): 837-850. doi:10.1111/gwat.13227). As of 2026, there are 68 impairments statewide for chloride, and 14 were added in just the last two years.



Graph credit: Freshwater Society

Excess chloride contributes to a phenomenon often referred to as freshwater salinization syndrome, mobilizing heavy metals and creating a chemical cocktail (Kaushal et al., 2022). It leads to direct toxicity and biodiversity loss, macroinvertebrate sensitivity and reduced reproductive success, amphibian mortality, reduced zooplankton populations shifting phytoplankton communities from green algae toward cyanobacteria, density stratification and anoxic conditions which can trigger phosphorus release from sediments.

There is currently no alternative to de-icing salt that doesn't have other tradeoffs in effectiveness, cost, scalability, or other environmental harm. While a variety of products are marketed as safer or more sustainable alternatives, most still contain chloride compounds, perform inconsistently in extreme winter conditions, or introduce their own environmental concerns. Organic additives such as beet juice are commonly blended with salt brine to improve performance at lower temperature and help reduce bounce and scatter, which can lower overall salt use. However, beet juice mixtures can increase biological oxygen demand in nearby waters, contribute nutrients and organic matter to aquatic systems, create odors, and add cost and storage complexity for winter maintenance operators. Other alternatives, such as calcium magnesium acetate or potassium acetate, may reduce chloride impacts but are often significantly more expensive and impractical for widespread use on roads, parking lots, and sidewalks. As a result, the most effective current strategy is not complete replacement of salt, but reducing unnecessary application through smarter winter maintenance practices and targeted use.

In recent years, calls for more enhanced and comprehensive approaches to reducing chloride pollution have gained momentum. The Environmental Quality Board (EQB) identified chloride pollution as an emerging issue in the 2015 Water Policy Report. In September 2025, the EQB published the Groundwater Policy Report and in the chloride section noted gaps and opportunities, specifically, "Implementation of policies that support chloride reduction are needed to move beyond voluntary chloride reduction actions". The Upper Mississippi River Basin Association issued a resolution in 2022 calling for collaboration and progress on chloride pollution. Minnesota Watersheds adopted a resolution in 2024 calling for a regulatory approach to addressing chloride pollution. The Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition issued a position statement in 2025 expressing urgency and offering ideas for a comprehensive approach to meet the challenge.

Audience and Purpose

The Clean Water Council has a statutory role to foster coordination and cooperation as part of the Clean Water Legacy Act. These recommendations are intended to inform legislative and regulatory decision-making, guide state and local program development, and support the adoption of best practices across public and private sectors.

This policy statement is intended for the Minnesota Legislature, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, other state agencies, and local governments responsible for water quality protection, transportation systems, and land use regulation. It is also directed toward private sector parties, including winter maintenance professionals, commercial applicators, property managers, developers, and de-icing product manufacturers whose decisions influence use across Minnesota. It applies statewide, with particular relevance to developed areas where impervious surfaces and winter maintenance activities are concentrated. While awareness has been increasing, continued progress depends on deepening that awareness across all groups (general public, decision-makers, practitioners, and industry leaders). At the same time, awareness alone is not sufficient to drive the scale of change needed. Progress will require translating awareness into more comprehensive and coordinated action.

The purpose of this document is to recommend a suite of actions to reduce chloride pollution from de-icing chemicals while maintaining public safety and effective winter maintenance. Further, this updated policy statement reflects an inflection point in chloride pollution management in Minnesota. Early efforts have focused on improving operational efficiency and advancing voluntary best practices, yielding measurable reductions in de-icing chemical use, particularly among public road authorities. However, chloride concentrations continue to rise in many waterbodies, indicating that additional progress will require a strategic shift beyond operational efficiency improvements in the public sector alone. A more comprehensive approach that integrates standards, incentives, research, accountability, and behavior change is necessary to make meaningful progress in source control and restoration of impaired waters.

Recommendations

1. **Implement a Granular Salt Fee.** To curb overuse, the costs of infrastructure and environmental damage should be partially shifted to those who overapply salt. A granular salt fee, modeled after the agricultural fertilizer fee, would incentivize more judicious use while generating revenue for and supporting financial sustainability of chloride reduction efforts. Funds could be reinvested in training and certification programs, research and innovation, implementation of best practices, and equipment and facilities upgrades. A fee structure would also enable improved tracking of salt use statewide, supporting benchmarking and accountability.
2. **Sustain and Enhance the MPCA Chloride Reduction Program including the Smart Salting Training Certification program.** The MPCA Smart Salting training and certification program supports a range of audiences involved in de-icing decisions and operations, from private and public winter maintenance professionals who maintain roads, rural roads, parking lots, and sidewalks, to MnDOT, property managers, and community leaders. The Statewide Chloride Management Plan identifies the Smart Salting training program as the top implementation strategy to reduce salt overuse in the winter. Case studies have shown that participating organizations have been able to reduce salt use by 30% to 70%, without compromising safety. Further, the program provides low-interest loans and grants for equipment and retrofit projects.

The program has been exclusively funded by Clean Water Funds since January 2021. The State should sustain and enhance the MPCA's **Chloride Reduction Program** to support the development and maintenance of tools, resources, policies, trainings and assistance programs to assist communities, private sector applicators, and property managers in their effort to reduce chloride pollution and at least half of the chloride reduction budget should be dedicated to adoption of best practices to reduce chloride from de-icing chemicals.

Lastly, growing the chloride reduction program in Minnesota is critical as adoption of best practices and other policies in this document could accelerate progress and would put more demand on the training and cost share programs.

3. **Investigate Feasible Approaches for Restoration and Remediation.** While source control is and should remain a top priority, it is prudent to advance a solution to remediate surface water that is or is imminently impaired by chloride. The State should lead a feasibility effort to evaluate remediation options and assess engineering feasibility, cost and scalability, waste management challenges and opportunities, risks, tradeoffs, energy demand, ecosystem impacts, and policy barriers. The goal is to determine if, where, and how chloride remediation can be implemented effectively.

Case Study: Leveraging Watershed Based Implementation Funding, the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission and City of Plymouth studied options for delisting Parker's Lake. The study analyzed two primary alternatives to reduce chloride in Parkers Lake: 1) pumping lake bottom water directly to the sanitary sewer, and 2) pumping lake bottom water, treating it, and returning treated water to the lake. Two different treatment systems were evaluated for this alternative – a small-scale reverse osmosis system (RO) and an ion exchange system (IX). Ultimately, the decentralized treatment systems were cost prohibitive. More information on the study is available at [Parkers_Lake_Chloride_Dilution_Extraction_Tech_Memo_final.pdf](#)

4. **Fund Research and Innovation.** The 2016 Twin Cities Metro Area (TCMA) Chloride Management Plan identified a broad range of research needs focused on reducing chloride pollution while maintaining public safety. Key research priorities including improving winter maintenance practices including in technology and equipment; evaluating alternative de-icing materials and additives; understanding and tracking chloride fate and transport; evaluating site design and infrastructure approaches; and understanding behavioral, institutional, and policy drivers that influence de-icer application decisions. Lastly, the plan recognizes a need to explore long-term management and potential mitigation strategies for chloride-impacted waters, given that chloride does not break down and accumulates in the environment.

The University of Minnesota's Stormwater Research Program provides an existing framework and strong institutional partner for advancing applied winter maintenance research to support the development and evaluation of new technologies, decision-support tools, and other best management practices that reduce chloride use while maintaining public safety. Expanded research capacity would also help test emerging de-icing products and operational approaches, accelerating the adoption of practical and scalable solutions.

The Forever Green Initiative could serve as a model framework for developing alternatives to chloride-based de-icing chemicals. Innovation in this sector is essential to develop a cost-effective alternative that can perform and is less harmful to the environment.

5. **Incorporate Low Salt Design Standards.** Infrastructure should be designed with winter maintenance in mind. Poor designs with inadequate snow storage, inefficient drainage, and snow removal obstacles drive salt overuse. Design improvements can reduce long term maintenance costs, improve safety, and minimize environmental impacts. The state should incorporate established low salt design principles into building and site development standards, state-funded project requirements, and sustainability frameworks such as the Minnesota B3 (Buildings, Benchmarks, and Beyond) Guidelines.
6. **Require Smart Salting for State Contracts and Facilities.** Require Smart Salting certification, use of best practices, and proper storage of de-icing chemicals for all winter maintenance conducted under state contracts and at state-owned or state-managed facilities. Contract specifications should clearly define performance expectations, documentation requirements, and compliance measures, including calibration of equipment, application rate tracking, and recordkeeping. State agencies should incorporate accountability mechanisms such as incentives, audits, or penalties. By leading through its own operations and procurement standards, the State can set a strong example and accelerate adoption across the private sector.

A model contract for responsible snow and ice management that embraces best practices to minimize environmental impacts from de-icing chemicals while also maintaining safety and addressing liability risk allocation is available on the MPCA's Chloride Resources website.

The February 2025 State Salt Purchase Report to the Minnesota Legislature included reporting from seven agencies that own property (MnDOT and leased properties excluded, with about half of agencies not reporting). The average annual purchase for 2023 and 2024 was 1,330 tons. If all the de-icing salt purchased were applied, it could permanently pollute more than a billion gallons and cause \$2M to \$22M in infrastructure damages annually.

7. **Establish an Occupational Licensure Program.** Establish a statewide occupational licensure program for winter maintenance professionals, or authorize counties to do so, to ensure consistent training and accountability. Licensure should include completion of an approved training program (such as the MPCA's Smart Salting certification program) and periodic continuing education. This approach would professionalize the industry, reduce overuse, and provide assurance to property owners and the public that winter maintenance services are being delivered safely and responsibly.
8. **Develop Standardized Labeling Requirements.** Develop standardized labeling requirements for de-icing chemicals sold in Minnesota to address misleading or incomplete information. De-icers can be labeled as "eco-friendly" or as an alternative to salt, but they may pose other problems for water quality. The MPCA should convene interested parties from a variety of sectors and lead a process to develop recommendations for new labeling requirements on packages of de-icing chemicals sold in Minnesota. Some key areas to establish requirements for include, but would not be limited to:
 - Ingredient disclosure
 - Verified environmental and safety claims
 - Realistic performance information
 - Clear application guidance

Improved labeling would support informed decision-making and reduce unintended environmental harm.

9. **Expand Proper Storage Requirements.** Proper storage of de-icing chemicals is a cost-effective and common-sense measure to reduce pollution.

Proper storage is required in communities regulated under the MPCA's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program; the permit requires local controls for proper bulk storage of de-icing chemicals at commercial, institutional, and non-NPDES permitted industrial facilities. The MPCA's Chloride Reduction Model Ordinance Language document provides guidance for creating and implementing an ordinance.

10. **Expand Strategic Chloride Monitoring.** Incorporate strategic chloride monitoring into the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's surface water and groundwater monitoring programs to better track statewide conditions and identify trends. This should include strategic enhancements to the MPCA's ambient groundwater monitoring network and the Watershed Pollutant Load Monitoring Network to sufficiently capture patterns in high-risk areas and across the state. Enhanced strategic monitoring and reporting of conditions and trends will support early detection of problems in vulnerable waterbodies, evaluate the effectiveness of chloride reduction strategies, and provide the data needed to guide policy, prioritize investments, and engage with interested parties on addressing chloride pollution.
11. **Liability Protection.** Provide liability protection to certified private salt applicators against slip and fall lawsuits who follow established best practices and document their work. The primary goal is to reduce overapplication driven by fear of litigation, encourage adoption of Smart Salting practices, and maintain safety while improving environmental outcomes.
12. **Establish a Statewide Community-Based Social Marketing Campaign.** A coordinated, statewide community-based social marketing campaign is needed to increase awareness and drive behavior change. The MPCA should

lead a process to establish a baseline of the public's current knowledge and attitudes, identify gaps, opportunities and roles among interested parties (MPCA's Chloride Reduction Program, Tribal governments, cities, counties, academic institutions, watersheds, non-profits, other state agencies, etc.), support crafting and distributing coordinated messages, and evaluate progress. State leadership can amplify and align existing local efforts. Additionally, the MPCA should further support enhancing chloride pollution awareness into existing programs such as the successful We Are Water program, Eco Experience at the Minnesota State Fair, and supporting the regional Winter Salt Week campaign.

Conclusion

Chloride pollution from de-icing chemicals is a growing threat to Minnesota's water resources. Because chloride accumulates and cannot be feasibly removed, proactive and coordinated action is essential. This policy framework outlines a comprehensive approach that combines incentives, standards, knowledge building, monitoring, research, and accountability. Together, these actions can significantly reduce chloride pollution while maintaining public safety, protecting infrastructure, and preserving Minnesota's freshwater resources for future generations.



Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program

Brad Jordahl Redlin | Agricultural Conservation Services Manager

Council Partnership

Partnership with Clean Water Council is central to statewide water-quality outcomes

MDA appreciates ongoing collaboration on clean-water projects

Today's focus: clarifications raised in the OLA report



The MDA agreed with nearly all OLA findings

Two areas require clarification:

Contingencies

Monitoring & Modeling



Baseline Program Standards

MAWQCP conducts whole-farm assessment:

Physical characteristics – slope, erodibility, soil type, vegetation

Nutrient Management – fertilizer type, rate, source, timing, placement

Tillage/Residue Management – STIR factor category standard

Pest Management – Integrated Pest Management category standard

Tile Drainage System – drainage water management

Irrigation Management – irrigation water management

Whole-field practices – conservation practice management

Resource Concerns – other necessary conservation practices

Certification Number _____



STATE OF MINNESOTA
AGRICULTURAL WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION AGREEMENT

This agreement is between _____ ("Producer") and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture ("MDA"), which is authorized to sign on behalf of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources pursuant to Minnesota Governor's Executive Order 19-12.

This contract is governed by Minnesota Statutes Sections 17.9891-17.993 which outline procedures for implementing the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. All parties agree that the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program is in the public interest as it enhances the water quality of Minnesota's rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands and groundwater, as well as promotes and accelerates environmental stewardship by Minnesota's farmers.

A. TERMS OF AGREEMENT:
Agreement start date is _____ and expires on _____

B. PRODUCER'S DUTIES:
Producer, upon completing a formal water quality assessment of all land in Producer's agricultural operation, achieving a passing score using the certification instrument, and having the assessment approved by a MDA-accredited certifying agent, agrees to the following:

1. Maintain compliance with all water quality rules and regulations in place at the time of certification, and if Producer is adjudicated to be in violation of said laws and regulations anytime during the certification period of this agreement, Producer has the affirmative duty to notify MDA within 30 days. Further, if Producer knows, or has reason to know, of a violation of said laws and regulations anytime during the certification period of this agreement, even though it has not been adjudicated, Producer has the affirmative duty to report the violation to MDA within 30 days.

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Agreement

Contracts ensure practices are implemented and maintained

Contract Framework

Benefits are contingent on participant performance

Contracts universally used in federal registrations and certifications (EPA, FDA, USDA, NCRS)

Contracts ensure regulatory certainty available only to farms meeting its commitments

In agriculture, further contingent challenges exist relative to weather, crop rotation, field conditions



Contingencies

OLA referenced “unmet” contingencies

- Regulatory certainty unavailable to farms with outstanding contingencies
- Financial benefit consists of reimbursement payments:
 - Limited to \$5,000/yr, for approved practices treating identified resource concern
 - Paid only upon completion of implementation at maximum of 75% of verified cost



OLA-cited example

Grower completed 8 of 8 WASCOBs, 32 of 33 grass waterways (with final scheduled)

- Implementation of conservation practices is MAWQCP's purpose
- Above example not a failure, but a profound conservation achievement in progress



Contingencies

Program designed to ensure water-quality practices are implemented, effective, comprehensive, and maintained

Participation and benefits are and need to be contingent on fulfilling and maintaining contracted obligations

4,377 new practices **implemented**

168,655 tons of soil retained in fields each year

61,481 tons of sediment prevented from entering waterways annually

77,988 pounds of phosphorus prevented from entering waterways annually

1,259,535 pounds of nitrogen prevented from entering waterways annually





Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program

Margaret Wagner | Fertilizer Section Manager

MAWQCP Monitoring Approach

MDA supports incorporating a formal monitoring component into MAWQCP

Baseline monitoring has occurred on more than a dozen certified farms

Any expanded effort must be designed to produce reliable, decision-ready data

Investments must answer specific questions and justify cost



What Field-Level Monitoring Can and Cannot Do

Tile and edge-of-field data provide the best estimates of nutrient loss

Results are highly sensitive to short-term weather and site variability

Requires ≥ 7 years of data to detect meaningful trends

Extreme weather often dominates annual results



What We Have Learn About Evaluating Practices

Detecting Differences Between Practices

Paired watershed design is necessary to compare practices or cropping systems

Finding viable paired sites is the biggest challenge

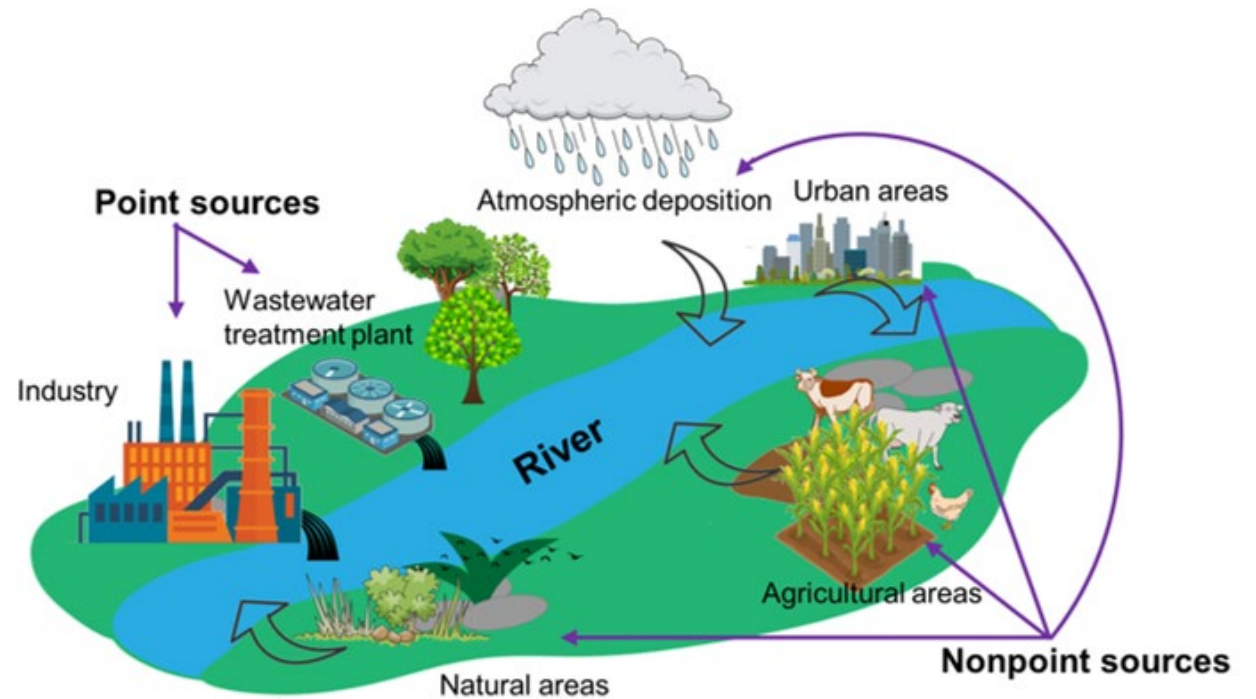
Many fields cannot be isolated for accurate monitoring



