Clean Water Council Meeting Agenda
Monday, October 19, 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 and Minutes - comments/additions and approve agenda and August and September meeting minutes
- **(INFORMATION ITEM**) Council updates
  - Council chair
  - Committee chairs
  - Policy Committee chair
  - Council staff

9:30 (INFORMATION ITEM) General public comment
Any member of the public wishing to address the Council regarding something not on the agenda is invited to do so as a part of this agenda item.

9:45 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Scenario plans for responding to the November budget forecast
At the end of the previous meeting, brief discussions were held regarding how to respond to the November forecast for scenarios where funds are higher or lower than the February forecast showed. We will briefly review the draft scenarios for any further guidance to give to the Budget and Outcomes Committee.

10:00 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Draft text for the biennial recommendations report
Drafting of the biennial recommendations report has begun. Acknowledging that there are some changes anticipated for the final dollar amounts, this is still a good time to capture what you, as the Clean Water Council, would like to highlight in this edition. We will briefly review highlights included in the newsletter and FY26-27 report before beginning to isolate what to include now.

10:30 (INFORMATION ITEM) Framing our Clean Water Fund outcomes discussions
The Council has been discussing "outcomes" in some way every month for quite a while. That has intensified in the last year through KPI dashboard discussions, development of the new scoring rubric and revised proposal form, public input, and the report from the Office of the Legislative Auditor. This agenda item will serve as an introduction to the primary focus of the October and November meetings, invite Council members to clarify what is meant by outcomes, and to consider what they hope to learn or come to consensus on in the next two months. These responses will be recorded on flip chart to track desired learning outcomes.

10:45 BREAK

11:00 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Outcomes: Background, current approach
Brief presentation of current approaches to understanding outcomes, where they came from, and how that information is tracked, reported, and accessed.

12:00 LUNCH
(Agenda continues on the next page)

12:30 (DISCUSSION AND INTERACTIVE ITEM) Outcomes: Building familiarity with the tools

There are a number of different places you can go to see the impact of the Clean Water Fund implementation activities in different ways. Time will be provided in the meeting to explore a handful of options. **PLEASE BRING YOU COMPUTER.** To facilitate exploration of the tools, they are hyperlinked below:

- Legislative Coordinating Commission's Legacy website
- eLINK interactive map (scroll down to "NEW! - Access eLINK Data here")
- Healthier watersheds

1:15 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Revisit questions, wrap up

The next meeting will dig more into examples of efforts to bridge the outputs and outcomes divide, but before this meeting is closed, the list of questions from the start of the meeting will be revisited for further discussion. New questions can be added. Homework will also be previewed for other current places that outcomes are discussed, including:

- Clean Water Fund Performance Report
- Evaluations of Clean Water Fund and Outdoor Heritage Fund implementation projects
- Board of Water and Soil Resource's Snapshots
- Clean Water Council storymap

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

Clean Water Council
August 24, 2026, Meeting Summary

Members present: John Barten (Chair), Steve Besser, Eunie Biel, Rich Biske (Vice Chair), Dick Brainerd, Gail Cederberg, Steve Christenson, Tannie Eshenaur, Warren Formo, Brad Gausman, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Justin Hanson, Bonnie Keeler (Joel Larson), Peter Kjeseth (Margaret Wagner), Chris Meyer, Jason Moeckel, Ole Olmanson, Rep. Kristi Pursell, Peter Schwagerl, Glenn Skuta, April Swenby, and Jessica Wilson.
Members absent: Holly Hatlewick, Sen. John Hoffman, Annie Knight, Fran Miron.