Modeling Complements Monitoring

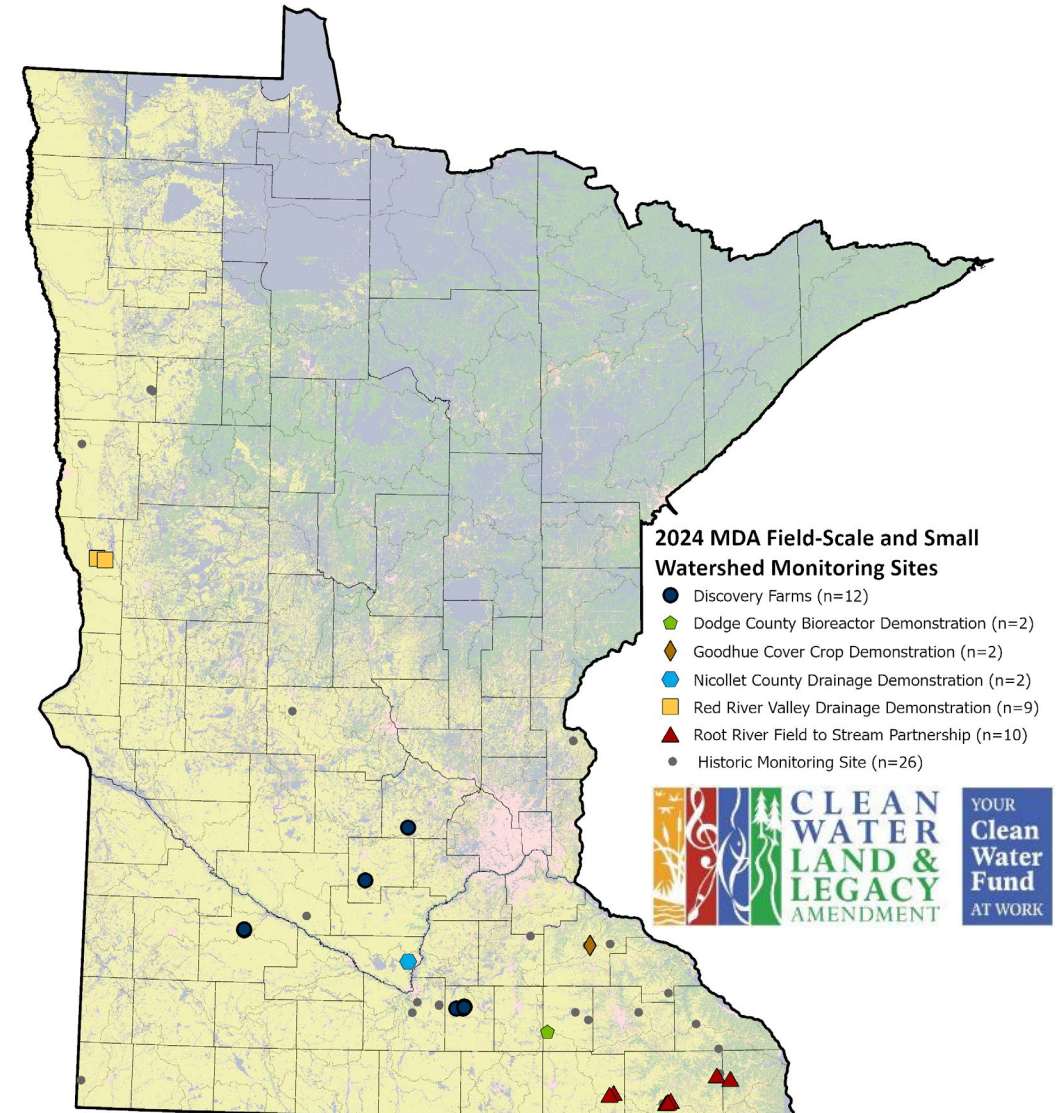
Why Minnesota Uses Both Tools

- Monitoring cannot be done everywhere
- Well-calibrated models simulate thousands of scenarios instantly
- Modeling is used across all Minnesota conservation program



Minnesota's Monitoring Leadership

- MDA has supported dozens of edge-of-field sites over the past decade
- Includes Discovery Farms, Root River Field to Stream, and other demonstrations
- In 2025, more than 35 monitoring stations operated statewide



What Monitoring Measures

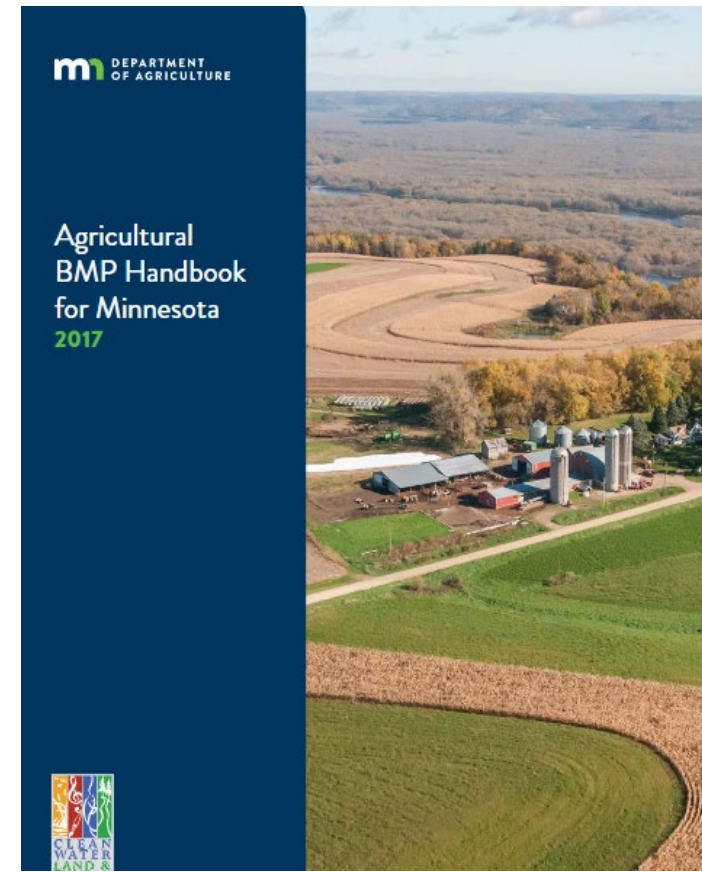
Observed, Site-Specific Data

- Sediment, nitrogen, and phosphorus movement
- Surface runoff and subsurface tile drainage
- Automated sampling captures runoff whenever it occurs
- Most nutrient losses occur during 1–2 major surface runoff events each year



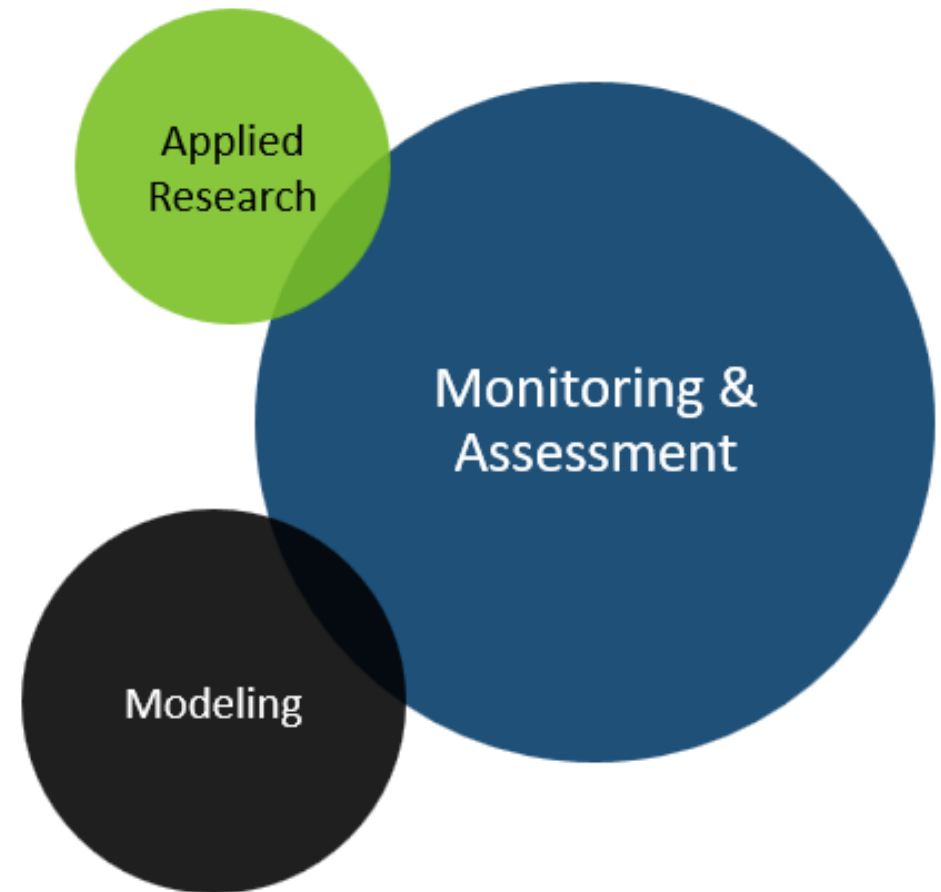
Applied Research Investments

- Cover crop effectiveness
- Irrigation scheduling and nitrate leaching
- Agricultural BMP Handbook (effectiveness of 30 BMPs)



How Monitoring + Research Feed Modeling

- MN and national research calibrate and refine water-quality models
- Models predict outcomes from conservation practices implemented through MAWQCP
- State and federal agencies use the same or similar models to estimate water quality impacts



How Minnesota Uses This Data

Turning Monitoring Into Action

- Monitoring and research data informs MN-specific computer models
- Monitoring, assessment and applied research directly inform implementation
- Implementation gets practices on the ground



Limits of Field-Level Monitoring

- Monitoring is not feasible on most certified farms
 - Over 1,900 certified farms = thousands of fields
- Paired watershed sites are rare and difficult to establish

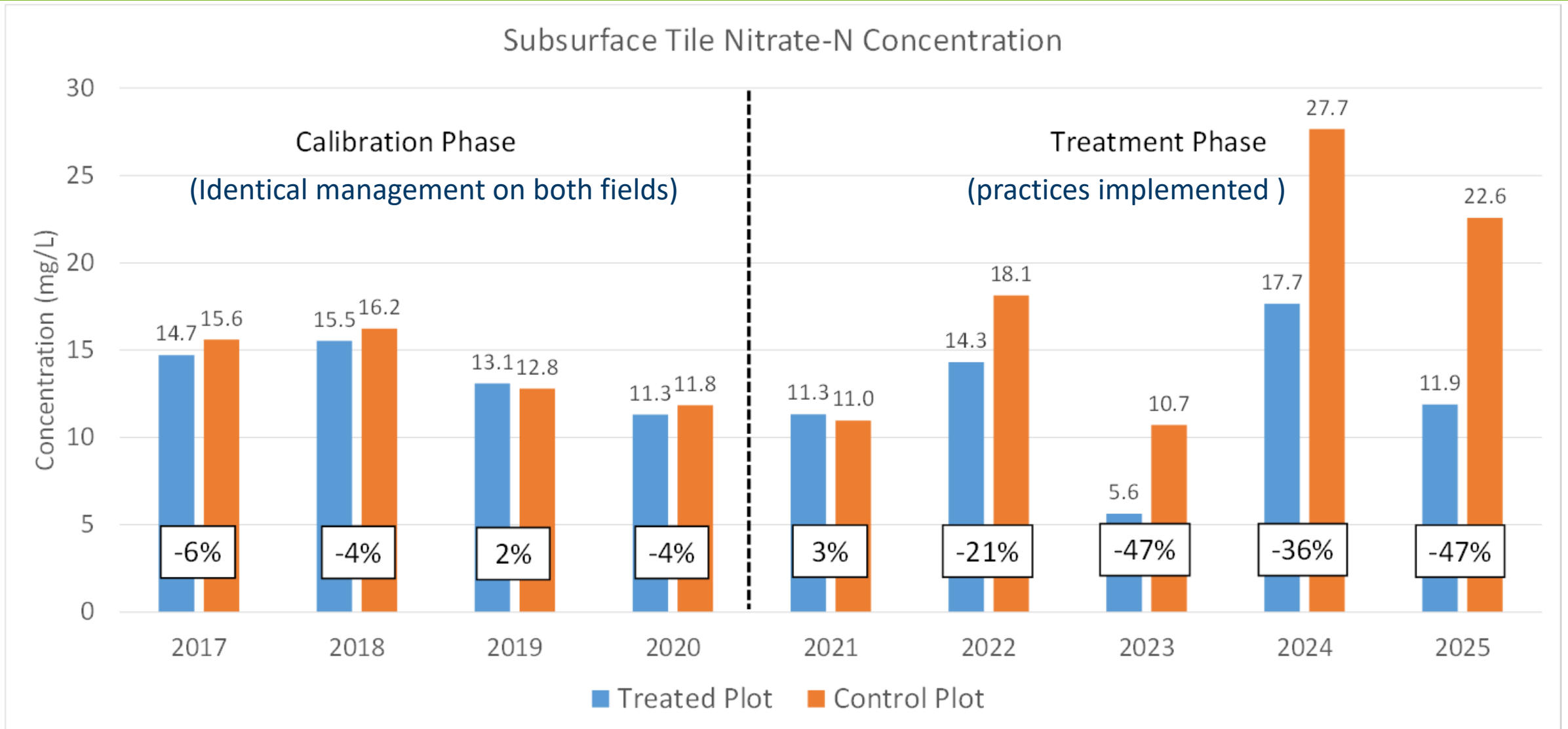


Recommended Approach

- Use paired watershed design with a control field and a treatment field
- Control field maintains existing practices
- Treatment field implements MAWQCP-required practices
- Grab samples or private well samples are not suitable for effectiveness monitoring



Example of Paired Watershed Data



Monitoring Costs

Budget Proposal – surface runoff, subsurface drainage tile, and groundwater monitoring demonstration site

Year	Site Establishment	Operating Cost -Nutrients and Sediment Only	Total
1	\$215,000	\$153,355	\$368,355
2		\$153,355	\$153,355
3		\$153,355	\$153,355
4		\$153,355	\$153,355
5		\$153,355	\$153,355
6		\$153,355	\$153,355
7		\$153,355	\$153,355
8		\$153,355	\$153,355
9		\$153,355	\$153,355
10		\$153,355	\$153,355
Total	\$290,000	\$1,533,550	\$1,823,550

- Proposal is scalable and cost is presented for single site over 10 years
- MDA proposes adding 5-10 sites statewide

Demonstration Site





Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program

Thom Petersen | Commissioner of Agriculture

Program Improvements

Integration

Early tools replaced with integrated digital systems

Mid-certification review tiers

Certification standards updated

Updated BMPs incorporated

RAPT: unified mapping, assessment, planning, tracking



Audit-Period Enhancements

Rigor

All active certifiers audited

Consolidated technical and policy guidance

Combined tracking of contingencies in RAPT

Structural-practice contingencies policy

Mid-certification reviews prioritized for highest-risk producers

Nutrient-reduction accounting aligned with statewide strategies



OLA Recommendations & Next Steps

Enhancements already underway

- Strengthened certifier guidance
- Classification for contingencies
- Improved tracking through RAPT



Continued collaboration with CWC to support statewide water-quality goals

53% of Minnesota's land is in agricultural production

Conservation choices ripple across more than half the landscape

Farmland conservation programs must deliver maximum impact



Asked to describe MAWQCP's impact:

57%: improved soil health

56%: improved water quality

52%: reduced erosion



Producer: MAWQCP is “vitally essential” for understanding and improving water-quality impacts

Shared Commitment

Together, we ensure MAWQCP delivers the greatest benefits to Minnesota's water and the communities that rely on it

MAWQCP delivers conservation where it matters most

MDA remains committed to strengthening the program

Partnership with the Clean Water Council is essential



Questions?



WATERSHED-BASED IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING

FROM REPORTING TO A STATEWIDE STORY

OUTCOMES REPORTING PROGRESS AND PATH FORWARD

August 14, 2026

WHY WE'RE HERE

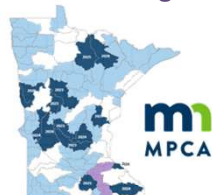
GOING FROM **OUTPUTS REPORTING TO**
A STATEWIDE OUTCOMES NARRATIVE



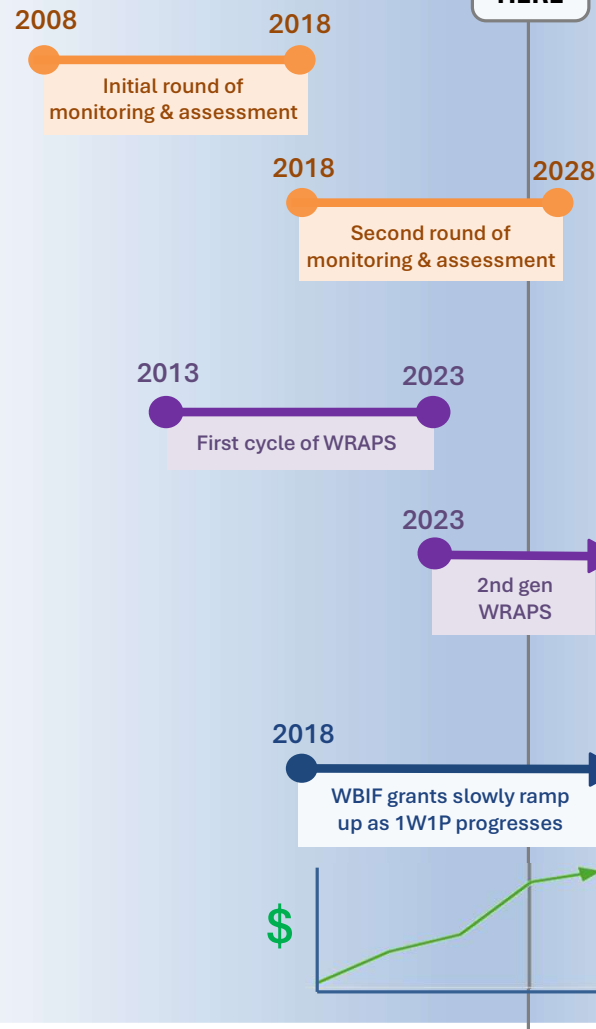
IWM Intensive Watershed Monitoring



WRAPS Watershed Restoration & Protection Strategies



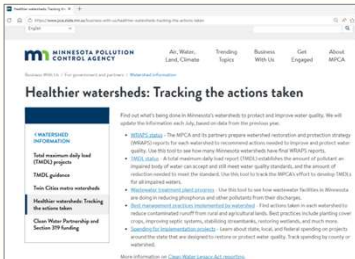
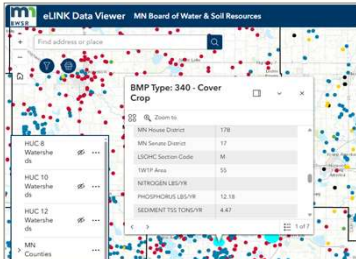
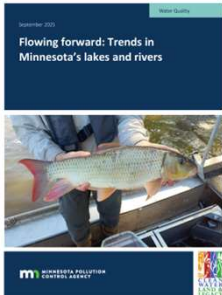
WBIF Watershed Based Implementation Funding



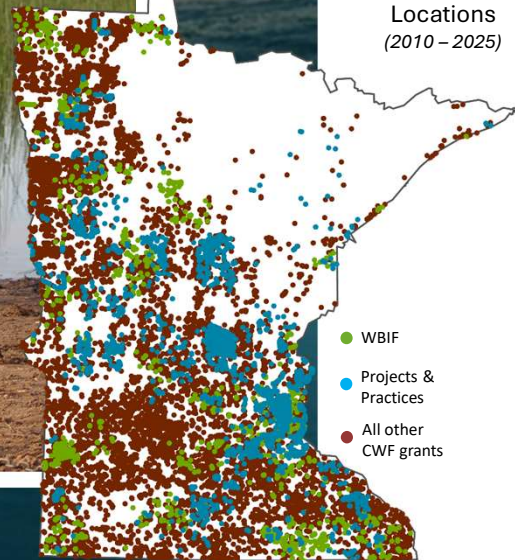


WHERE WE ARE TODAY

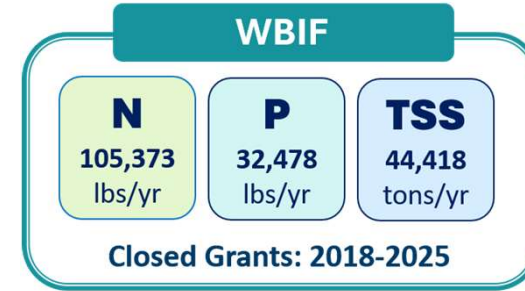
The program has made significant progress in shaping a cohesive statewide narrative and sharing the considerable strides we've made.



WHERE WE ARE TODAY



BWSR CWF Project
Locations
(2010 – 2025)



FY2018-2025 WBIF Outputs

Watershed	Plan Approval Year	Nitrogen Reduction (lbs/yr)	Phosphorus Reduction (lbs/yr)	Sediment Reduction (tons/yr)
Yellow Medicine River	2016	8,259	1,393	802
North Fork Crow River	2018	0	3,531	3,309
Cedar River	2019	7,299	883	600
Watonwan River	2020	13,411	796	1,110
Mississippi River Headw	2021	378	1,424	887
Middle-Snake-Tamarac	2022	1,031	872	955



WHO WE'RE

LEARNING
FROM

Local Partners: Watershed districts, cities, counties, SWCDs, and Tribal governments providing on-the-ground insight and place-based knowledge.

Organizations: Non-profit partners, local government associations, and key interest groups.

Agencies: Federal and state agencies contributing data, expertise, and policy alignment across program areas.

& WORKING
WITH



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

THE AGGREGATION CHALLENGE

WHEN DATA COMES TOGETHER — WHAT GETS LOST?

Integrating diverse data sources across local programs creates complexity. Nuance, local priorities and community-specific stories risk being flattened into a single statewide metric.

- 1. Watershed Goals and Priorities**
- 2. Output Tools**
- 3. Multiple Funding Efforts**



How do we aggregate without losing what matters most?

THE AGGREGATION CHALLENGE

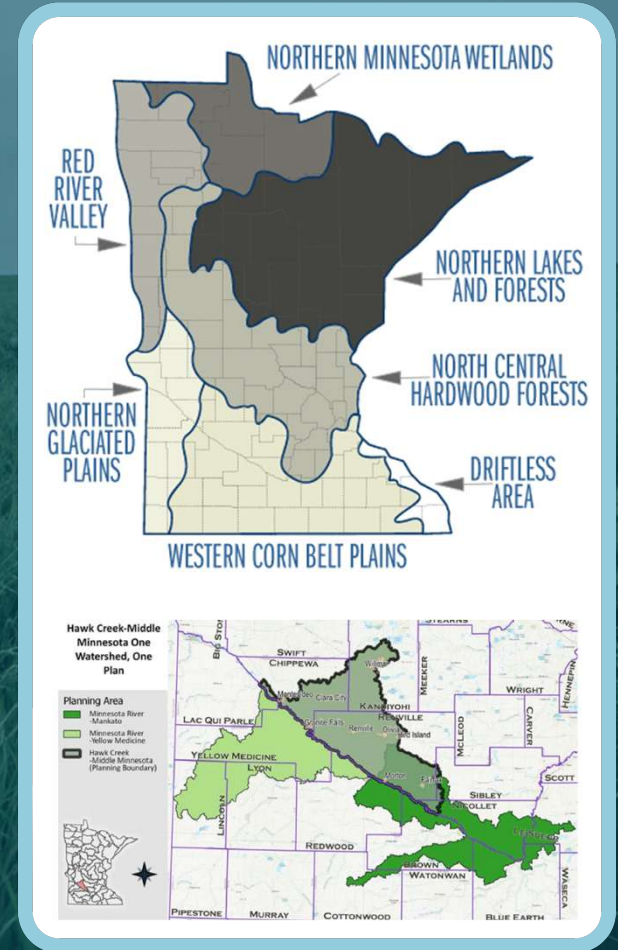
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AGRICULTURAL

- RUSLE2
- HSPF SAM
- PTMAApp
- BEET



STORMWATER

- WinSLAMM
- MIDS
- P8



FORESTRY

- FERN
- PLET

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2. Output Tools

3. Multiple Funding Efforts

[U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service \(USDA-NRCS\)](#)

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Wetlands Reserve Easement (ACEP-WRE)
Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easement (EWPP-FPE)
Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP)
Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

[Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources \(BWSR\)](#)

Easement programs:

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)
Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM)
Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)
Army Compatible Use Buffer program (ACUB)
Riparian buffer conservation easements

Grant programs:

Disaster Recovery Assistance Program
Clean Water Fund Grants
State Conservation Cost-Share
Native Buffer Grant Program
Natural Resources Block Grant (NRBG)

Other programs as reported in the eLINK tracking system

[Minnesota Department of Agriculture \(MDA\)](#)

Agriculture Best Management Practices Loan Program (AgBMP)
Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)

[Minnesota Pollution Control Agency \(MPCA\)](#)

Federal Clean Water Act Section 319 Program (Section 319)
Clean Water Partnership Program (CWP)



...AND MANY MORE!

OUTCOMES BY SCALE

WATERSHED LEVEL

Local data, goals & priorities
Ground-level stories

STATEWIDE LEVEL

Statewide synthesis
Unified narrative on trends

REGIONAL LEVEL

Larger regional aggregation
Strides to reduce pollutants



Connections to:

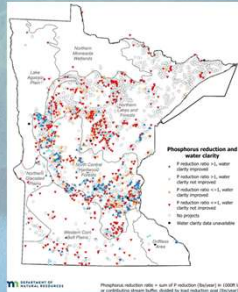
- **Fishable,**
- **Swimmable, and**
- **Drinkable waters**

WHAT'S EMERGING

Outcomes Reporting Concepts

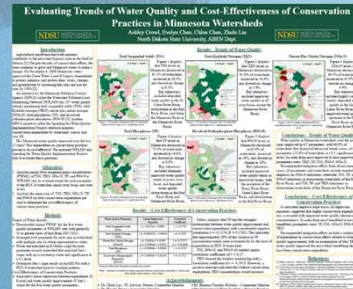
1

Near-lake
BMP data



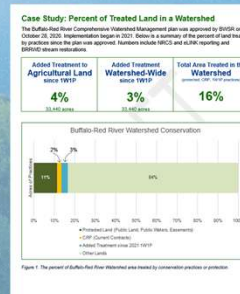
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NDSU Study



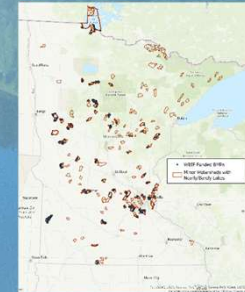
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% Treated
Acres



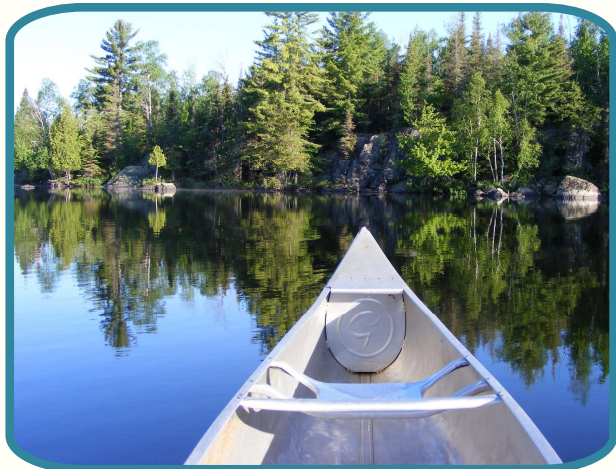
4

Nearly/Barely
Investments



TWO-YEAR APPROACH

PROPOSED PLAN +
COUNCIL ACTION



YEAR ONE (2027)

- eLink updates
- Explore Output & Outcome Connections
- **Draft Interactive Watersheds Map***
- **Outcomes Reporting Plan***
- **CWC BOC Presentation**

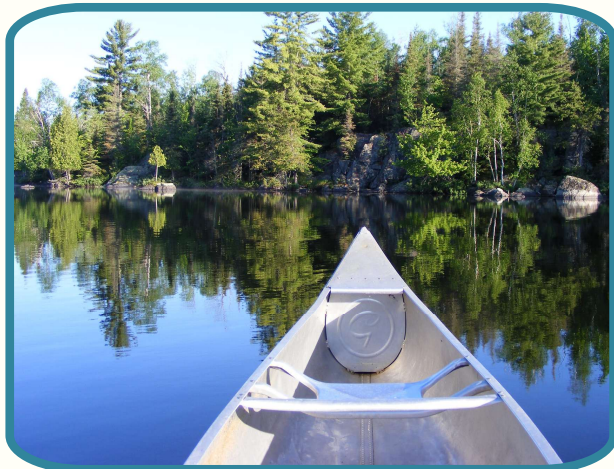
Year TWO (2028)

- **Launch Interactive Watersheds Map***
- **Begin Implementing Outcomes Reporting Plan***
- **CWC BOC Presentation**

*May require additional resources & capacity.

TWO-YEAR APPROACH

PROPOSED PLAN +
COUNCIL ACTION



OPTION 1

Direct BWSR to proceed with activities that can be completed using existing resources, staff capacity and agency partnerships, while scoping the activities below to determine their feasibility, anticipated costs, and potential resource needs to be proposed in FY30-31.

OPTION 2

Direct staff to:

1) proceed with activities that can be completed using existing resources, staff capacity and agency partnerships

AND

2) develop rough cost estimates for those activities that need additional resources and capacity, and return to the CWC at its September meeting with an estimated budget to be included in the proposed FY28-29 budget.

THANK YOU

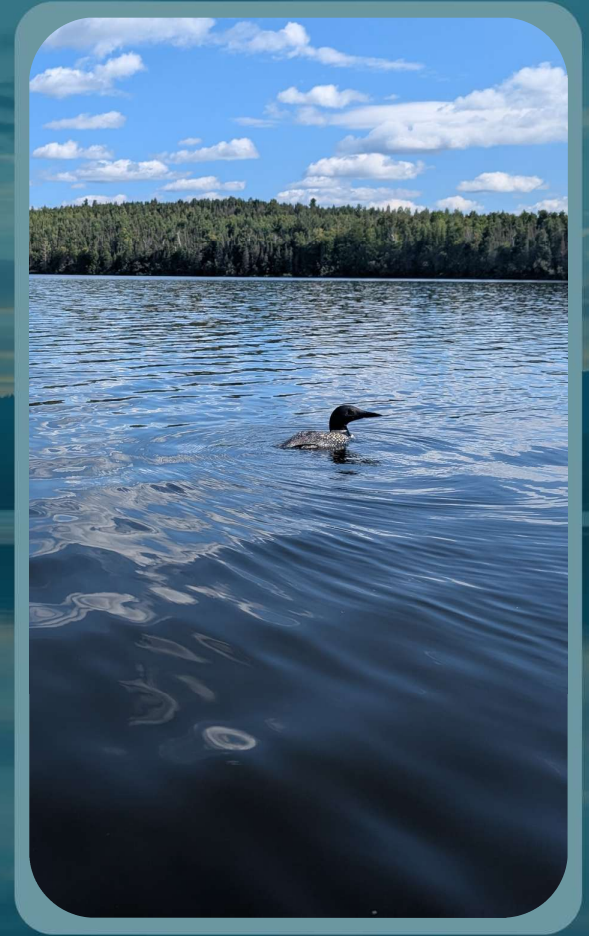
QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

Thank you for your support in shaping this statewide story. Your input is essential to moving this program forward together.

For questions or follow-up, please reach out to:

Julie Westerlund, 1W1P Coordinator
julie.westerlund@state.mn.us

Maggie Karschnia, Clean Water Coordinator
maggie.karschnia@state.mn.us



MEMORANDUM

Date: 08/14/2026
To: Jen Kader, Administrator, Clean Water Council
From: Maggie Karschnia, Clean Water Coordinator, BWSR
 Justin Hanson, Assistant Director of Regional Operations, BWSR

RE: Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) Outcomes Reporting

Purpose

The Watershed-based Implementation Fund (WBIF) is the largest Clean Water Fund-supported program and represents a significant investment in locally led water quality improvement. At the One Watershed, One Plan listening sessions, there has been clear support by local partnerships for strengthening our ability to consistently report on the outcomes of WBIF investments. At the request of the Clean Water Council's (CWC) Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC), a WBIF outcomes reporting item has been put on the August agenda. This agenda item provides an opportunity to discuss a proposed approach to improve outcomes reporting at the watershed, regional, and statewide levels. This approach is summarized below.

Proposed Outcomes Reporting Plan

A two-year work plan is proposed to strengthen data consistency, improve the connection between implementation activities and water quality outcomes, and provide more accessible information to decision-makers and the public.

Timeline	Milestone	Description	Resources & Capacity	
			Use Existing	May Need Additional
YEAR 1	eLINK Updates	Convene a workgroup to discuss and advance standardized reporting of best management practices (BMPs) and identify opportunities to update and improve eLINK reporting.	X	
YEAR 1 to YEAR 2	Explore Output & Outcome Connections	Review existing eLINK data and explore ways to improve connections to water quality outcomes in partnership with MPCA and the interagency Outcomes Workgroup.	X	
YEAR 1	Draft Interactive Watersheds Map	Coordinate with watershed partnerships to outline a design and mock up an interactive map showing 1W1P boundaries and priority areas along with WBIF and other Clean Water Fund projects across watersheds, connecting implementation outputs to outcomes if possible in coordination with MPCA.		X

Timeline	Milestone	Description	Resources & Capacity	
			Use Existing	May Need Additional
YEAR 1 to YEAR 2	Draft Outcomes Reporting Plan	Coordinate across state agencies to develop a plan with key deliverables and timelines for improved reporting of outcomes at the local, regional, and state levels for both WBIF and other CWF programs.		X
YEAR 1	CWC BOC Presentation	Present updates and the proposed statewide outcomes reporting plan to the Clean Water Council BOC for review and approval.	X	
YEAR 2	Launch Interactive Watersheds Map	Finish development of and launch the interactive watershed-based project and outcomes map		X
YEAR 2	Implement Outcomes Reporting Plan	Begin implementation of the statewide outcomes reporting plan.		X
END OF YEAR 2	CWC BOC Presentation	Present initial results, consolidated findings, lessons learned, and recommended next steps to the BOC for review and then to the Clean Water Council.	X	

Action Requested

The CWC BOC has requested a proposed two-year work plan and outcomes reporting approach for the WBIF. The proposed approach will provide a clear timeline and milestones for improving the consistency, accessibility, and usefulness of information about WBIF investments and their contribution to water quality outcomes.

Some activities will require additional scoping before BWSR can determine whether they can be completed with existing resources and capacity or will require additional funding. The BOC could consider the following options.

OPTION 1: Proceed Within Existing Resources

CWC BOC action: Direct BWSR to proceed with activities that can be completed using existing resources, staff capacity and agency partnerships, while scoping the activities below to determine their feasibility, anticipated costs, and potential resource needs to be requested in the next biennium (FY30-31).

- Outcomes Reporting Plan & Implementation
- Interactive Watersheds Map

OPTION 2: Direct Staff to Return with a Costed Proposal in October Before Proceeding

CWC BOC action: Direct staff to proceed with activities that can be completed using existing resources, staff capacity and agency partnerships AND develop rough cost estimates for those activities that need additional resources and capacity, and return to the CWC at its September meeting with an estimated budget to be included in the proposed FY28-29 budget.

Note: This option provides the Council with the greatest opportunity to evaluate the investment before committing resources, but may not align the with FY28-29 CWF budgeting timeline.

Status Memo: Draft Clean Water Fund budget for FY28-29 biennium

August 17, 2026

Background

At their July 20, 2026 meeting, the Clean Water Council (CWC) finalized direction to program proposers regarding level of program priority and desired funding direction (increase, decrease, hold steady). In response, agency proposers worked through the Interagency Coordinating Team (ICT) to develop a draft budget proposal for agency programs. (Their memo is included separately.)

In advance of the Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) meeting on August 14, 2026, committee members were invited to review the draft budget proposals from the ICT and offer their overall reactions, identify any remaining questions they felt must be addressed at this time, suggest adjustments, as well as offer possible budget amounts for nonagency programs.

Before discussing the outcomes from the homework, two programs were reviewed in detail, as the discussions could have impacts for the budget deliberations. These were the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (as a follow up to the report on the program released by the Office of the Legislative Auditor in July) and the Watershed Based Implementation Fund program (in response to requests for enhanced standardized reporting from the program). Each of those discussions warranted the use of a considerable portion of the BOC meeting, and report outs from that discussions will be included in the August 24, 2026 CWC meeting.

The final hour of the BOC meeting was then dedicated to review of the homework outcomes.

Discussion of homework outcomes

Overall reactions

On the whole, BOC members noted appreciation of the efforts among ICT members to develop a proposal strongly aligned with the direction the CWC had offered over the last several months and, in particular, at the July CWC meeting. They appreciated as well that the ICT did not seek to use the entire \$340M in their proposals, acknowledging the high priority and interest in nonagency programs.

Questions

There were a handful of programs for which there were still some outstanding questions. Some were able to be addressed in the room, some were more rhetorical, and some will need to be considered over a longer period of time. The details can be seen in the recording of the meeting and will be available in minutes in the future, but we were able to reach a point in discussion where members felt comfortable moving forward.

Adjustments

Three programs were considered by some members as candidates for increases, whereas five were identified as possible candidates for cuts. It should be noted that some members did not recommend any changes, and for the cuts, it is possible that some suggested cuts were to make space for the desired increases, but may not have been suggested otherwise. That said, where adjustments were suggested, the adjusted amounts were similar. However, in the remaining time available in the meeting, the BOC was not able to reach agreement, and will instead offer their responses as a starting point for the August 24, 2026 CWC meeting discussion.

CWC members are asked to review this table, as well as review the full draft table to identify if other adjustments are desired.