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

Regular Clean Water Council Business

- Introductions
  - Joel Larson, University of Minnesota (UMN): The Minnesota Water Resources Conference will be on October 13-14, 2026.
  - Representative Steve Jacob: The St. Louis County commissioners and Voyageur's Park folks have reached out to me. They would like to see more funding recommended for their project. I see the Council has it currently at $1.5 million. I would like to see it funded more.
  - April Swenby: The Minnesota Watersheds Summer Tour will be this week in Detroit Lakes.
- Motion to approve the August 24th meeting agenda by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Chris Meyer. Motion carries unanimously.
- Council Updates
  - Chair Update
    - Please connect with John Barten or Jen Kader if you are planning to attend the Water Resources Conference (or other conferences) if you are utilizing the Clean Water Funds (CWFs) to cover registration. The Council wants to make sure we have good representation at these kinds of events, but also to be mindful of reimbursement costs.
    - John Barten has been working with the UMN St. Anothony Falls Laboratory project, connected to the wake board study. Washington County lakes seem to be some of the better test sites. Utilizing this information can be impacting moving forward. The Council will monitor findings.
  - Staff Update
    - The Clean Water Fund Performance Report is out. Thank you for the hard work of the state agency folks who worked on this document. Council members should take time to read it.
    - Newsletter subscribers has reached 10,000! Paul Gardner started this, and this is rapid growth for us.
    - There was a Chapter 15 ad hoc meeting with the MN Plumbing Board. They had work that was moving towards prohibiting stormwater use. Many groups came forward to talk about the impact of it. The current approach is to bring that chapter back to have more discussion. There will be an effort to keep stormwater use in there, but we do not know what that will look like yet. Jen Kader will continue to monitor this item.
    - Jen Kader visited Council member Fran Miron's farm. She attended along with the local watershed district staff, state representatives, county staff, and others to see the work on the farm and the work done with the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). All his cow's milk goes to the Ellsworth Creamery!
    - Watershed Management Implementation Team at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). They had a presentation regarding a study on best management practices (BMPs) that have been implemented near lakes. They are excited about the data coming back. They are working to complete the total effort. Will share it with the Council later this fall as part of a deeper dive into outcomes.
    - The UMN hosted a 2100 water future conversation, on behalf of Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB), to dig more deeply into the research briefs, leading into the scenario development

and creation looking out towards 2100. Looking at focusing on what we know now, to proactively reduce risks in the future. This will also be brought to the Council in the future.
    - Jessica Wilson and Jen Kader will be a the UMN Water Resources Conference for a special session looking at chloride (de-icer road salt policy statement). It will be an opportunity for feedback. People can look at the high effort high impact items to strategize. We wants to look at making progress on the Council's policies – to try to workshop some of these items that will be difficult to do.
    - Jen Kader will be presenting in Detroit Lakes at the Minnesota Watersheds Summer Tour.
- Policy Committee Update
    - The last meeting focused on the policy chloride de-icer policy, which is included in the meeting packet for review. We also discussed the public input process, and we will revisit it at the next meeting as well.
    - *Motion to approve the chloride de-icer policy to bring to the Water Resources Conference by Steve Christenson, seconded by Dick Brainerd. This work highlights the collaboration between the BOC and Policy committees*.

  Discussion:
    - Chris Meyer: Washington County talked about unfunded mandates. I want to acknowledge some of the issues from the counties. We need to acknowledge the safety concerns. We did spend a lot of time regarding public safety and concerns of local governments.
    - Glenn Skuta, MPCA: There is an existing policy, so this is an update. Are we voting on draft revisions, would this go to the conference for further input before the Council approves a final version? *Jen Kader:* Yes, we had great comments come in from county staff. These are helpful clarifications that can be changed to improve it. This is a draft to send to the conference in October, then have a final version approved later this year. The final version would be included into the report to the Legislature.
    - Jessica Wilson: In the City of Edina, safety is everyone's number one priority (we do not need to debate it). Every winter is different, so it makes it hard to note the difference. Chloride is a tricky and complicated pollutant. We know public road authorities (they are not sacrificing safety). Chloride does not break down; we cannot build a BMP to break it down. So, the prevention is the work at this point. This policy represents a strategic shift. There are many more things we can do. This is a timely policy; we heard a lot of feedback on it. Now is the time to make some scalable, measurable progress. Safety is still number one.
    - Brad Gausman: Is there another state or Canadian Provence that is tackling this issue too?
        - *Answer:* Some places in Montana use a lot of sand, so their salt is way down. Canada is doing research and trying out some things. I do not know about too much internationally. Minnesota is leading in the training side. We have state-of-the-art training. However, there is no incentive and no consequence to not doing the training. Exposure to the content can be a game changer.
        - *Joel Larson, UMN:* We are trying to answer it a little bit, connecting with the University of New Hampshire. The CWFs allowed us to leverage some staff time to be able to do some of that work.
        - Kelly Gribuaval-Hite: Boseman uses sand, but due to the elevation the snow melts rapidly.
    - *Motion is carried, and this document will go to the Water Resources Conference for comments*.
- Budget and Outcomes Committee Update
    - Review of the MAWQCP. The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) completed an audit of this program, primarily funded by the CWFs.
    - There is a new proposal with the WBIF program, specifically looking at outcomes (about $130,000 a year). There is a memo in the meeting packet for review.
    - There is also a list of the top priorities that Glenn Skuta put together aligning the work of the Council and ICT, which includes the text in green. It is also found in the meeting packet.
    - The BOC also made early recommendations for the non-state agency programs.
    - Gail Cederberg: Thank you to all the work on this CWFs budget. We appreciate the comments received which are thoughtful and specific, and helping us as the Council get better. This is a