Agency	Program	FY26-27 Approp	ICT Rec July 2026	Potential + or -	Revised Rec
BWSR	Legacy Partners	\$1M	\$2M	+\$1.75-2M	\$2M-4M
BWSR	Critical Shoreland Easements	\$1M	\$2M	+\$1.75-2M	\$2M-3.75-4M
UMN	Stormwater BMP Perf & Eval Tech Transfer	\$1.6M	\$2M	+\$0.5M	\$2M-2.5M
MPCA	River & Lake Monitoring & Assessment	\$18.9M	\$20.9M	-\$1-1.4M	\$19.5-20.9M
MDH	Private Well Initiative	\$6M	\$10M	-\$2M	\$8-10M
MDA	Nitrate in Groundwater	\$6.2M	\$7.2M	-\$0.5M	\$6.7-7.2M
BWSR	Conservation Drainage	\$2M	\$3M	-\$0.5-0.6M	\$2.4-3M
BWSR	Riparian Protection & Soil Loss Assistance	\$4M	\$3.5M	-\$0.5M	\$3-3.5M

Nonagency programs

As no base numbers were available to consider for nonagency programs, the BOC prioritized their meeting time to setting these draft amounts. Several motions were offered, and not all passed. However, BOC members set the following recommendations through non-unanimous votes in order to be discussed alongside all of the other programs at the August 24, 2026 CWC meeting. The proposed amounts from all BOC members are included in the final column, with the draft amounts listed in bold and dark teal.

Proposal	Prior Appropriations	Requested	Proposed Funding
Voyageurs National Park	\$1.5M	\$8M (\$3M match from St. Louis County)	\$0-2M (\$1.5M 8/14)
Red River Basin River of Dreams*	\$300k-\$326k	\$350k	\$325k-350k, ?? (\$350k 8/14)
River Watch in the Minnesota Valley*	\$0	\$150k	\$100k-150k, ?? (\$75k 8/14)
River Watch – Cannon River Valley*	\$0	\$150k	\$0-100k, ?? (\$0 8/14)
<i>*Perhaps fund these through River & Lakes Monitoring & Assessment</i>			

Next steps

The CWC will review the draft budget at their August 24, 2026 meeting. It is possible that, with more CWC members engaged, other programs may be suggested for increases or decreases than those offered by the BOC. It is also possible that BOC suggestions will be altered during the course of conversation. The BOC will review the budget one more time in September before offering a final draft to the CWC for approval.



Date: July 27, 2026

To: John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair
Steve Christensen, Budget and Outcomes Committee Chair, Clean Water Council
Jen Kader, Clean Water Council Administrator

From: Dana Vanderbosch, Assistant Commissioner, MPCA
Katie Smith, Assistant Commissioner, DNR
Andrea Fish, Assistant Director, BSWR
Myra Kunas, Assistant Commissioner, MDH
Raj Mann, Assistant Division Director, MDA
Sam Paske, Assistant General Manager, Metropolitan Council
Chad Kolstad, Interim Executive Director, Public Facilities Authority
Joel Larson, Associate Director of the Water Resources Center, University of Minnesota

RE: Interagency Recommendations for FY2028-2029 Clean Water Fund Budget

The Clean Water Fund Interagency Coordinating Team (ICT) appreciates the opportunity to provide to the Clean Water Council (CWC) these FY28-29 Clean Water Fund (CWF) budget recommendations for consideration. We strived to create a budget that supports all elements of Minnesota's water management framework. These recommendations reflect:

- a strong commitment to foundational work that supports Minnesota's water management system, and ensures a base of solid science and data on which to effectively target implementation funds and gage progress;
- the input of partners and the CWC priorities; and
- a sustained commitment to funding implementation, incorporating innovations alongside time-tested strategies that increase results.

In recognition that there are applicants for Clean Water Funding from non-state entities, the ICT did not allot the entire amount that Minnesota Management and Budget projects to be available for appropriation in FY28-29. This leaves capacity for the CWC to recommend funding to non-state applicants or supplement state programs, as desired.

The ICT also recognizes that cancellations back to the CWF from previous biennial appropriations are likely and this may mean there is more to allot for FY28-29 after the November 2026 and February 2027 budget forecasts are released. This would allow us to jointly identify additional opportunities for increased investment before the 2027 legislative session.

Budget Recommendations by Agency

Collectively, the budget recommendations are grounded in the watershed approach to protect and restore the state's abundant and diverse water resources. As you know, the watershed approach is a systematic, data-driven, iterative process that allows state agencies and local partners to coordinate to maximize CWF investments. It requires and supports local and state partnerships and includes consideration of water quality, quantity, surface water, groundwater, drinking water, habitat, and recreation. The following paragraphs summarize the proposed FY28-29 recommendations for activities led by each of the ICT member agencies.

I. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

River and Lake Monitoring

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$18,900,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$20,900,000

The Surface Water Monitoring program conducts water chemistry and biological monitoring on lakes, rivers, and streams to determine if waterbodies are impaired or meet standards, detects long-term trends over time at the basin, watershed and subwatershed scales, and identifies areas for protection and restoration. The primary output from the surface water monitoring activities is a large body of high-quality data, which is used in other steps within the Watershed Framework. A primary feature of the surface water monitoring activities is partnership between MPCA and local units of government, educational institutions, and Tribal nations who accomplish the work together. This recommendation ensures work will remain steady, and that two FTE can be hired to manage the large volume of data that is being generated from the new continuous nitrate monitoring network that the Legislature funded two years ago.

Groundwater Trend Monitoring

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$2,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,300,000

Rationale: Groundwater monitoring data are foundational to understanding the condition of Minnesota's groundwater quality. A long-standing Memorandum of Understanding divides groundwater monitoring responsibilities between the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. These data are critical for the development of Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS), and the development and implementation of One Watershed One Plans (1W1P). As more WRAPS, GRAPS and 1W1P are implemented, monitoring remains critical as the means to determine if clean water goals are being met. This program's budget has not been increased in many years. The recommendation ensures work can remain steady, and that high-priority PFAS sampling can be routinely conducted so we can detect contamination as quickly as possible.

Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS)

FY26/27 Appropriation: \$14,500,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$15,000,000

Rationale: WRAPS reports, including Total Maximum Daily Load studies (TMDLs) for impaired waters, are updated with local partners to confirm strategies for impaired waters and unimpaired waters by setting reduction and protection goals, milestones and measures to guide targeted state and local government planning and implementation efforts. Funding also supports updating watershed models as new monitoring data become available. Some of this program's funding moves to local partners who participate in WRAPS updates and supports the We Are Water public engagement traveling exhibit. This recommendation ensures that work remains steady.

Chloride Reduction Program

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,300,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$2,600,000

Rationale: This program provides critical support to communities by providing chloride reduction from road salt and water softening training, and grants to communities so they can implement their chloride management plans. This recommendation recognizes the CWC's desire to see more training and more grants available for on-the-ground chloride reduction work, and it also meets the needs MPCA is hearing from partners. The MPCA is open to discussing additional work once the CWC finalizes its chloride reduction policy.

Subsurface Treatment System Grants (septic systems)

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$6,881,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$6,900,000

Rationale: This program provides critical funding to local units of government to operate their respective SSTS programs and also provides funding to homeowners with low income to replace or repair non-complying septic systems. Both county SSTS programs and grants for SSTS replacement protect groundwater and connected surface water. This recommendation ensures we can maintain the grant levels from the past biennium.

Wastewater and Stormwater TMDL implementation

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$3,200,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,400,000

Rationale: With the completion of hundreds of TMDLs over the past decade and a half, the work to translate wasteload allocations into permit requirements has expanded enormously. Funding for these programs provides technical assistance tools to local units of government and supports staff to accelerate work in the stormwater and wastewater permitting programs that protect lakes and streams. The FY28/29 recommendation will ensure the work effort remains steady.

Clean Water Council Administration

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$922,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,500,000

Rationale: This recommendation reflects the change in CWC administration scope to conduct more stakeholder engagement and communication, as well as hire an additional staff person to assist the Council Administrator.

II. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

Stream Flow Monitoring

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$5,650,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$5,850,000

Rationale: Stream flow monitoring is foundational to assessing water quality, the development of TMDLs, WRAPS, and developing and implementing 1W1Ps. As more WRAPS and 1W1Ps are implemented, monitoring remains critical to measure progress. The recommendation will maintain the current gage network, replace aging equipment and continue to ensure data are readily available to inform decision making and assess progress toward clean water goals.

Lake Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) Assessment

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$3,050,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,300,000

Rationale: Lake IBI assessments are foundational to assessing water quality, the development of TMDLs, WRAPS, developing and implementing 1W1P. Lake IBI assessments started later than stream IBIs conducted by the MPCA and there are still many lakes that need to be completed. This recommendation maintains most of the DNR's core capacity to assess lakes for fish and associated stressor identification.

Fish Contamination Assessment

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,100,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,100,000

Rationale: The DNR traditionally collected fish for mercury and PCB contamination assessment from 70 lake and stream sites using Game and Fish Funds. The Clean Water Fund has been supporting the laboratory costs for an additional 80 lake and stream sites per year. The recommendation maintains the core capacity for the statewide assessment of PFAS compounds in fish tissue.

Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$4,750,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$5,300,000

Rationale: The DNR employs experts in hydrology and geomorphology to support comprehensive assessments and strategy development as part of WRAPS. DNR staff complete targeted surveys and analysis and watershed reports that inform WRAPS and ultimately implementation projects. DNR staff make this information available in the Watershed Health Assessment Framework (WHAF) and other reports. The proposed amount will maintain DNR's capacity to provide this core expertise as part of the interagency watershed approach.

Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$4,700,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$5,300,000

Rationale: The DNR is developing a robust groundwater level monitoring network that informs our understanding of groundwater level trends; the source of drinking water for 75% of Minnesotans. DNR applies this data in groundwater models, technical analysis, and water supply planning. The proposed amount will add up to 25 new monitoring wells, help maintain the current network of about 1,254 wells, and sustain the DNR's capacity to manage and apply the data.

Nonpoint Source Restoration and Protection**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$4,350,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$4,930,000**

Rationale: As the number of completed WRAPS and 1W1P increases, there is an increasing need for DNR experts to provide site-specific technical support for planning and implementing projects. DNR is actively involved in about 80 implementation projects each year, providing design expertise on dam removals, stream restoration and other stabilization projects. DNR staff often help during implementation and construction oversight, filling in critical gaps in local expertise. The proposed amount will maintain this core expertise and continue supporting local government partners.

Tool Development and Evaluation**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,400,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,500,000**

Rationale: The DNR maintains and provides access to LiDAR-derived elevation data that is widely used for targeting and designing implementation projects and for watershed modeling. DNR also assesses relationships among disturbance patterns, BMP applications, and water quality in forested watersheds. The proposed amount will maintain effort on LiDAR related support, maintain effort in forest BMP monitoring. Over the past biennium the DNR has eliminated effort on fine-scale watershed models to evaluate the effects of drainage, soil health and other BMPs.

County Geologic Atlases**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$200,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$200,000**

Rationale: The CWF has enhanced data collection and analysis of the county geologic atlases by providing supplemental chemistry and geology data. The core funding of the atlas program continues to be the LCCMR and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, along with state general fund resources. The proposed amount restores capacity to supplement the atlas data collection efforts that have previously resulted in significant efforts to target nitrate reduction in southeastern Minnesota.

Mussel Restoration Program**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$700,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$750,000**

Rationale: Of the 50 native freshwater mussel species in Minnesota, 61% are low in number, declining and their persistence is in jeopardy. Mussels are efficient natural filterers of water, including removal of sediment, nutrients and bacteria and they provide habitat for other aquatic species. The DNR has developed the expertise to grow and restore mussel populations and upgraded facilities to support an expansion and more rapid restoration of mussels throughout Minnesota. The amount requested will provide support to significantly maintain higher propagation, rearing and restoration efforts.

Culvert Replacement Incentive Program**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$2,900,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,000,000**

Rationale: Minnesota's public roads intersect the state's natural perennial flowing watercourses at approximately 65,000 locations. Many of the culvert structures at these locations are failing and require replacement. A culvert replacement and incentive program would provide financial and technical assistance for counties and other local governments to modernize culvert systems to address climate resiliency, restore fish communities, and reduce sediment loads (two major sources of impairment). This proposal will accelerate the adoption of alternative culvert designs that improve biological connectivity, channel stability, reduce flood stage and lower long-term maintenance costs. This proposal will fund approximately 12 projects with a 25% cost share. Funds would need to be available until spent to allow for sufficient local planning and implementation.

Natural Shoreline Protection Program (New)**FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,800,000**

Rationale: Nearly 50% of Minnesota's natural shorelines have vanished due to suburban-style development and lawn manicuring. This conversion allows up to nine times more pollutants into lakes and degrading critical fish and wildlife habitats. Protecting and restoring native plant buffers is essential to filter runoff and anchor soil.

This program will enhance funding for the Lake Steward program, sponsored by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers, and provide funding for permanent lakeshore conservation easements to protect priority lakes by restoring natural shorelines and reducing pollutant loading.

III. Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)

One Watershed, One Plan

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,000,000

Rationale: As more comprehensive watershed management plans mature, increased funding is needed to keep plans current through plan evaluations and updates that reflect new data, implementation experience, and emerging priorities. Maintaining current plans ensures implementation funding continues to be targeted to the highest-priority projects, strengthens local and Tribal partnerships, and preserves the effectiveness of Minnesota's watershed-based approach.

Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF)

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$88,100,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$96,000,000

Rationale: While moving at a slower rate than the implementation trajectory calls for, continued growth in WBIF is necessary to keep pace with rising projects costs and to meet the demand by partnerships to help fund the goals set out in their plans. Stable funding provides local governments and Tribal partners the certainty needed to invest in staff, leverage additional resources, and deliver measurable water quality improvements for priority resources identified in watershed plans.

Accelerated Implementation

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$8,700,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$9,000,000

Rationale: As we continue to hear a demand from local and Tribal government partners for more training and tools, this recommendation helps to maintain program capacity. Funding is needed to expand technical assistance through Technical Service Areas, technical training & certifications, and implementation support that directly increases the pace and quality of conservation project delivery. These investments leverage federal matching funds while building the local capacity required to move priority projects from planning to implementation.

Conservation Drainage (*Multipurpose Drainage Management*)

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$2,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,000,000

Rationale: Demand for multipurpose drainage projects continues to exceed available funding. Increased investment will allow more high-impact drainage system improvements to incorporate conservation practices during infrequent system upgrades, producing long-term water quality benefits while expanding implementation of new conservation solutions identified by the Drainage Work Group.

Measures, Results, and Accountability

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$2,500,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$2,780,000

Rationale: Continued investment ensures accountability for CWF expenditures by measuring, evaluating, and communicating program outcomes. Maintaining robust performance reporting and grant oversight improves program effectiveness, supports legislative accountability, and demonstrates the return on public investment.

Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance (*Buffer Law Implementation*)

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$4,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,500,000

Rationale: Stable funding is necessary to maintain statewide buffer compliance through continued monitoring, technical assistance, and local implementation support. Sustained investment protects previous gains in compliance and prevents increased enforcement costs by helping landowners remain in compliance. The FY28/29 recommendation reflects the Council's direction to decrease funding support, without compromising the integrity of the previous investments.

Surface and Drinking Water Protection & Restoration (*Projects and Practices*)**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$6,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$7,500,000**

Rationale: Demand for project funding consistently exceeds available resources, with requests typically totaling twice the available funding. Conservation project costs have increased by 6%-15% statewide, year over year in the previous 2 years. The increase reflects a recovery from the cuts from the shortfall last biennium, and an increased investment to fund more high-priority, shovel-ready projects. An increase in funding will also allow local governments to capitalize on time-sensitive opportunities, including the protection of drinking water resources while avoiding higher future project costs.

Watershed Partners Legacy Partners**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$2,000,000**

Rationale: The proposal doubles the previous appropriation for the program. Based on the priority of the CWC, increased funding is needed to address demand from Tribal Nations and nonprofit conservation organizations and to expand participation through a more flexible funding approach for Tribes. Additional investment will build implementation capacity and allow more high-quality projects aligned with local watershed priorities to move forward.

Enhancing Cover Crops for Adoption (*Joint Soil Health Program*)**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$9,486,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$12,500,000**

Rationale: Increased funding supports expansion of technical assistance and implementation needed to meet growing demand for soil health practices, including restoring funding to the FY24-25 level of \$12M, and adding a new, southeast Minnesota performance-based pilot program, all while leveraging available federal matching funds and aligned LCCMR funding (Olmsted County) to maximize conservation outcomes.

Tillage and Erosion Transects**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$850,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$850,000**

Rationale: Maintaining funding ensures continued collection of consistent, scientifically valid statewide data used to target conservation investments, improve watershed models, and evaluate conservation outcomes. Reliable, long-term data is essential for informed water quality planning and decision-making.

Technical Evaluation**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$200,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$220,000**

Rationale: Continued funding supports independent evaluation of restoration projects, improving accountability and ensuring future investments are informed by demonstrated project performance. Evaluation findings strengthen conservation effectiveness and provide legislators and partners with credible information on program outcomes. The increase reflects two biennia of inflation, as the appropriation has remained the same during that time period.

Wetland Restoration Easements**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$5,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$8,000,000**

Rationale: Increased funding is needed to capitalize on high-priority restoration opportunities before they are permanently lost. Wetland restoration provides multiple public benefits from a single investment, and this program remains one of Minnesota's most effective tools for achieving large-scale water quality improvements while leveraging federal conservation funding. This is BWSR's top priority easement program and work may be done in cooperation with the USDA or other agencies to leverage federal funding.

Targeted Wellhead/Drinking Water Protection Easements**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$5,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$2,000,000**

Rationale: Continued investment is needed to protect additional high-priority drinking water supply areas. Rising land values and increasing development pressure make proactive land protection more cost-effective

than delaying conservation investments or constructing costly drinking water treatment systems that many small water suppliers struggle to fund and maintain.

Working Lands Floodplain Easements

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$2,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$2,300,000

Rationale: Increased funding responds to growing demand for working lands easements that improve water quality while maintaining productive agricultural use and will keep the program at a sustainable level. This program sets aside sensitive land in riverine and riparian corridors to address water quality concerns, and climate adaptation and mitigation goals, and creates opportunities to leverage additional conservation funding and achieve multiple watershed benefits through a single investment.

Critical Shorelands Easements

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$2,000,000

Rationale: Increased funding is needed to capitalize on time-sensitive land protection opportunities before development permanently alters high-quality shorelands. Strong demand from local partners, increasing development pressure, and aging landownership make consistent investment critical to protecting Minnesota's highest-quality waters. FY26-27 appropriation amount was suggested by BWSR as a budget solution for the biennium because of the additional funding this program received in FY24. This request is in line with historic appropriations for this easement program.

Great Lakes Restoration

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,060,000

Rationale: Continued funding enables soil and water conservation districts in the Lake Superior Basin to leverage significant federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative investments. State funding provides the local capacity and matching resources necessary to maximize federal dollars and accelerate implementation of priority watershed projects.

Conservation Corp of Minnesota and Iowa

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,500,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,600,000

Rationale: Continued investment maintains critical on-the-ground implementation capacity that many local governments and Tribal Nations rely on to complete conservation projects. The program also develops Minnesota's conservation workforce while accelerating delivery of CWF investments.