continual process, but we should take a moment to reflect on the work so far. Especially the public engagement and comment part. Thank you to everyone for all the hard work. It makes what we are doing better.

Public Comment *(Webex 00:24:45)*

- Trevor Russel, Friends of the Mississippi River: We have a lot to do to get to our clean water goals in Minnesota. Thank you for your public input process. I want to make a few observations. The Forever Green Initiative (FGI) was your third highest in the Council's scoring rubric. Of the public comments received, more than half addressed support for FGI. Also looking at the Nutrient Reduction Goals, an increased investment is warranted. The Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) recommended $3.3 million, and the Council recommended $3 million to FGI. This is helpful, but not in line with your own support or the public comments received. My second comment relates to naming individual projects in this process versus programs (usually omitted specific locations). It is important to maintain it. My third comment is regarding the Legacy Partner Grants program. It is difficult for smaller communities to access funds if you do not have administrative resources. So, this is an important process, and we would like to see more support for it.

Review of homework outcomes, Jen Kader Presentation *(Webex 01:16:00)*

- High level observations:
  - About seventy-five percent of the programs have no suggested changes (7 suggested increases from ICT/BOC values, totaling up to $17.34 million; 9 suggested decreases from ICT/BOC values, totaling up to $9.775 million).
  - Where changes are desired, nearly all still honor the previous CWC direction. The biggest difference of opinion is in how much of an increase for different programs.
- Suggested Changes:
  - Increases: BWSR Critical Shoreland Easements (up to $2 million more), BWSR Watershed Partners Legacy Grants (up to $ 2 million more), MDA MAWQCP ($1 million more), MPFA Point Source Implementation Grants ($6 million more), MDA Forever Green Initiative ($3.34 million more), UMN Stormwater Research and Tech Transfer ($0.5 million more), and Voyageurs National Park (up to $2.5 million more).
  - Desired smaller increases: MPCA River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment (up to $1.4 million less), MDH Private Well Initiative (up to $ 2 million less), BWSR WBIF (up to $1 million less), BWSR Conservation Drainage Management and Assistance (up to $600,000 less), BWSR Wetland Restoration Easements ($1 million less), and MDA Nitrate in Groundwater (up to $500,000 less).
  - Decreases on hold steady or reduced programs: BWSR Riparian Aid (up to $2.5 million less) and the Met Council Water Efficiency Grants (up to $700,000 less).
  - To cut the Minnesota Valley River Watch.

Questions/Comments:

- Brad Gausman: If we want to see an increase in another program, can we ask the ICT to find the funds?
  - *Response from Steve Christenson:* It is the Council's job is to identify the program or direction for a decrease.
  - *Dana Vanderbosch, MPCA (ICT Chair):* The ICT took all the input they received from the Council, the BOC, and developed the budget recommendations around them. In some cases, we have knowledge about the programs and what would happen if they did not receive the funding they need, so we are privy to some information. It could come back to the ICT, but we need you to refine what your recommendations would be and the feedback, looking for greater refinement in certain areas. Otherwise, it is just as difficult for the ICT as it is for the CWC for making cuts.