IV. Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)

Future of Drinking Water

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$500,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$500,000

Rationale: Current federal and state regulations no longer provide adequate protection for customers of public water systems and users of private wells. This initiative supports MDH's implementation of the **Minnesota Drinking Water Action Plan** to protect Minnesotans against new threats that endanger our vision of safe and sufficient drinking water for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota. In addition, this initiative will focus on implementation of select activities named in the Action Plan that will prepare both public and private well supplies to adapt to an uncertain future.

Source Water Protection

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$7,690,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$8,120,000

Rationale: Protecting our sources of drinking water (groundwater, rivers, and lakes) is the most equitable and cost-effective approach to safeguarding our drinking water now and for future generations. This support facilitates planning and implementation specific to local needs for protecting drinking water sources and includes small grants for public water systems to implement actions identified in their Source Water Protection Plans. Additionally, program assets are being directed toward 1) enhancing the characterization of source water quality conditions using rigorous screening, monitoring, and analysis and 2) fulfilling MDH and CWC strategic

objectives of securing long-term protection for the most vulnerable lands in drinking water system management areas statewide and protection plans for community systems that use surface waters as their source of drinking water.

Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$3,500,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,500,000

Rationale: GRAPS is an interagency effort to coordinate the delivery of state agency groundwater and drinking water data, information, and implementation strategies for use at the local level. The aim is to facilitate local efforts to benefit groundwater resource restoration and protection. Key efforts include the following:

1) migrating data and information to online tools, 2) completing a GRAPS report for every comprehensive watershed planning (1W1P) by end of FY28 so that local partners have groundwater information resources for implementation planning, and 3) building local capacity through education, outreach, and financial assistance.

Private Well Initiative

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$6,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$10,000,000

Rationale: Unlike people who get their drinking water from public water system, people who get their drinking water from a private well (private well users) are largely on their own for ensuring that water from their well is safe for their household. As part of our commitment for equity, we are increasing education, technical support, and financial assistance for private well users so they can be confident in the safety and quality of their drinking water. This initiative continues to make progress towards the Council's vision of offering free private well testing to 10% of private well users each year. By the end of FY29, the initiative is on track to have free private well testing available for 50% of Minnesota's private well users and on track to meet the 2034 goal of offering free private well testing to all private well households.

Contaminants of Emerging Concern

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$11,850,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$11,850,000

Rationale: Maintain program capacity for evaluating contaminants of emerging concern (CEC). The health-based evaluation of known and new contaminants in drinking water is the starting point for assessing the threat to public health and potential public health burden. The values developed in this initiative are widely used by sister agencies. Technical assistance is given by the CEC program to citizens, companies, and other state agencies on interpreting and evaluating what CEC concentrations in water mean for human health. This initiative also develops analytical methods for laboratories to improve detection of emerging contaminants and ensures that accredited laboratories performing analytical water testing are accountable to standards that support defensible and accurate data.

Recreational Water Quality Online Portal

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$600,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$600,000

Rationale: While many people assume all beaches are monitored, beach testing is conducted at the discretion of the entity responsible for the beach (often a local public health agency). This initiative maintains the statewide recreational water testing portal that allows Minnesotans to go to one online location to access information on any recreational water testing conducted or beach closures currently in place. Additionally, the portal allows users to be made aware of any alerts currently in place at the beach of interest, such as the appearance of harmful algal blooms or major pollution events.

V. Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)

Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$740,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$800,000

Rationale: Pesticide monitoring is critical to assess water quality compared to environmental standards (assessing impaired waters); evaluate the risk to drinking water from both surface and groundwater sources; and evaluate the need for and effectiveness of restrictions on product use or voluntary best management practices. Clean Water funding has 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 that can be analyzed on an annual basis. The expansion has allowed the MDA to test additional public water supply wells, lakes, rivers/streams, wetlands including water samples collected on Tribal land.

Pesticide Testing of Private Wells

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,100,000

Rationale: The primary goal of testing wells for pesticides is to provide information to homeowners and the public about the presence of pesticides in private drinking water wells and in groundwater. Funding is for free pesticide testing of private wells in areas where groundwater may be at risk for elevated pesticide concentrations. Earlier phases of the project 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—represented the greatest pesticide-related risk to private well users. Building on these findings, upcoming sampling will prioritize these compounds, along with nitrate and select insecticides and fungicides in vulnerable aquifers, to ensure continued monitoring of contaminants most likely to affect groundwater quality.

AgBMP Loan Program

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$4,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$4,500,000

Rationale: AgBMP loans can be used for the implementation of any practice that reduces or mitigates the effects of water pollution. The purpose is to encourage agricultural best management practices and other practices that prevent or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields and for other pollution problems identified by the county in local water plans. Funding can also be used to replace or treat contaminated wells. The program is administered by local governments and local loaning institutions and has extremely low administration costs. AgBMP loans are frequently used to leverage additional funding. Loans are repaid into the corpus of the account and will be available for future clean water projects regardless of the renewal of the CWF. The demand for Ag BMP loans greatly exceeds available funding.

Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$7,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$7,470,000

Rationale: The proposed budget serves to meet expanding demand and associate needs for program delivery including implementation grants, growing number of participating farms to audit, and overall labor demands to serve increasing participation. This funding provides for MAWQCP to meet seven goals in the CWC's 2024 Strategic Plan. Greater than 50% of funding is pass-through for soil and water conservation districts and supports implementation. The funding is required as match to leverage and maintain a \$10,000,000 federal EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG).

Technical Assistance

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$3,200,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,980,000

Rationale: Technical assistance is a primary vehicle to work with the agricultural community to promote best management practices. This funding is used to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation practices, demonstrate practices that protect water and enhance outreach and education of recommended agricultural practices to the agricultural community and local government partners. Technical assistance activities fill an important need for field demonstrations and validation of practices to protect water quality.

Irrigation Water Quality Program

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$310,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$330,000

Rationale: 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 best management practices (BMPs), and contributes to the development of irrigation scheduling tools for Minnesota irrigators.

Nitrate in Groundwater**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$6,200,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$7,200,000**

Rationale: 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 nitrogen 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.

Research Inventory Database (MnWRL)**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$100,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$80,000**

Rationale: The MnWRL is a user-friendly, searchable inventory of water research relevant to Minnesota. It provides “one-stop” access to all types of water research, including both peer-reviewed articles and white papers and reports. MnWRL provides access to water related information, enabling water managers, researchers, engaged citizens and others to easily find, share, and coordinate research to support their efforts to protect, conserve, manage and restore water in Minnesota.

Forever Green Initiative (FGI)**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$5,000,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$6,660,000**

Rationale: The 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. CWF advances research, implementation, and partnerships that expand these crops across Minnesota’s agricultural landscape.

Conservation Equipment Assistance**FY26-27 Appropriation: \$3,500,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,500,000**

Rationale: Conservation Equipment Assistance supports the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Soil Health Financial Assistance Program (SHFAP), which provides grants to producers, producer groups, and local governments to purchase or retrofit equipment that implements soil-health practices. A primary obstacle to expanding soil health is access to the specialized equipment necessary for successful adoption of 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 to directly protect water quality by reducing erosion and curbing sediment and nutrient runoff. The appropriation is required as match to leverage and maintain a federal EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) award.

Manure BMP and Water Quality Specialist (NEW)**FY28-29 Recommendation: \$330,000**

Rationale: 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 Southeast and Central Minnesota. Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the 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.

VI. Metropolitan Council

Water Demand Reduction Grant Program

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,400,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,400,000

Rationale: The program is a Metropolitan Council and local community cost share program that provides 100% pass-through water efficiency grants to metro municipalities. This popular, over-subscribed program provided critical support to address the drought of 2021. The proposed budget was set to continue to meet growing needs by communities implementing water demand reduction measures to use groundwater more wisely, particularly in areas with drinking water contamination or water availability issues. The funds protect drinking water supplies and support the reliability and resiliency of water suppliers to serve homes, businesses, and growth.

Metropolitan Area Water Sustainability Support

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$2,750,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$3,000,000

Rationale: This program helps municipalities and industries in the Twin Cities metro area as they plan and implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats and overall water sustainability, provide cost-effective regional solutions, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of wellhead protection plans, and prevent degradation of groundwater and surface water resources. Activities in this program provide metro communities with:

- III. Potential solutions to better connect land use impacts on water supply and overall water sustainability
- IV. Ways to balance regional water use through utilization of surface water, storm water, wastewater and groundwater
- V. Analysis of infrastructure requirements needed to maintain and strengthen the reliability of water systems
- VI. Development of planning level cost estimates, including capital cost and operation cost
- VII. Funding mechanisms and equitable cost-sharing structure for regionally beneficial water supply development projects
- VIII. Information and tools to use to address climate change impacts on overall water supply systems and overall water sustainability
- IX. Ways to reduce impacts on our groundwater system including funds to communities for stormwater reuse

Through established workgroups, the Met Council will collaborate with local units of government, state agencies and other stakeholders to collaboratively address local and regional water sustainability issues.

VII. Public Facilities Authority (PFA)

Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Program

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$16,440,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$18,000,000

Rationale: The PSIG program provides essential assistance to cities to upgrade water treatment facilities needed to meet required wasteload reductions to address impaired waters and protect threatened waterbodies. Program funding has been supplemented in the past with bonding appropriations; however, annual applications consistently exceed available funds. Currently the PSIG funding list has over \$160 million of projects outside that funding range and construction costs only continue to grow.

Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$100,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$100,000

Rationale: The Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program provides grants and loans to assist small unsewered communities with technical assistance and construction funding to replace non-complying septic systems with community subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS). These funds allow small communities to evaluate and implement lower cost decentralized treatment alternatives to address their wastewater needs.

VIII. University of Minnesota

Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation & Technology Transfer

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$1,600,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$2,000,000

Rationale: Provides research and technology transfer to address priority water resource needs for Minnesota communities. Research is completed through a competitive grant program to develop new stormwater practices and policies as well as improving the effectiveness of existing practices. Technology transfer is a crucial aspect of the program and translates emerging research results to Minnesota stormwater professionals and practitioners through training, outreach, and Extension.

Geologic Atlas with Dept. of Natural Resources

FY26-27 Appropriation: \$800,000 FY28-29 Recommendation: \$1,000,000

Rationale: Develops county Geologic Atlases, which include maps and databases essential for improved management of ground and surface water. This is foundational data that supports management of drinking water, domestic and industrial supply, irrigation, and aquatic habitat. The distribution of geologic materials defines aquifer boundaries and the connection of aquifers to the land surface and to surface water resources to enable a comprehensive water management effort.

Program priorities for ICT and proposers

July 20, 2026

The Budget and Outcomes Committee and Full Council have developed the following list of priorities for programs seeking increases. A full reflection of Council priorities which includes “Hold Steady” and “Decrease” programs can be seen in the excel spreadsheet and PDF that has also been sent with this document.

Green text shows the change in funding for the programs from the current FY26-27 appropriation to the current ICT recommendations, and the % change that represents (past reductions to programs are not shown here). These figures show strong alignment between the CWC priorities below and the ICT recommendations.

Tier 1

- Direction to proposers: Emphasize increases here first, but do not wipe out total available for increase.

Program name	Council Priority	Rationale
Forever Green – increasing from \$5M to \$6.66M, a 33% increase	High	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 – increasing from \$88.1M to \$96M, a 9% increase	High	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 – increasing from \$.922M to \$1.5M, a 63% increase	High	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 increasing existing program from \$9.486M to \$12.5M, a 32% increase, and adds new pilot component	High	Financial leverage of historic soil health funds Innovation of soil health funds Implementation on the ground
Critical Shoreland Easements increasing from \$1M to \$2M, a 100% increase	High	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 increasing from \$2M to \$2.3M, a 15% increase	High	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 increasing from \$5M to \$8M, a 60% increase	High	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 increasing from \$7.69M to \$8.12M, a 5.6% increase	High	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 increasing from \$2M to \$3M, a 50% increase	High	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
Legacy Partners increasing from \$1M to \$2M, a 100% increase	High	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
Chloride Reduction increasing from \$1.3M to \$2.6M, a 100% increase	High	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
Native Mussels increasing from \$.7M to \$.75M, a 7% increase	High	Ecosystem services, support for fish and wildlife Restoring native species to rivers Nature-based solutions Innovation and science-based approach Improve fishable and swimmable
River Watch (both programs) not agency programs	High	Community and youth engagement aspect, connection with the schools Social change, build water literacy Increase funding to diverse audiences
Stormwater Research Program increasing from \$1.6M to \$2M, a 25% increase	High	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
Private Well Initiative increasing from \$6M to \$10M, a 67% increase	High	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 increasing from \$2M to \$3.3M, a 65% increase	High	Groundwater quality assessment, increase for PFAS focus

Tier 2

- Direction to proposers: Still work to ensure meaningful increase but as second priority

Program name	Council Priority	Rationale
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Drinking Water Easements decreasing from \$5M to \$2M, a 60% decrease	High	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
AgBMP Loans increasing from \$4M to \$4.5M, a 12.5% increase	High	Good use of funding--loans that are paid back and reutilized Helps move adoption and innovation Strong public support
Natural Shorelines (NEW) as a new program, increasing from \$0 to \$1.8M	High/Med	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 increasing from \$6.2M to \$7.2M, a 16% increase	High	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
Accelerated Implementation increasing from \$8.7M to \$9M, a 3.4% increase	High	Technically- and science-driven High level of innovation Targeted using local input, 1W1P
MAWQCP increasing from \$7M to \$7.47M, a 6.7% increase	High	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 Grants increasing from \$16.44M to \$18M, a 9.5% increase	High	Support municipalities This work continues to be needed
Surface Water and Drinking Water Protection Restoration increasing from	High	Strong level of local engagement by multiple partners Drinking water as a strategic plan priority

\$6M to \$7.5M, a 25% increase		
River and Lake Monitoring increasing from \$18.9M to \$20.9M, a 10.6% increase	High	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 increasing from \$3.2M to \$3.98M, a 24% increase	High	Research on feasibility and effectiveness of solutions we are trying to implement
Manure and Water Quality Specialist (NEW) as a new program, increasing from \$0 to \$.33M	High	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
County Geologic Atlas Part A increasing from \$.8M to \$1M, a 20% increase	High	Foundational for Part B Counties rely on these for Groundwater and Drinking Water

Tier 3

- Direction to proposers: Continue to increase as funds are available

Program Name	Council Priority
Enhanced SSTS Program Support increasing from \$6.881M to \$6.9M, a 1.7% increase	High
Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Project not agency programs	High

Agency	Program Activity	Enacted budget FY2026-27 (000s)	CWC priority and funding direction	ICT recs FY2028-29 (000s)
	Monitoring, Assessment, and Characterization			
MPCA	River and Lake Monitoring & Assessment: The Surface Water Monitoring program conducts water chemistry and biological monitoring on lakes, rivers, and streams to determine if waterbodies are impaired or meet standards, detects long-term trends over time at the basin, watershed and subwatershed scales, and identifies areas for protection and restoration. The primary output from the surface water monitoring activities is a large body of high-quality data, which is used in other steps within the Watershed Framework. A primary feature of the surface water monitoring activities is partnership between MPCA and local units of government, educational institutions, and Tribal nations who accomplish the work together. This recommendation ensures work will remain steady, and that two FTE can be hired to manage the large volume of data that is being generated from the new continuous nitrate monitoring network that the Legislature funded two years ago.	\$18,900	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$20,900
MPCA	Groundwater assessment: Groundwater monitoring data are foundational to understanding the condition of Minnesota’s groundwater quality. A long-standing Memorandum of Understanding divides groundwater monitoring responsibilities between the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. These data are critical for the development of Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS), and the development and implementation of One Watershed One Plans (1W1P). As more WRAPS, GRAPS and 1W1P are implemented, monitoring remains critical as the means to determine if clean water goals are being met. This program’s budget has not been increased in many years. The recommendation ensures work can remain steady, and that high-priority PFAS sampling can be routinely conducted so we can detect contamination as quickly as possible.	\$2,000	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$3,300
DNR	Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning: The DNR is developing a robust groundwater level monitoring network that informs our understanding of groundwater level trends; the source of drinking water for 75% of Minnesotans. DNR applies these data in groundwater models, technical analysis, and water supply planning. The proposed amount will add up to 25 new monitoring wells, help maintain the current network of about 1,254 wells, and sustain the DNR’s capacity to manage and apply the data.	\$4,700	High priority, hold steady	\$5,300
DNR	Fish Contamination Assessment: The DNR traditionally collected fish for mercury and PCB contamination assessment from 70 lake and stream sites using Game and Fish Funds. The Clean Water Fund has been supporting the laboratory costs for an additional 80 lake and stream sites per year. The recommendation maintains the core capacity for the statewide assessment of PFAS compounds in fish tissue.	\$1,100	High priority, hold steady	\$1,100
DNR	Lake IBI assessment: Lake IBI assessments are foundational to assessing water quality, the development of TMDLs, WRAPS, developing and implementing 1W1P. Lake IBI assessments started later than stream IBIs conducted by the MPCA and there are still many lakes that need to be completed. This recommendation maintains most of the DNR’s core capacity to assess lakes for fish and associated stressor identification.	\$3,050	High priority, hold steady	\$3,300
DNR	Stream flow monitoring: Stream flow monitoring is foundational to assessing water quality, the development of TMDLs, WRAPS, and developing and implementing 1W1Ps. As more WRAPS and 1W1Ps are implemented, monitoring remains critical to measure progress. The recommendation will maintain the current gage network, replace aging equipment and continue to ensure data are readily available to inform decision making and assess progress toward clean water goals.	\$5,650	High priority, hold steady	\$5,850
MDA	Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater: Pesticide monitoring is critical to assess water quality compared to environmental standards (assessing impaired waters); evaluate the risk to drinking water from both surface and groundwater sources; and, evaluate the need for and effectiveness of restrictions on product use or voluntary best management practices. Clean Water funding has 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 that can be analyzed on an annual basis. The expansion has allowed the MDA to test additional public water supply wells, lakes, rivers/streams, wetlands including water samples collected on Tribal land.	\$740	High priority, hold steady	\$800
MDA	Pesticide Testing of Private Wells: The primary goal of testing wells for pesticides is to provide information to homeowners and the public about the presence of pesticides in private drinking water wells and in groundwater. Funding is for free pesticide testing of private wells in areas where groundwater may be at risk for elevated pesticide concentrations. Earlier phases of the project 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— represented the greatest pesticide-related risk to private well users. Building on these findings, upcoming sampling will prioritize these compounds, along with nitrate and select insecticides and fungicides in vulnerable aquifers, to ensure continued monitoring of contaminants most likely to affect groundwater quality.	\$1,000	High priority, hold steady	\$1,100
MDH	Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern Program: Maintain program capacity for evaluating contaminants of emerging concern (CEC). The health-based evaluation of known and new contaminants in drinking water is the starting point for assessing the threat to public health and potential public health burden. The values developed in this initiative are widely used by sister agencies. Technical assistance is given by the CEC program to citizens, companies, and other state agencies on interpreting and evaluating what CEC concentrations in water mean for human health. This initiative also develops analytical methods for laboratories to improve detection of emerging contaminants and ensures that accredited laboratories performing analytical water testing are accountable to standards that support defensible and accurate data.	\$11,850	High priority, hold steady	\$11,850
MDH	Private Well Initiative: Unlike people who get their drinking water from public water system, people who get their drinking water from a private well (private well users) are largely on their own for ensuring that water from their well is safe for their household. As part of our commitment for equity, we are increasing education, technical support, and financial assistance for private well users so they can be confident in the safety and quality of their drinking water. This initiative continues to make progress towards the Council’s vision of offering free private well testing to 10% of private well users each year. By the end of FY29, the initiative is on track to have free private well testing available for 50% of Minnesota’s private well users and on track to meet the 2034 goal of offering free private well testing to all private well households.	\$6,000	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$10,000
	Monitoring, Assessment, and Characterization total	\$54,990		\$63,500
	Watershed & Groundwater Restoration/Protection Strategies			