Discussion of Draft Budget Amounts *(Webex 01:39:00)*

- See ICT Recommendations Table in meeting packet. Suggestions are from at least one voting Council member. The BOC decided to bring it to this conversation. Column F, at least one Council member who completed their homework, provided suggestions. If a Council member suggested it in column F, they should speak about it. Then, the state agency will have a chance to respond.

Discussion:

- River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment, MPCA *(Webex 01:44:00)*:
  - Some Council members would like to see a decrease in this program.
  - Steve Christenson: I support funding for this program. The reason I placed this on the list for reductions is because it is a large one (along with WBIF). So, I thought we could cut $1 million, to free up those funds to go to other programs. It is a budgetary recommendation.
  - Brad Gausman: On my homework, I also chose to shift funds, to support other programs. I wanted to see funds added to Legacy Partners and Critical Shoreland Easements.
  - Joel Larson, UMN: I read this as an increase from the previous biennium.
    - *Response from Dana Vanderbosch, ICT Chair:* It would only be a $600,000 adjustment, when the ICT requested $2 million. Without that funding we cannot manage the network. We would also have to cut into our intensive watershed monitoring program. There are other areas, special emphasis (such as mercury monitoring, specialized chloride monitoring), that would be cut into as well. This is not a scalable program, so these cuts would be impacting. The ICT proposal is to go up to $2 million.
- Private Well Initiative, MDH *(Webex 01:55:30):*
  - Some Council members would like to see a decrease in this program.
  - Steve Christenson: I support investing in drinking water investments, especially with Minnesota voters. There has been a slight mismatch because we have not invested in that much drinking water in the past. This was the second largest increase, so I was looking at making it smaller, so it was a numerical decision.
  - Brad Gausman: I had shifted it down as well, to $9 million.
  - Rich Biske: How is the demand now? *Answer from Frieda von Qualen, MDH:* The demand is growing. There are more partnerships coming forward as well. Note, the additional amount is going towards grants, not any staff.
  - John Barten: If the funding shifted from $10 million to $9 million, would that compromise the objective for private well testing for all Minnesotans by 2034? *Answer:* Potentially. Each year we are learning more about who we can engage in the process. Based on current response rates and capacity needed at the local level to provide technical support, to have testing available. If they receive the full $10 million, they should be able to have free private well testing and local navigators for about fifty percent of private well users across Minnesota. If we were to scale back, we would need to scale back that fifty percent, unless something changes in the interim and that would put us further behind. We would still be working towards that hundred percent, but it would slow the process.
  - Gail Cederberg: This is growing exponentially; we are seeing it all over the place. This is growing in demand. We need to meet that demand, so there are no repercussions (it could have negative impacts if we do not meet the demand). Every community I talk to, people are asking for this, both metro and rural areas. We need to consider how to support this moving forward, because the demand continue to increase.
- No changes suggested for the Watershed & Groundwater Restoration/Protection Strategies section
- No changes suggested for the Comprehensive Local Watershed Management section
- Watershed-based Implementation Funding, BWSR *(Webex 02:08:00)*:
  - Some Council members would like to see a decrease in this program.
  - Steve Christenson: This is the largest program, so I proposed a minor reduction. I do support this program and want to increase funding for this program. We need funding for this program. Now, I would like to increase it only by $6 million more (from $88.1 million to $94 million next time).
  - Peter Schwagerl: This is a large program, and I have similar thoughts. It is a critical piece in our strategy. It is hard to find the spots to make up the balance – so this was the area to cut from to try to make other programs have more funding.
  - John Barten: I wanted to take some funds from here for the MAWQCP. I will retract that, because of conversations I have had. I do still think the increase is significant here, so a slight shift down does still make sense here.