Agency	Program Activity	Enacted budget FY2026-27 (000s)	CWC priority and funding direction	ICT recs FY2028-29 (000s)
MPCA	Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies: WRAPS reports, including Total Maximum Daily Load studies (TMDLs) for impaired waters, are updated with local partners to confirm strategies for impaired waters and unimpaired waters by setting reduction and protection goals, milestones and measures to guide targeted state and local government planning and implementation efforts. Funding also supports updating watershed models as new monitoring data become available. Some of this program’s funding moves to local partners who participate in WRAPS updates and supports the We Are Water public engagement traveling exhibit. This recommendation ensures that work remains steady.	\$14,500	High priority, hold steady	\$15,000
DNR	Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies: The DNR employs experts in hydrology and geomorphology to support comprehensive assessments and strategy development as part of WRAPS. DNR staff complete targeted surveys and analysis and watershed reports that inform WRAPS and ultimately implementation projects. DNR staff make this information available in the Watershed Health Assessment Framework (WHAf) and other reports. The proposed amount will maintain DNR’s capacity to provide this core expertise as part of the interagency watershed approach.	\$4,750	High priority, hold steady	\$5,300
MDH	Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies: GRAPS is an interagency effort to coordinate the delivery of state agency groundwater and drinking water data, information, and implementation strategies for use at the local level. The aim is to facilitate local efforts to benefit groundwater resource restoration and protection. Key efforts include the following: 1) migrating data and information to online tools, 2) completing a GRAPS report for every comprehensive watershed planning (1W1P) by end of FY28 so that local partners have groundwater information resources for implementation planning, and 3) building local capacity through education, outreach, and financial assistance.	\$3,500	High priority, hold steady	\$3,500
MDH	Source Water Protection: Protecting our sources of drinking water (groundwater, rivers, and lakes) is the most equitable and cost-effective approach to safeguarding our drinking water now and for future generations. This support facilitates planning and implementation specific to local needs for protecting drinking water sources and includes small grants for public water systems to implement actions identified in their Source Water Protection Plans. Additionally, program assets are being directed toward 1) enhancing the characterization of source water quality conditions using rigorous screening, monitoring, and analysis and 2) fulfilling MDH and CWC strategic objectives of securing long-term protection for the most vulnerable lands in drinking water system management areas statewide and protection plans for community systems that use surface waters as their source of drinking water.	\$7,690	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$8,120
	Watershed & Groundwater Restoration/Protection Strategies total	\$30,440		\$31,920
	Comprehensive Local Watershed Management			
BWSR	Water Management Transition (One Watershed One Plan): As more comprehensive watershed management plans mature, increased funding is needed to keep plans current through plan evaluations and updates that reflect new data, implementation experience, and emerging priorities. Maintaining current plans ensures implementation funding continues to be targeted to the highest-priority projects, strengthens local and Tribal partnerships, and preserves the effectiveness of Minnesota’s watershed-based approach.	\$1,000	High priority, hold steady	\$1,000
	Comprehensive Local Watershed Management total	\$1,000		\$1,000
	Nonpoint source implementation			
BWSR	Implementation Funding for Watersheds with Approved Comprehensive Watershed Plans (Watershed-based Implementation Funding): While moving at a slower rate than the implementation trajectory calls for, continued growth in WBIF is necessary to keep pace with rising projects costs and to meet the demand by partnerships to help fund the goals set out in their plans. Stable funding provides local governments and Tribal partners the certainty needed to invest in staff, leverage additional resources, and deliver measurable water quality improvements for priority resources identified in watershed plans.	\$88,100	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$96,000
BWSR	Accelerated Implementation: As we continue to hear a demand from local and Tribal government partners for more training and tools, this recommendation helps to maintain program capacity. Funding is needed to expand technical assistance through Technical Service Areas, technical training & certifications, and implementation support that directly increases the pace and quality of conservation project delivery. These investments leverage federal matching funds while building the local capacity required to move priority projects from planning to implementation.	\$8,700	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$9,000
BWSR	Conservation Drainage Management and Assistance: Demand for multipurpose drainage projects continues to exceed available funding. Increased investment will allow more high-impact drainage system improvements to incorporate conservation practices during infrequent system upgrades, producing long-term water quality benefits while expanding implementation of new conservation solutions identified by the Drainage Work Group.	\$2,000	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$3,000
BWSR	Critical Shoreland Protection-Permanent Conservation Easements: Increased funding is needed to capitalize on time-sensitive land protection opportunities before development permanently alters high-quality shorelands. Strong demand from local partners, increasing development pressure, and aging landownership make consistent investment critical to protecting Minnesota’s highest-quality waters. FY26-27 appropriation amount was suggested by BWSR as a budget solution for the biennium because of the additional funding this program received in FY24. This request is in line with historic appropriations for this easement program.	\$1,000	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$2,000
BWSR	Wetland restoration easements: Increased funding is needed to capitalize on high-priority restoration opportunities before they are permanently lost. Wetland restoration provides multiple public benefits from a single investment, and this program remains one of Minnesota’s most effective tools for achieving large-scale water quality improvements while leveraging federal conservation funding. This is BWSR’s top priority easement program and work may be done in cooperation with the USDA or other agencies to leverage federal funding.	\$5,000	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$8,000
BWSR	Measures, Results and Accountability: Continued investment ensures accountability for CWF expenditures by measuring, evaluating, and communicating program outcomes. Maintaining robust performance reporting and grant oversight improves program effectiveness, supports legislative accountability, and demonstrates the return on public investment.	\$2,500	High priority, hold steady	\$2,780

Agency	Program Activity	Enacted budget FY2026-27 (000s)	CWC priority and funding direction	ICT recs FY2028-29 (000s)
BWSR	Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance (Buffer Law Implementation): Stable funding is necessary to maintain statewide buffer compliance through continued monitoring, technical assistance, and local implementation support. Sustained investment protects previous gains in compliance and prevents increased enforcement costs by helping landowners remain in compliance. The FY28/29 recommendation reflects the Council’s direction to decrease funding support, without compromising the integrity of the previous investments.	\$4,000	Medium priority, reduce	\$3,500
BWSR	Working Land and Floodplain Easements: Increased funding responds to growing demand for working lands easements that improve water quality while maintaining productive agricultural use and will keep the program at a sustainable level. This program sets aside sensitive land in riverine and riparian corridors to address water quality concerns, and climate adaptation and mitigation goals, and also creates opportunities to leverage additional conservation funding and achieve multiple watershed benefits through a single investment.	\$2,000	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$2,300
BWSR	Surface and Drinking Water Protection/Restoration Grants: Demand for project funding consistently exceeds available resources, with requests typically totaling twice the available funding. Conservation project costs have increased by 6%-15% statewide, year over year in the previous 2 years. The increase reflects a recovery from the cuts from the shortfall last biennium, and an increased investment to fund more high-priority, shovel-ready projects. An increase in funding will also allow local governments to capitalize on time-sensitive opportunities, including the protection of drinking water resources while avoiding higher future project costs.	\$6,000	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$7,500
BWSR	Watershed Partners Legacy (WPL) Grants: The proposal doubles the previous appropriation for the program. Based on the priority of the CWC, increased funding is needed to address demand from Tribal Nations and nonprofit conservation organizations and to expand participation through a more flexible funding approach for Tribes. Additional investment will build implementation capacity and allow more high-quality projects aligned with local watershed priorities to move forward.	\$1,000	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$2,000
BWSR	Enhancing Landowner Adoption of Soil Health Practices for Drinking Water & Groundwater Protection: Increased funding supports expansion of technical assistance and implementation needed to meet growing demand for soil health practices, including restoring funding to the FY24-25 level of \$12M, and adding a new, southeast Minnesota performance-based pilot program, all while leveraging available federal matching funds and aligned LCCMR funding (Olmsted County) to maximize conservation outcomes.	\$9,486	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$12,500
BWSR	Lake Superior leveraging of GLRI/federal funds: Continued funding enables soil and water conservation districts in the Lake Superior Basin to leverage significant federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative investments. State funding provides the local capacity and matching resources necessary to maximize federal dollars and accelerate implementation of priority watershed projects.	\$1,000	Split high and medium priority, hold steady	\$1,060
BWSR	MN & IA Conservation Corps. Continued investment maintains critical on-the-ground implementation capacity that many local governments and Tribal Nations rely on to complete conservation projects. The program also develops Minnesota’s conservation workforce while accelerating delivery of CWF investments.	\$1,500	Medium priority, hold steady	\$1,600
DNR	Nonpoint source restoration and protection activities: As the number of completed WRAPS and 1W1P increase, there is an increasing need for DNR experts to provide site-specific technical support for planning and implementing projects. DNR is actively involved in about 80 implementation projects each year, providing design expertise on dam removals, stream restoration and other stabilization projects. DNR staff often help during implementation and construction oversight, filling in critical gaps in local expertise. The proposed amount will maintain this core expertise and continue supporting local government partners.	\$4,350	High priority, hold steady	\$4,930
DNR	Mussel Restoration: Of the 50 native freshwater mussel species in Minnesota, 61% are low in number, declining and their persistence is in jeopardy. Mussels are efficient natural filterers of water, including removal of sediment, nutrients and bacteria and they provide habitat for other aquatic species. The DNR has developed the expertise to grow and restore mussel populations and upgraded facilities to support an expansion and more rapid restoration of mussels throughout Minnesota. The amount requested will provide support to significantly maintain higher propagation, rearing and restoration efforts.	\$700	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$750
DNR	Culvert replacement Incentive Program: Minnesota’s public roads intersect the state’s natural perennial flowing watercourses at approximately 65,000 locations. Many of the culvert structures at these locations are failing and require replacement. A culvert replacement and incentive program would provide financial and technical assistance for counties and other local governments to modernize culvert systems to address climate resiliency, restore fish communities, and reduce sediment loads (two major sources of impairment). This proposal will accelerate the adoption of alternative culvert designs that improve biological connectivity, channel stability, reduce flood stage and lower long-term maintenance costs. This proposal will fund approximately 12 projects with a 25% cost share. Funds would need to be available until spent to allow for sufficient local planning and implementation.	\$2,900	High priority, hold steady	\$3,000
DNR	(NEW) Natural Shorelines: Nearly 50% of Minnesota’s natural shorelines have vanished due to suburban-style development and lawn manicuring. This conversion allows up to nine times more pollutants into lakes and degrading critical fish and wildlife habitats. Protecting and restoring native plant buffers is essential to filter runoff and anchor soil. This program will enhance funding for the Lake Steward program, sponsored by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers, and provide funding for permanent lakeshore conservation easements to protect priority lakes by restoring natural shorelines and reducing pollutant loading.	\$0	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$1,800
MC	Water demand reduction/efficiency grant program: The program is a Metropolitan Council and local community cost share program that provides 100% pass-through water efficiency grants to metro municipalities. This popular, over-subscribed program provided critical support to address the drought of 2021. The proposed budget was set to continue to meet growing needs by communities implementing water demand reduction measures to use groundwater more wisely, particularly in areas with drinking water contamination or water availability issues. The funds protect drinking water supplies and support the reliability and resiliency of water suppliers to serve homes, businesses, and growth.	\$1,400	Medium priority, hold steady	\$1,400

Agency	Program Activity	Enacted budget FY2026-27 (000s)	CWC priority and funding direction	ICT recs FY2028-29 (000s)
MDA	AgBMP Loan Program: AgBMP loans can be used for the implementation of any practice that reduces or mitigates the effects of water pollution. The purpose is to encourage agricultural best management practices and other practices that prevent or reduce runoff from feedlots, farm fields and for other pollution problems identified by the county in local water plans. Funding can also be used to replace or treat contaminated wells. The program is administered by local governments and local loaning institutions and has extremely low administration costs. AgBMP loans are frequently used to leverage additional funding. Loans are repaid into the corpus of the account and will be available for future clean water projects regardless of the renewal of the CWF. The demand for Ag BMP loans greatly exceeds available funding.	\$4,000	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$4,500
MDA	MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program: The proposed budget serves to meet expanding demand and associate needs for program delivery including implementation grants, growing number of participating farms to audit, and overall labor demands to serve increasing participation. This funding provides for MAWQCP to meet seven goals in the CWC’s 2024 Strategic Plan. Greater than 50% of funding is pass through for soil and water conservation districts and supports implementation. The funding is required as match to leverage and maintain a \$10,000,000 federal EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG).	\$7,000	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$7,470
MDA	Technical Assistance: Technical assistance is a primary vehicle to work with the agricultural community to promote best management practices. This funding is used to evaluate the effectiveness of conservation practices, demonstrate practices that protect water and enhance outreach and education of recommended agricultural practices to the agricultural community and local government partners. Technical assistance activities fill an important need for field demonstrations and validation of practices to protect water quality.	\$3,200	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$3,980
MDA	Conservation Equipment Assistance: Conservation Equipment Assistance supports the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Soil Health Financial Assistance Program (SHFAP), which provides grants to producers, producer groups, and local governments to purchase or retrofit equipment that implements soil-health practices. A primary obstacle to expanding soil health is access to the specialized equipment necessary for successful adoption of 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 to directly protect water quality by reducing erosion and curbing sediment and nutrient runoff. The appropriation is required as match to leverage and maintain a federal EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) award.	\$3,500	High priority, hold steady	\$3,500
MDA	Ag Weather Station Network	\$2,300		\$0
	Nonpoint source implementation total	\$161,636		\$182,570
	Point source implementation			
MPCA	Chloride reduction efforts: This program provides critical support to communities by providing chloride reduction from road salt and water softening training, and grants to communities so they can implement their chloride management plans. This recommendation recognizes the CWC’s desire to see more training and more grants available for on-the-ground chloride reduction work, and it also meets the needs MPCA is hearing from partners. The MPCA is open to discussing additional work once the CWC finalizes its chloride reduction policy.	\$1,300	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$2,600
MPCA	Wastewater/stormwater TMDL implementation: With the completion of hundreds of TMDLs over the past decade and a half, the work to translate wasteload allocations into permit requirements has expanded enormously. Funding for these programs provides technical assistance tools to local units of government and supports staff to accelerate work in the stormwater and wastewater permitting programs that protect lakes and streams. The FY28/29 recommendation will ensure the work effort remains steady.	\$3,200	High priority, hold steady	\$3,400
PFA	Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Program: The PSIG program provides essential assistance to cities to upgrade water treatment facilities needed to meet required wasteload reductions to address impaired waters and protect threatened waterbodies. Program funding has been supplemented in the past with bonding appropriations; however, annual applications consistently exceed available funds. Currently the PSIG funding list has over \$160 million of projects outside that funding range and construction costs only continue to grow.	\$16,440	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$18,000
PFA	Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program: The Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program provides grants and loans to assist small unsewered communities with technical assistance and construction funding to replace non-complying septic systems with community subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS). These funds allow small communities to evaluate and implement lower cost decentralized treatment alternatives to address their wastewater needs.	\$100	High priority, hold steady	\$100
	Point source implementation total	\$21,040		\$24,100
	Groundwater/Drinking Water Implementation			
BWSR	Targeted Wellhead/Drinking Water Protection: Continued investment is needed to protect additional high-priority drinking water supply areas. Rising land values and increasing development pressure make proactive land protection more cost-effective than delaying conservation investments or constructing costly drinking water treatment systems that many small water suppliers struggle to fund and maintain.	\$5,000	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$2,000
MC	Metropolitan Area Water Sustainability Support: This program helps municipalities and industries in the Twin Cities metro area as they plan and implement projects that address emerging drinking water supply threats and overall water sustainability, provide cost-effective regional solutions, leverage inter-jurisdictional coordination, support local implementation of wellhead protection plans, and prevent degradation of groundwater and surface water resources.	\$2,750	Medium priority, hold steady	\$3,000
MDA	Nitrate in Groundwater: 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 nitrogen 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	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$7,200

Agency	Program Activity	Enacted budget FY2026-27 (000s)	CWC priority and funding direction	ICT recs FY2028-29 (000s)
MDA	Irrigation Water Quality Protection: 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 best management practices (BMPs), and contributes to the development of irrigation scheduling tools for Minnesota irrigators.	\$310	High priority, hold steady	\$330
MDH	Future of Drinking Water: Current federal and state regulations no longer provide adequate protection for customers of public water systems and users of private wells. This initiative supports MDH’s implementation of the Minnesota Drinking Water Action Plan to protect Minnesotans against new threats that endanger our vision of safe and sufficient drinking water for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota. In addition, this initiative will focus on implementation of select activities named in the Action Plan that will prepare both public and private well supplies to adapt to an uncertain future.	\$500	High priority, hold steady	\$500
MPCA	Enhanced County inspections/SSTS corrective actions: This program provides critical funding to local units of government to operate their respective SSTS programs and also provides funding to homeowners with low income to replace or repair non-complying septic systems. Both county SSTS programs and grants for SSTS replacement protect groundwater and connected surface water. This recommendation ensures we can maintain the grant levels from the past biennium.	\$6,881	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$6,900
	Groundwater/Drinking Water Implementation total	\$23,141		\$19,930
	Local Implementation total (NPS, PS, GW/DW)	\$205,817		\$226,600
	Research, Evaluation and Tool Development			
BWSR	Tillage and Erosion Survey: Maintaining funding ensures continued collection of consistent, scientifically valid statewide data used to target conservation investments, improve watershed models, and evaluate conservation outcomes. Reliable long-term data are essential for informed water quality planning and decision-making.	\$850	High priority, hold steady	\$850
BWSR	Technical Evaluation: Continued funding supports independent evaluation of restoration projects, improving accountability and ensuring future investments are informed by demonstrated project performance. Evaluation findings strengthen conservation effectiveness and provide legislators and partners with credible information on program outcomes. The increase reflects two biennia of inflation, as the appropriation has remained the same during that time period.	\$200	Medium priority, hold steady	\$220
DNR	Tool development and evaluation: The DNR maintains and provides access to LiDAR-derived elevation data that is widely used for targeting and designing implementation projects and for watershed modeling. DNR also assesses relationships among disturbance patterns, BMP applications, and water quality in forested watersheds. The proposed amount will maintain effort on LiDAR related support, maintain effort in forest BMP monitoring. Over the past biennium the DNR has eliminated effort on fine-scale watershed models to evaluate the effects of drainage, soil health and other BMPs.	\$1,400	High priority, hold steady	\$1,500
DNR	County geologic atlases: The CWF has enhanced data collection and analysis of the county geologic atlases by providing supplemental chemistry and geology data. The core funding of the atlas program continues to be the LCCMR and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, along with state general fund resources. The proposed amount restores capacity to supplement the atlas data collection efforts that have previously resulted in significant efforts to target nitrate reduction in southeastern Minnesota.	\$200	High priority, hold steady	\$200
MDA	Research Inventory Database: The MnWRL is a user-friendly, searchable inventory of water research relevant to Minnesota. It provides “one-stop” access to all types of water research, including both peer-reviewed articles and white papers and reports. MnWRL provides access to water related information, enabling water managers, researchers, engaged citizens and others to easily find, share, and coordinate research to support their efforts to protect, conserve, manage and restore water in Minnesota.	\$100	High priority, reduce	\$80
MDA	Forever Green Agricultural Initiative (U of MN): The 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. CWF support advances research, implementation, and partnerships that expand these crops across Minnesota’s agricultural landscape.	\$5,000	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$6,660
MDH	Recreational Water Quality Online Portal: While many people assume all beaches are monitored, beach testing is conducted at the discretion of the entity responsible for the beach (often a local public health agency). This initiative maintains the statewide recreational water testing portal that allows Minnesotans to go to one online location to access information on any recreational water testing conducted or beach closures currently in place. Additionally, the portal allows users to be made aware of any alerts currently in place at the beach of interest, such as the appearance of harmful algal blooms or major pollution events.	\$600	Medium priority, hold steady	\$600
U of MN	Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation & Technology Transfer: Provides research and technology transfer to address priority water resource needs for Minnesota communities. Research is completed through a competitive grant program to develop new stormwater practices and policies as well as improving the effectiveness of existing practices. Technology transfer is a crucial aspect of the program and translates emerging research results to Minnesota stormwater professionals and practitioners through training, outreach, and Extension.	\$1,600	High priority, Tier 1 increase	\$2,000
U of MN	Geologic Atlas with Dept. of Natural Resources: Develops county Geologic Atlases, which include maps and databases essential for improved management of ground and surface water. This is foundational data that supports management of drinking water, domestic and industrial supply, irrigation, and aquatic habitat. The distribution of geologic materials defines aquifer boundaries and the connection of aquifers to the land surface and to surface water resources to enable a comprehensive water management effort.	\$800	High priority, Tier 2 increase	\$1,000

[illegible]

CWC homework responses

August 24, 2026





High level observations

- Roughly 75% of the programs have no suggested changes
 - 7 suggested increases from ICT/BOC values, totaling up to \$17.34M
 - 9 suggested decreases from ICT/BOC values, totaling up to \$9.775M
- Where changes are desired:
 - Nearly all still honor the previous CWC direction
 - Biggest difference of opinion is in *how much* of an increase for different programs
 - Another point in favor of getting more specific about what we mean by “increase” in the future!