- Justin Hanson, BWSR: It is a large one-line item, but there are sixty different partnerships included in it. We have been able to leverage this funding (one to one match). Therefore, you will also be decreasing the leveraging part of these funds too, so make sure to consider those impacts. At the BOC we talked about doing some additional work around outcomes. We will come back in September about what that would cost, and have not identified where that will come from, so we need to figure that out as well. If there are cuts, it would be impacting.
- Chris Meyer: Yes, it is a lot of funding, but I can tell you it is important at the local level.
- April Swenby: Before we decrease funds in this program, we can decrease funds in other programs. This program gives us the biggest bang for our buck. It also is across Minnesota.
- Steve Christenson: If we took $2 million out and required you to fund this program with $94 million dollars, what would not get done? *Answer:* We have been able to leverage funding. With the reporting proposal out of this it would be a loss of more like $4 million. So, less money is less projects. The project costs have gone up exponentially.
- April Swenby: Out of all the projects presented, there are few like this program. This is unique because there is a strong presence of implementation. It is implementation of our goals. These programs are important, and this is the biggest bang for our buck.

- Conservation Drainage Management and Assistance, BWSR *(Webex 02:20:00):*
  - Some Council members would like to see a decrease in this program.
  - Steve Christenson: I am in support of this program. I see the benefits of the investments. It is a huge increase, so I proposed less. I wanted to shave this to balance the budget.
  - John Barten: I had a similar view. A number of these projects are funded by WBIF funds (according to the BWSR highlighted stories). So, it is shifted away to a different priority, just in the same pot of implementation. Just in a different area, more to easements than this program.
  - Brad Gausman: Decease it a little to fund other programs. It is also a shift for me.
  - Steve Christenson: What doesn't happen if you have $500,000 instead of $1 million? *Answer*: It is another leveraging discussion. These folks are on their own timeline (through state law). These projects are nimbler than WBIF projects, and it is a timeliness element. There would only be a few projects done with this decrease.
  - Rich Biske: I didn't make any changes to this, but I will comment that the way ditches have been managed in this state of Minnesota has hardly changed in the last hundred years. Having a program like this that brings in drainage authorities at a local level to partner with engineers and local staff, helps to build an evolution of system change. It introduces new ideas and concepts that still serve the mandate and local units of government. Yet, still impacts the drainage systems. I support this program at the full funding requested.
  - Tom Gile, BWSR: I appreciate the discussion on this topic. While $3 million would be awesome, an increase to $2.5 million in this is still a good first step, as this program has shown increase in usage, so this is still a positive direction for this program with a relatively small pot already. I also support the comments from Justin on the balance between this and other programs.
- Critical Shoreline Protection-Permanent Conservation Easements, BWSR *(Webex 02:26:00):*
  - Some Council members would like to see an increase in this program.
  - Steve Christenson: I wanted to see it funded at the previous amount. I like the fact that this program focuses on the Upper Mississippi River, and the protection of that water. It is a program the Council requested to be established. Easements have had cuts in the past, so it is good to fund now to help catch up. The Mississippi River is a jewel to protect.
  - Brad Gausman: I agree with Steve. We should fund this at a higher level. Investing in protection is important. Minnesotans want to see this funding used for these protections.
  - John Barten: I agree, we want to see protections too. This program is important. Seeing it on our field tour was impacting. This is important for us and show the impacts for renewing the CWFs.
  - Justin Hanson: We can take this increase and can put it to work.
- Wetland Restoration Easements, BWSR *(Webex 02:30:45):*
  - Some Council members would like to see a decrease in this program, with one Council member wanting an increase in this program (but less than what the ICT recommends).

- Steve Christenson: I want to see an increase in this program but can shave a million to balance the budget.
- Justin Hanson: This program has been successful in dealing with cuts in the past. Programs that you can offer continuously, can be helpful to continue to connect with Minnesotans. It is an important element of continuing programs. We need to have the funding to continue the program. It is successful in many ways. It is hard to market if you lose funding versus having reliable funding.
- Steve Christenson: The great thing about easement programs, is that they will be durable beyond 2034, if the amendment is not renewed.

- Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance (Buffer Law Implementation), BWSR *(Webex 02:38:30):*
  - This is a rare reduction. Council members identified it as a possibly greater reduction.
  - Brad Gausman: We have high compliance of the Buffer Law, so I think it can handle this cut. It was a place to shift some funds.
  - Rich Biske: I think we can find alternative funding for it, and we can start to shift it from a different fund.
  - Justin Hanson: We have ninety-nine compliance because we have a program to support it. So, decreasing funding in the work will have some impact on it (decrease in compliance). I am concerned about the level of cuts being proposed. The amount would gut the program; it would be hard to continue funding. There would be jobs impacted, and it would have a ripple effect. Starting a reduction, so we can look at other opportunities would be an easier transition, than an extreme cut. A huge cut may signal to folks to stop doing it.
  - Tom Gile, BWSR: I understand the policy committee was going to help assist in finding funding for these funds elsewhere. Has any progress been made on it? *Answer:* Not yet, it is on the upcoming topics list.
  - Tom Gile, BWSR: If this goes to being funded only $1-2 million dollars, it is a cut and not a shift. It would be more helpful to have other funds to shift to setup before decreasing the funds for the program altogether. The reason Buffer Law has been as successful as it has been is it was well funded alongside the regulation that came into place. I am supportive of a path towards decreasing the funds over time, with the efforts to find funding elsewhere. However, a cut of $2-3 million dollars is greatly impacting to a $4 million program.
- Watershed Partners Legacy (WPL) Grants, BWSR *(Webex 02:45:30)*
  - Some Council members would like to see an increase in this fund (up to a total of $4 million funded).
  - Steve Christenson: In the prior biennium it was decreased, so I proposed getting it back to $4 million. I would like to see it even higher. It fosters a lot of innovation. I support fully funding the Tribal Governments as well.
  - Brad Gausman: I agree with Steve. I have it for $3.75 million dollars but would love to see this funded at $4 million. I would like to see it grow. We should take advantage of these funds in the field. I re-watched the presentation we had from the staff of the program, and if we really want this to take off, they suggested $3.74 million. It would fund about 13 non-competitive tribal grants at $200,000 a piece over the biennium, and four other NGO or entities over $200,000 a piece projects, which would be competitive, plus staffing funds for the program. It is a great opportunity. I highly recommend we consider an increase to $3.75 million.
  - Jessica Wilson: This is the one program I indicated an increase as well.
  - Ole Olmanson: There have been successful applications already, and it is effective. It will take some time for the other tribes to see the benefit of it. So, thank you for support. The different Tribal Nations are at a different level. This program helps them dip their toes into government programs; it give opportunities for them to get started. The non-competitive is good too, because some Tribes will avoid competing when they know other Tribes are applying with their needs.
  - Brad Gausman: As we get closer to 2034, it will be increasingly important to fund work, where we can draw a direct line from Clean Water Council (CWC) to action. The funding goes through state agencies, so it is a little tricky to draw that line. I think it is smart investing to showcase this work, so we can tell the story about these grants. As we think about how our Council is viewed, looking at the direct impact of funds, this is funds well spent.