Suggested changes:

- Increases:
 - BWSR Critical Shoreland Easements: up to \$2M more
 - BWSR Watershed Partners Legacy Grants: up to \$2M more
 - MDA MAWQCP: \$1M more
 - MPFA Point Source Implementation Grants: \$6M more
 - MDA Forever Green Initiative: \$3.34M more
 - UMN Stormwater Research and Tech Transfer: \$0.5M more
 - Voyageurs National Park: up to \$2.5M more

Total increase: up to
\$17.34M



Suggested changes

- Desired smaller increases:
 - MPCA River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment: up to \$1.4M less
 - MDH Private Well Initiative: up to \$2M less
 - BWSR WBIF: up to \$1M less
 - BWSR Conservation Drainage Management and Assistance: up to \$600k less
 - BWSR Wetland Restoration Easements: \$1M less
 - MDA Nitrate in Groundwater: up to \$500k less
- Decreases on hold steady or reduce programs:
 - BWSR Riparian Aid: up to \$2.5M less
 - Met Council Water Efficiency Grants: up to \$700k less
- Minnesota Valley River Watch: Cut

Total decrease: up to
\$9.775M





August 13, 2026

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

Re: Clean Water Council Recommendations

Dear Ms. Kader,

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Clean Water Council (CWC) project recommendations from the Clean Water Fund (CWF). MCGA advocates for nearly 6,500 corn farmer-members and works closely with the Minnesota Corn Research and Promotion Council and all of Minnesota's 24,000 corn farmers to implement best management practices for water quality and soil health.

We would first like to address the recent Office of the Legislative Auditor Report regarding the MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. While farmers should have some flexibility in implementing practices based on weather and time of year they enter the program, we would agree that tighter contingency timelines could be considered that still gives farmers flexibility to implement the practices on a timeline that works best for their farm. A large portion of the report asserts that the use of modeling in determining water quality outcomes is not a reliable metric to measure actual outcomes. By this standard, any CWF funded program that relies on modeling outcome determinations should be audited, and we would encourage the CWC to request audits of all programs that report outcomes using these same scientific tools.

Additionally, while we recognize the CWC's funding reduction over the years, we would encourage the CWC to consider the outcomes of the continued funding for Buffer Implementation. Between the CWF and the statutory required Riparian Protection Aid through the Department of Revenue, local government units have received over \$100 million since the passage of the buffer law for implementation and enforcement despite near-universal compliance within two years of the law going into effect. What was the return on investment for this massive expenditure of the last 10 years? In our September 2024 letter to the CWC regarding this issue, we stated that to our knowledge, virtually all of Minnesota's farmers came into compliance with the buffer law without financial help from the state, such as cost-share, and we requested examples of where this money was used to help farmers implement buffers since the law was passed in 2015. To date, we have not received any information regarding this request. We encourage the CWC to request deeper evaluation of the over \$100 million that has been spent "implementing" buffers.

MCGA wants to thank the CWC for its continued direction of increasing recommendations for on-the-ground projects. As the CWC considers funding recommendations for the FY 28-29 biennium, MCGA would support prioritization, and in some cases expansion, of the following projects because of the focus on implementation and are consistent with the CWC strategic plan priorities.

Conservation Equipment Assistance (MDA) - We greatly appreciate the CWC's support for this program since its inception as a pilot in 2022. Since then, farmer interest in soil health practice implementation has been proven by the tremendous popularity of this program. Last year, MDA received over \$8.6 million in funding requests vs the \$4.75 million total grant funding available which included general fund, CWF funds and funding from the EPA, made available in the Inflation Reduction Act. We expect a similar response from Minnesota farmers during the next funding round.

MCGA would like to comment on questions that have been raised regarding the use of equipment by farmers to do "custom work" whereby they use their own equipment and are hired by fellow farmers - often neighbors -to do conservation tillage or cover crop applications on cropland that otherwise would not have been done because that farmer does not have the equipment to do so. Renting or trading labor for use of equipment is a common practice among farmers, not just for conservation tillage systems or other conservation practices but also done for other farming practices such as planting or harvesting. The ability of an individual farmer to do custom work for other farmers is an opportunity to keep farmers on the farm rather than having to look for off-farm work.

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

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

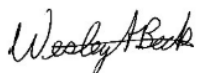
Technical Assistance (MDA) – We appreciate the CWC’s long-term support for on-farm demonstrations like Discovery Farms that increase education and promotion of best management practices on the farm. MDA technical assistance funds help to support on-farm demonstrations in agricultural production areas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

MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MDA) – Enrollment in the program continues to increase and it has been an effective program to leverage federal conservation program funding resources for implementation. We think there are opportunities to further utilize the program as a conduit to implement soil health and water quality practices on farms by utilizing CWF dollars to help farmers implement practices as a part of the program.

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

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

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



President

Minnesota Corn Growers Association



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

106 W. Water St., Ste. 600 | St. Paul MN 55107-2032
(651) 222-2193 | fmr.org | info@fmr.org

August 24th, 2026

Dear Administrator Kader and members of the Clean Water Council,

As you continue your FY 28-29 Clean Water Fund deliberations, Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) requests that you **recommend \$8 million for the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative.**

The Forever Green Initiative

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

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

Alignment with Nutrient Reduction Strategy and drinking water protection goals

Minnesota's [Nutrient Reduction Strategy](#) (NRS) calls for millions of acres of CLC cropping systems in Minnesota.

The NRS makes CLC cropping systems a foundational pillar of success, and notes that:

"Nitrogen reduction goals cannot be achieved without transformative changes in crop system rotations and maintaining living cover for more months each year."

Figure ES-1-12. Example scenario showing the magnitude of change needed to achieve nutrient reduction goals in the Mississippi River Basin.



This is aligned with the Clean Water Council's own target of five million acres of continuous Living Cover by 2034.

Similarly, CLCs can help protect our drinking water, especially in [vulnerable areas](#) such as coarse-textured soils or karst topography. When it comes to protecting groundwater, few strategies are as effective or scalable as CLC cropping systems. For example:

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

Scaling up CLC cropping systems over time

While CLC acreage goals and associated water quality improvements are certainly ambitious, they are achievable with sustained support over time.

- **Putting Down Roots:** The 2023 [Putting Down Roots](#) report, prepared by FMR and the University of Minnesota, found that under a moderate adoption scenario, Forever Green CLC cropping systems could reduce nitrogen loss by 23% and soil erosion by 35% in Minnesota by 2050 while enhancing on-farm profits by 20%.
- **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) market.** Winter-hardy oilseeds are particularly well-positioned as a low-carbon aviation fuel feedstock. Minnesota now boasts an [improved state SAF tax credit](#), a brand-new [SAF blending facility](#), a SAF demand consortium, and strong leadership from the MN SAF Hub. We are well-positioned for rapid commercialization of winter-hardy oilseeds as a SAF feedstock.
- **One Million Acres Scaling Study (1MASS):** The University of Minnesota, MBOLD, and many project partners (including FMR) are collaborating on a [One Million Acres Scaling Study for Camelina](#), identifying a pathway to securing the 1st million acres of camelina.

Alignment with the Clean Water Council Strategic Plan

Investments in Forever Green align with multiple strategies and actions included in the [Final Clean Water Council Strategic Plan for 2024-2028](#), including:

- **Vision: All Minnesotans value water and take actions to sustain and protect it.**
 - Goal 1: Build capacity of local communities to protect and sustain water resources
 - Measure: Number of acres with continuous living cover, with a target of five million acres by 2034.
- **Vision: Groundwater is clean and available to all in Minnesota**
 - Goal 1: Protect groundwater from degradation and support effective measures to restore degraded groundwater.
 - Measure: Alternative land management activities supported that protect groundwater such as easements, perennials, and market-based continuous living cover.

¹ Jungers et al. 2019. Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment.

² Weyers et al. 2019. Journal of Environmental Quality resources.

³ Randall et al. 1997. Journal of Environmental Quality. strategic and

- **Vision: Drinking water is safe for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota.**
 - Goal 1: Public Water Systems
 - Measure: Landowner adoption of practices that protect drinking water through technical assistance, conservation equipment support, financial assistance, easements, drinking water protection/restoration grants, targeted wellhead protection grants, market-based living cover, soil health grants, etc.
- **Vision: All Minnesotans value water and take actions to sustain and protect it.**
 - Goal 1: Build capacity of local communities to protect and sustain water resources
 - Measure: Acres of income-generating continuous living cover planted.

A Seven-to-One Return

State investment in Forever Green is leveraged many times over in federal grants and other funding that support this increasingly high-profile effort. Historically, for every one dollar of Clean Water Fund support, Forever Green has secured roughly seven additional dollars in complementary funds.

A deserving investment

While traditional on-farm education and BMP cost-share programs remain important, we must acknowledge that BMPs can't do the job alone. Getting to clean water is not just about 'how we grow' our crops - it is about 'what we grow'.

We must find ways to keep the soil covered year-round through economically viable CLC cropping systems that work for farmers and our environment. **We urge you to support \$8 million in funding for Forever Green in your FY28-29 Clean Water Fund recommendations process.**

Sincerely,



Trevor Russell
Water Program Director
Friends of the Mississippi River

May 1st, 2026

Administrator Jen Kader
Minnesota Clean Water Council
520 Lafayette Road North
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for enhanced University of Minnesota Forever Green Initiative funding

Dear Clean Water Council members,

We, the undersigned organizations, respectfully request that the Clean Water Council recommend an increase in funding for the Forever Green Initiative at the University of Minnesota in your FY28-29 Clean Water Fund recommendations.

As described in the updated Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS), our state can only achieve its long-term clean water goals through sustained investment in the “continuous living cover” strategy that lies at the core of Forever Green’s mission. The Council’s longstanding and prescient support of Forever Green has given Minnesota a significant foundation to build on in the years ahead; we ask for your continued backing as this work reaches critical inflection points for research, farmer adoption, and market development.

The Forever Green Initiative

Forever Green is an internationally respected program that works to develop and commercialize the perennial and winter-annual crops that are essential to achieving our clean water goals. Integrating such crops into existing farming systems – thereby creating “continuous living cover” (CLC) systems – dramatically helps to protect and enhance water quality, soil health, wildlife habitat and climate resiliency. By providing producers with new revenue streams from high-value feed and fuel products, this approach also harnesses market forces to achieve the scale necessary to transform our landscapes.

CLC crops can:

- Protect drinking water and secure public health;
- Improve water quality in surface waters and groundwater;
- Enhance soil health and climate resilience;
- Enhance habitat for wildlife and pollinators;
- Diversify crop rotations and farm income streams;
- Enable production of biofuels with strong sustainability attributes;
- Foster new economic opportunities for Minnesota family farmers;
- Attract new investment and employment in emerging agricultural industries;
- Attract high-quality talent to the University of Minnesota to meet the future state workforce needs of the agriculture, food, energy and natural resource industries.

CLC agriculture is increasingly recognized as a core strategy for achieving Minnesota's water quality goals: As we noted above, the 2026 [NRS](#) calls for the creation of a CLC Campaign and Work Group to “achieve the first million new acres of CLC, also recognizing that many more millions of acres will ultimately be needed to achieve the NRS goals.” Additionally, the 2026 update of the state's [Climate Action Framework](#) emphasizes the need for investment in CLC crop research, supply chains, and market development.

The state-supported Forever Green Partnership has laid the groundwork for this push through cross-sector collaborations that attract investments from private and philanthropic sectors, leverage public investments, and build resources needed for the successful deployment of Forever Green crops and other CLC systems.

Investing in the farmers of today and the crops of tomorrow

Multiple Forever Green cropping systems have reached an inflection point, moving beyond field trials and into landscape production and market development. Forever Green's unique *Environmental and Economic Clusters of Opportunity* (EECO) Program provides Minnesota farmers with technical and financial assistance in order to protect early adopters from undue risk and feed real-world lessons back into University researchers' breeding and agronomic work. EECO is a partnership with the MN Department of Agriculture and has been made possible due to investment from the Clean Water Fund.

Forever Green also partners with dozens of supply chain businesses – ranging from local “mom & pop” operations to some of the world's largest agribusiness companies – to create the products and grow market opportunities that are fundamental to the success of this enterprise. One outgrowth of this work is the MN Department of Agriculture's *Developing Markets for CLC Crops* grant program, which for the past three years has invested in small and mid-sized businesses involved in supply chain and market development in communities across the state.

Maintaining and enhancing funding for such farmer- and business-facing efforts will be critical to maintaining momentum and scaling up implementation. However, as our friend, the late Forever Green co-founder Dr. Don Wyse used to say, **“If you don't have the crops, you don't have anything.”**

Robust, long-term funding for Forever Green is particularly important because successfully breeding and commercializing new crops requires dedicated researchers and supply chain specialists. Already, Forever Green crops like winter camelina (a winter-hardy oilseed crop with immense potential for livestock feed and biofuel markets) and Kernza perennial grain are rapidly advancing due to the Council's sustained support of foundational research, with more winners on the horizon. State investments in continuous living cover through Forever Green have historically been leveraged many times over (around 7X) in federal grants and other funding that supports this increasingly high-profile effort, while major players in the private sector are bringing their own capital and expertise to bear.

With your continued support, we can make Minnesota the unquestioned leader in developing sustainable, profitable and diversified cropping systems that improve habitat, water quality, and soil health while boosting farm prosperity and rural economies.

We urge you to support robust funding for Forever Green in your FY28-29 Clean Water Fund recommendations.

Sincerely,

40 Century Grain, Inc
Albert Lea Seed House, Inc.
Alliance for Sustainability
American Hazelnut Company
Applegate Farms LLC
Audubon Upper Mississippi River
Bang Brewing
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
Cargill, Incorporated
Citizens' Climate Lobby Minnesota
Clean River Partners
Climate Land Leaders
Compeer Financial
Delta Air Lines
Environmental Working Group
Friends of the Mississippi River
General Mills
GREATER MSP Partnership
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Land Stewardship Project
League of Women Voters of Minnesota
Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota
Minnesota Division Izaak Walton League of America
Minnesota Environmental Partnership
Northern MN New Iron and Clean Energy
Perennial Pantry
Perennial Promise Growers Cooperative
Pine SWCD
Savanna Institute
Sierra Club North Star Chapter
SUN Consulting, Inc. — representing Gertens Nursery
The American Hazelnut Company LLC
Wild Farm Alliance

Opinion | *Cleaner water and farm profits can go together*

Planting crops like Kernza and winter camelina can help block erosion and absorb leftover nutrients – and help farmers make money.

By Paul Novotny and Trevor Russell

Guest contributor(s) to the Minnesota Star Tribune

AUGUST 6, 2026 AT 1:54PM



Farmer Paul Novotny harvests his field of camelina, June 27, 2024, in Chatfield, Minn. (Anthony Souffle/The Minnesota Star Tribune)

Opinion editor's note: *Strib Voices publishes a mix of guest [commentaries](#) online and in print each day. To contribute, [click here](#).*

...

As a farmer and an environmental leader, we both care about clean water and farm prosperity in Minnesota. That's why Jill Burcum's recent column ("Minnesota has spent

millions trying to reduce agricultural pollution. It's not clear it's working," Strib Voices, July 27) caught our eye.

As Burcum makes clear, we urgently need to embrace more effective solutions to reduce agricultural runoff, particularly the nitrate and phosphorus that are the leading source of pollution in the Mississippi River and continue to contaminate drinking water, including both public and private wells, throughout the state.

Today, Minnesota is focused on certification programs and financial incentives for farmers to implement conservation practices. While such approaches are helpful, the state's own data makes it clear that they will never be enough on their own.

That's because every year, the vast majority of Minnesota's farm fields lie bare and brown from late fall through early spring, leaving millions of acres empty, without living plants or root systems. Rain and snowmelt wash unprotected soil and excess fertilizer straight into local streams, lakes, rivers and groundwater.

This is the obvious consequence of a system that rewards summer crops over everything else – and it's a system that increasingly doesn't pencil out for farm families, either.

But it doesn't need to be this way. Planting perennial grains (such as Kernza) or winter-hardy cash cover crops such as winter camelina can keep living roots in the soil year-round to anchor topsoil, block erosion and absorb leftover nutrients. Better yet, producers can harvest and sell these crops for a profit, boosting farm prosperity and water quality at the same time.





Anna Teeter, a novel oil seeds program manager with Cargill, takes samples with farmer Paul Novotny as he harvests his field of camelina. (Anthony Souffle/The Minnesota Star Tribune)

At least, they can if Minnesota invests in these systems.

Thanks to support from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the state Legislature, the University of Minnesota is developing perennial and winter-hardy crops that will protect our waters while turning a profit for farmers. Today, consumers are beginning to find beer, bread and other products made from Kernza at bakeries and breweries, as well as food made from other clean-water crops such as hazelnuts and oats. In July, the state celebrated a new sustainable aviation-fuel blending facility, and the prospects for camelina-based sustainable aviation fuel are very promising. But we need to scale up.

Don't just take our word for it: The state's newest plan to reduce nutrient pollution strongly emphasizes the importance of increasing living cover on farm fields year-round.

Farmers like me and organizations like Friends of the Mississippi River have been advocating for this approach for more than a decade. We're excited to see these advancements. And now we're also excited to be part of a collaborative with researchers, farming organizations and others that is creating a roadmap to reach 1 million acres of camelina in Minnesota.

This roadmap is expected this fall. After its release, we'll be able to see the strategic investments Minnesota can make to lift up a solution that is a win-win-win for farmers, our environment and public health.

As Burcum and the recent state audit made clear, incentivizing voluntary conservation practices is important, but it can't be the only tool in our toolbox. If we invest correctly, we can turn market headwinds into tailwinds.

Paul Novotny (not to be confused with the state legislator of the same name) is a farmer in southeastern Minnesota and Trevor Russell is water program director for Friends of the Mississippi River.

From: Ryann Geldner <rygeldner@gmail.com>
Sent on: Thursday, August 20, 2026 3:05:47 AM
To: Kader, Jen (She/Her/Hers) (MPCA) <Jen.Kader@state.mn.us>
Subject: comment on the draft FY28–29 Clean Water Fund budget.

Administrator Kader and Members of the Clean Water Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft FY28–29 Clean Water Fund budget. After reviewing the materials for the August 24 meeting, including the Budget and Outcomes Committee memo (wq-cwc1-38a), I request that the Council include dedicated funding for benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring.

Macroinvertebrates are nationally recognized indicators of aquatic ecosystem condition and provide early, measurable signals of stress that chemical monitoring alone cannot detect. Adding a modest line item for macroinvertebrate monitoring would strengthen the Monitoring & Assessment and Research & Evaluation categories and fill a long-standing biological data gap in Minnesota's Clean Water Fund portfolio.

The draft budget intentionally leaves room for non-agency programs. A macroinvertebrate monitoring initiative is cost-effective, aligns with statutory Clean Water Fund purposes, and would improve the state's ability to evaluate watershed health and management outcomes.

I respectfully ask the Council to incorporate this need into its FY28–29 recommendations.

Sincerely,
Ryann Geldner
Cleveland MN

Senator Grant Hauschild
Senate District 3

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

Phone 651-296-1789
Email sen.grant.hauschild@senate.mn



Representative Roger J. Skraba
House District 03A

Centennial Office Building
658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

Phone 651-296-2190
Email rep.roger.skraba@house.mn.gov

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155
bbarten79@gmail.com

Jen Kader, Clean Water Council Administrator
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155
Jen.Kader@state.mn.us

SENT VIA E-MAIL

August 19, 2026

Dear Members of the Minnesota Clean Water Council:

We write in strong support of continued Clean Water Fund investment in the National Park Water Quality Protection Program, specifically, the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project and respectfully urge the Clean Water Council to provide at least \$3 million in FY 2027-28 funding for this important initiative.

I have supported this project because it represents exactly the type of partnership Minnesota should encourage: local, state, and federal partners working together to address identifiable water quality and wastewater infrastructure needs in one of our state's most treasured natural resources.

St. Louis County has demonstrated its commitment by providing \$3 million toward this work this year. I believe the State of Minnesota should match that commitment with at least \$3 million from the Clean Water Fund.

Voyageurs National Park is unique. As the nation's only water-based national park, its lakes and waterways are not simply an amenity, they are the park. Protecting water quality within and surrounding Voyageurs and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness is essential to preserving this nationally significant resource for future generations.

This work also has a direct impact on the communities and economy of northern Minnesota. Voyageurs draws visitors from across Minnesota, the United States, and the world to fish, boat,

paddle, camp, and experience our region. Those visitors support resorts, restaurants, outfitters, guides, retailers, and other small businesses throughout northern Minnesota.

For more than a decade, local governments have worked collaboratively through the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board to address wastewater infrastructure needs surrounding the park. Working with the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, National Park Service, St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, and other partners, the Joint Powers Board has moved these projects from planning to construction.

The results are tangible. Sanitary sewer systems and related infrastructure are now completed or underway at three of the park's four major entrances. Rather than creating a new or open-ended initiative, continued funding allows Minnesota to build upon substantial investments already made and move this longstanding effort closer to completion.

The project has also successfully leveraged funding from multiple sources, including the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, local governments, and other partners. Clean Water Fund dollars are therefore leveraging significant additional investment rather than carrying the entire cost of these improvements.

I understand the Clean Water Council must balance many worthy requests from throughout Minnesota. However, I respectfully ask the Council to recognize the significant local commitment already made to this project. With St. Louis County committing \$3 million, a matching \$3 million Clean Water Fund investment represents a reasonable and appropriate state partnership.

This is an opportunity to protect water quality, complete critical wastewater infrastructure, leverage millions of dollars from other funding partners, and protect one of Minnesota's, and our nation's, most extraordinary natural resources.

I respectfully urge the Clean Water Council to increase the FY 2027-28 recommendation for the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project to at least \$3 million.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting Minnesota's waters.

Sincerely,



Grant Hauschild
MN State Senator
District 3



Roger J. Skraba
MN State Representative
District 3A

Rep. Pete Johnson
House District 08A



Rep. Liish Kozlowksi
House District 08B

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155 bbarten79@gmail.com

Jen Kader, Clean Water Council Administrator
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155 Jen.Kader@state.mn.us

August 19, 2026

Dear Members of the Minnesota Clean Water Council:

We write in strong support of continued funding for the National Park Water Quality Protection Program, specifically the work being undertaken through the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project. As the Council considers its FY 2027-28 funding recommendations, we respectfully urge the Council to provide at least \$3 million to continue this important water quality initiative.

As legislators representing Duluth, we understand firsthand the importance of clean water to the environmental, economic, and cultural vitality of northeastern Minnesota. Our lakes, rivers, and watersheds are among our region's greatest assets, and protecting them requires sustained partnerships among state, local, and federal governments.

That partnership is clearly demonstrated in this project. St. Louis County has committed \$3 million toward this work this year. We believe the State of Minnesota should recognize that significant local commitment by providing at least a matching \$3 million investment from the Clean Water Fund.

Voyageurs National Park is one of Minnesota's most extraordinary natural resources. As the nation's only water-based national park, its lakes and waterways are fundamental to the park itself. Protecting water quality within and surrounding Voyageurs is essential to preserving this nationally significant resource for future generations.

While Voyageurs National Park is located north of Duluth, its importance extends throughout northeastern Minnesota. Duluth serves as a gateway to our region's outdoor recreation economy, and visitors drawn to Voyageurs, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, the North Shore, Lake Superior, and our other public lands support businesses and communities across the region.

Clean water is at the heart of that economy. Fishing, boating, paddling, camping, and other outdoor activities support resorts, restaurants, outfitters, guides, retailers, hospitality businesses, and thousands of jobs across northeastern Minnesota. Investments that protect water quality are therefore investments in both our environment and our regional economy.

Rep. Pete Johnson

House District 08A



Rep. Liish Kozlowski

House District 08B

For more than a decade, local governments have worked collaboratively through the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board to address wastewater infrastructure needs surrounding the park. Working with St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, the State of Minnesota, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, National Park Service, and other partners, the Joint Powers Board has turned planning into tangible improvements.

Today, sanitary sewer systems and related infrastructure are completed or underway at three of the four major entrances to Voyageurs National Park. This progress demonstrates that Clean Water Fund investments are producing real and measurable results.

Importantly, Minnesota is not being asked to accomplish this work alone. The project has successfully leveraged funding and participation from the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, local governments, and other partners. Clean Water Fund dollars help bring these resources together and maximize the impact of the state's investment. With substantial infrastructure already completed or underway, now is the time to build upon that progress and move this longstanding effort closer to completion.

We recognize the many important water quality needs throughout Minnesota and the difficult decisions facing the Clean Water Council. However, this project combines a significant local financial commitment, substantial outside investment, demonstrated progress, and a clear and lasting benefit to water quality. St. Louis County has committed \$3 million to this work. We respectfully ask the Clean Water Council to match that commitment with at least \$3 million in FY 2027-28 funding for the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project.

Continuing this partnership will help protect one of Minnesota's most treasured water resources, leverage millions of dollars in additional investment, support northeastern Minnesota's outdoor recreation economy, and ensure that the progress already made continues toward completion.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting Minnesota's waters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete Johnson".

Rep. Pete Johnson

5th Floor Centennial Office Building
rep.pete.johnson@house.mn.gov
651-296-4246

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liish Kozlowski".

Rep. Liish Kozlowski

5th Floor Centennial Office Building
rep.liish.kozlowski@house.mn.gov
651-296-2228

Senator Robert Farnsworth & Representative Cal Warwas

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

john.barten@mn.gov

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

jen.kader@mn.gov

SENT VIA E-MAIL

August 20, 2026

Dear Members of the Minnesota Clean Water Council:

We write in support of continued funding for the National Park Water Quality Protection Program and specifically the work being undertaken through the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project. As the Council considers its FY 2027-28 recommendations, we respectfully request that at least \$3 million be provided to continue this important work.

For us, one of the most compelling reasons for this investment is the commitment already being made at the local level. St. Louis County has committed \$3 million toward this effort this year. We believe a matching \$3 million investment from the Clean Water Fund represents a reasonable state partnership and demonstrates that local governments and the State of Minnesota are sharing responsibility for completing this work.

This is also a good example of how state funding can be used to leverage substantially greater investment. The Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board has worked with St. Louis and Koochiching Counties, the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other partners to assemble funding and advance wastewater infrastructure projects surrounding the park.

As a result of these partnerships, sanitary sewer systems and related infrastructure are now completed or underway at three of the four major entrances to Voyageurs National Park. These are tangible improvements that protect water quality and address longstanding infrastructure needs.

The progress already made is also an important reason to continue the state's investment. This is not a proposal to begin a new initiative. Considerable public resources have already been invested, projects have been designed and constructed, and outside funding has been secured. Continued Clean Water Fund support will help protect those previous investments and move this longstanding effort closer to completion.

Voyageurs National Park is a particularly appropriate place for Minnesota to make this investment. As the nation's only water-based national park, water quality is fundamental to the park itself. Its lakes and waterways support fishing, boating, paddling, camping, tourism, and outdoor recreation while providing an economic foundation for resorts, outfitters, restaurants, retailers, and other small businesses throughout northern Minnesota.

Protecting these waters is therefore both an environmental responsibility and an economic priority for our region.

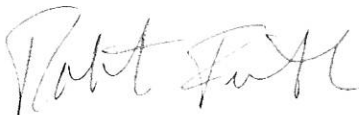
We recognize that the Clean Water Council receives many worthy requests and must carefully prioritize the use of Clean Water Fund dollars. We believe this project presents a strong case for continued investment because it combines a substantial local financial commitment, significant federal and state partnerships, measurable progress, and a clear water quality benefit.

St. Louis County has put \$3 million on the table. We respectfully ask the Clean Water Council to match that commitment and provide at least \$3 million in FY 2027-28 funding for the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project.

Doing so will leverage other public investments, help complete critical wastewater infrastructure, protect one of Minnesota's most important natural resources, and support the communities and small businesses whose economies depend upon clean water and outdoor recreation.

Thank you for your consideration and for your stewardship of Minnesota's Clean Water Fund.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Farnsworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" being more prominent than the last name "Farnsworth".

Robert Farnsworth
State Senator
District 7

Cal Warwas
State Representative
District 7B

A stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "CAL". The letters are bold and blocky, with a thick horizontal line underneath the letters.

Minnesota State Senator Jennifer McEwen

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

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

SENT VIA E-MAIL

August 20th, 2026

Dear Members of the Minnesota Clean Water Council:

I am writing to urge the Clean Water Council to continue its investment in the National Park Water Quality Protection Program and to provide at least \$3 million in FY 2027-28 funding for the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project.

This project has been a strong example of what can be accomplished when state, local, and federal partners work together toward a common goal. Over the past decade, significant progress has been made to address wastewater infrastructure and protect water quality in and around Voyageurs National Park. Continued state support is important to maintain that progress and bring this effort closer to completion.

This year, St. Louis County committed \$3 million to advance this work. That is a significant local investment and a clear demonstration of the region's commitment to completing these projects. I respectfully ask the Clean Water Council to recognize that commitment by providing at least an equal \$3 million investment from the Clean Water Fund.

Voyageurs National Park is one of Minnesota's most unique natural resources. As the nation's only water-based national park, clean water is fundamental to virtually every aspect of the park experience. The interconnected waters of Voyageurs and the nearby Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness are internationally recognized resources that Minnesota has a responsibility to protect for future generations.

Protecting these waters is also important to the economic vitality of northern Minnesota. Thousands of visitors come to the region each year to fish, boat, paddle, camp, and enjoy the outdoors. Their spending supports resorts, restaurants, outfitters, guides, retailers, and other small businesses in communities throughout the region. Protecting water quality is therefore both an environmental investment and an investment in the long-term strength of northern Minnesota's tourism and recreation economy.

The Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board and its local government partners have spent more than a decade developing and implementing a coordinated strategy to address wastewater infrastructure around the park. That effort has produced measurable results. Sanitary sewer systems and related infrastructure are completed or underway at three of the four major entrances to Voyageurs National Park.

Importantly, the Clean Water Fund is not being asked to shoulder this responsibility alone. Funding from the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis County, other local governments, and additional partners has been brought together to advance this work. State Clean Water Fund investments have helped leverage these other resources and turn plans into completed projects.

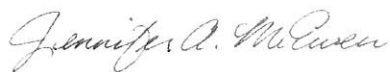
Much has already been accomplished. Now is the time to build upon those investments rather than slow the momentum toward completion.

I recognize that the Clean Water Council faces difficult choices and many deserving requests from across Minnesota. However, when a local government is willing to commit \$3 million of its own resources to protect a resource of statewide and national significance, I believe the State of Minnesota should be willing to stand alongside that local commitment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Clean Water Council to provide at least \$3 million in FY 2027-28 funding for the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project, matching St. Louis County's investment and allowing this important work to continue.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work to protect and improve Minnesota's water resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jennifer A. McEwen".

Jennifer A. McEwen
State Senator
District 8, Duluth



Saint Louis County

Fourth District County Commissioner • 320 Miners Drive East • Ely, MN 55731
Phone: (218)365-8200 • Fax: (218)365-8205 • mcdonaldp@stlouiscountymn.gov

Paul McDonald

Mr. John Barten, Clean Water Council Chair
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155
bbarten79@gmail.com

Jen Kader, Clean Water Council Administrator
520 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155
Jen.Kader@state.mn.us

SENT VIA E-MAIL

August 20, 2026

Dear Members of the Minnesota Clean Water Council:

On behalf of the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board, St. Louis County, and Koochiching County, I respectfully urge the Clean Water Council to provide at least \$3 million in FY 2027-28 funding for the National Park Water Quality Protection Program and the Voyageurs National Park Water Quality Project.

For more than a decade, our local governments have worked in partnership with the State of Minnesota and federal agencies to address wastewater infrastructure and protect water quality in and around Voyageurs National Park. That partnership is producing results, with sanitary sewer systems and related infrastructure completed or underway at three of the park's four major entrances.

Most importantly, St. Louis County has committed \$3 million this year to continue this work. That is a significant investment of local resources and demonstrates our commitment to seeing these projects through to completion. We are simply asking the Clean Water Council and the State of Minnesota to match that commitment with at least \$3 million from the Clean Water Fund.

These state and local investments also leverage millions of dollars from other partners, including the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and others. Clean Water Fund dollars are not carrying these projects alone; they are helping bring together the resources necessary to complete them.

Voyageurs is the nation's only water-based national park. Protecting its water quality is fundamental to protecting the park itself, as well as the communities, businesses, and outdoor recreation economy that depend upon these waters.

St. Louis County has stepped forward with \$3 million. We respectfully ask the Clean Water Council to stand with our local communities and match that investment.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued partnership in protecting the waters of Voyageurs National Park and northern Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Paul McDonald

Paul McDonald
St. Louis County Commissioner – 4th District
Chair, Voyageurs National Park Clean Water Joint Powers Board

From: [Kader, Jen \(She/Her/Hers\) \(MPCA\)](#)
To: [Frisch, Brianna \(MPCA\)](#)
Subject: FW: CWC Chloride Policy Reflection
Date: Wednesday, August 26, 2026 4:18:48 PM

Jen Kader
Administrator, Clean Water Council

520 Lafayette Road North, 6th Floor
St. Paul, MN 55155

jen.kader@state.mn.us
<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/clean-water-council>
<https://www.legacy.mn.gov/clean-water-fund>
Pronouns: She/her/hers
Office: (651) 757-2621
Cell: (651) 252-9215



From: Sue Nissen
Sent: Monday, August 24, 2026 7:03 AM
To: Kader, Jen (She/Her/Hers) (MPCA); Richard Biske; Chris Meyer
Subject: CWC Chloride Policy Reflection

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Hi Jen, Rich, and Chris,

My thanks to everyone on the Policy Committee for their work on the chloride policy. It is going to provide an overarching picture of options for reducing chloride pollution in Minnesota's waters. I am very excited to see this policy evolving.

I'm writing because listening to the July Policy Committee meeting I heard concerns about safety and chloride reduction reminiscent of conversations I've had over the years as a community volunteer. I'd like to share three thoughts as you look at revisions. And I apologize if this timing is late.

Safety First

Jen, I believe that you mentioned adding 'safety' to the policy. I think that is a really good idea. My experience is that acknowledging the importance of safety, and doing so right up front, is a conversation starter. It gets heads start shaking 'yes', and sets a common expectation for the discussion to come. In the current policy draft, safety could be added to the "Summarized Policy Statement" and early in the 'Problem Statement'.

Safety and Pollution Prevention

A big problem in trusting that public safely using less salts is a possibility is the decades long practice and belief that applying more salt = more safety. This norm runs deep, and has been hard to untangle.

It was the realization that Minnesota's waters were becoming saltier and saltier that prompted industry experts and scientists to begin asking, "how could they get the same safety results using less salts?" The findings pointed not to another product, but to how efficiently the salts we have are used. This has led to the development of an intentional skill set of practices that support both safety and pollution prevention, and are a trusted pathway to safety and pollution prevention (30%-70% reductions).

The reality, and new norm to communicate is that today's Smart Salting training is a toolkit of science-based practices are built on the shared values of safety and pollution prevention. (MPCA)

We're all responsible.

One last finding to reinforce, the industry needs to change. (MPCA) For years we've been training and talking to applicators about salt reduction, but it is impossible for applicators to make the needed change on their own. They are directly impacted by decisions made by property managers, and also the public, policy makes and suppliers. MPCA has dedicated trainings for property managers and local leaders in addition to applicators, and a key part of making progress is engaging all these sectors.

Sincerely,
Sue Nissen

Mn Water Steward
Smart Salting Trained: Roads, Sidewalks & Parking Lots, Property Management & Local Leaders
Founding Member Stop Over Salting.
Lobbyist limited liability legislation
One teaspoon salt permanently pollutes five gallons of fresh Minnesota water

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