    - Rich Biske: When I think about the empowerment that comes to the Tribal Governments, to the local groups, etc. It is a small way to build this momentum.
- Water Demand Reduction/Efficiency Grant Program, Met Council *(Webex 03:02:00):*
    - Council members suggested a decrease ranging from $200,000 to $700,000.
    - Jesscia Wilson: For my suggestion, it is a legitimate reduction. I would like to take $200,000 in funding and place it with the WPL program instead. I think we can sunset this program over time. When it comes to outcomes, I am skeptical this accelerates water conservation. In the community I work for in the City of Edina, we have seen winter water use consistently decrease, which can be attributed to those passive adoption of high efficient appliances and fixtures. We do not, and have not, offered water efficiency rebates. I have a chart from 2007-2017 that reveals a 38 percent reduction in winter water rates for indoor water use. So, it is possible without offering funds to do it. Also, as a taxpayer without an irrigation system, I am annoyed that the funds generated from my tax dollars are paying for someone's irrigation controller. If a property owner is wealthy enough to irrigate their lawn with potable water, the cost of an irrigation controller is not a barrier to adoption. We should work towards water efficiency as a society, but I do not know if CWFs should be used for it here. This program could be set to sunset, while continuing clean water fund investments in conservation. Reducing by $200,000 would send a signal that the program should be sunset by the end of 2034. It can provide time for them to find alternate funding.
    - Gail Cederberg, Met Council: This serves the seven-county metro area, which serves about half of the population of the state. There are a lot of different things going on, not just replacing toilets. There are other items the CWFs are funding that I would not want my tax dollars going to, but the CWFs are still funding them. I think the issue is it sounds like it is for replacing appliances in houses, but it can also be for the metering used for businesses as well. It starts connecting with people, getting them to think about water efficiency. It really gets people thinking about it. Saving water can save money. There is also the turfgrass part. There are 108 municipalities, and this program can help them replace turfgrass with more water-smart grasses. It is an introduction into trying new things for water conservation. It is something to offer to communities.
    - Judy Sventek, Met Council: We have seen an increase in the number of communities that have applied. Every cycle, we have more money requested than we have. We can handle a slight reduction to the program. Currently, we are funding over 44 communities, replacing toilets, appliances, irrigations, etc. We target communities that use groundwater.
- MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), MDA *(Webex 03:15:45):*
    - The ICT requested a slight increase.
    - John Barten: I think we can continue this program with the existing funding, without the increase. The BOC had an extensive discussion to complete some monitoring. There is a new program from the MDA to work on this area or monitoring outcomes. We need to be responsive to the Legislative Auditors report on this program. So, we are looking for some monitoring data, to help understand the impact. I think that would be valuable.
    - Peter Schwagerl: This program is about 19,000 farms. By its nature, the people who signed up with the program have already been doing conservation on their farms. The range you are talking about may just be the incremental change and pace at which it has to happen on a farm business. The goal I see, are the initial adopters, and building the social awareness of the folks who are not already invested in conservation are hearing about it, they are seeing their neighbors do it, and it is building the public support for and attitude for change for farms. It is important to realize a goal is social change, which is a long-term play. Regarding the monitoring, as proposed the BOC has asked the MDA to bring a proposal. Another edge of field and data verification study is probably not a great use of Council funds. We have other funds through MDA and Discovery Farms University research. There is a mountain of scientific research into how these practices have been impacting. Duplicating the research does not seem wise. There are other interesting questions as the program grows on research for the clusters of MAWQCP farms, to find the association at a sub-watershed or base watershed scale. That could be something in the future to consider.
    - Rich Biske: There is some good research out there. This has come up because of the auditor's report. We could pick any one program from the implementation funding cycle and find similar questions. I

would like to hear a shared plan from the BOC and state agencies. We can go down the list, so we know what contribution is toward a water quality outcome at a watershed scale. I am looking forward to seeing the lakes report from the MPCA. How we got the answer will be lost on the public, they want to know if what we are doing is changing the impact on the landscape. We don't want each program to look inside their programs, rather reveal what is working with each other. It is a challenge.
    - Steve Christenson: I like the MDA's proposal. I would argue it is a good investment, to reveal the truth through the models to show an impact.
    - Margaret Wagner, MDA: There is information in the packet, the MDA came forward with a monitoring approach. We are open to incorporating more formal monitoring approach into the program. If you choose to make that investment, we need to do it correctly, so the data produced is reliable and gives us the answers we are asking for here.
    - John Barten: This item can go back to the BOC for further discussion and then bring it to full Council again.
- Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Program, PFA *(Webex 03:50:30):*
    - A Council member suggested an increase (so it can be from $18 million up to $24 million).
    - Steve Christenson: The Council identified this as a tier two level. Although it is a great program, to balance the budget, I would keep it where the ICT recommended.
    - Gail Cederberg: I agree.
- Nitrate in Groundwater, MDA *(Webex 03:52:00):*
    - The ICT recommended it to increase to $7.2 million, but some Council members did not agree to that total increase (only to $6.7 million).
    - Steve Christenson: I made this suggestion only for budget balancing purposes. It is a great program, and I wish there was more funding for it. It is still a large increase.
    - Margaret Wagner, MDA: This work is core to the work we do. There is a lot of focus. Addressing this issue is important to the department. The $500,000 addition is to invest in some of the solutions we have talked about around increased continuous living covers in the high nitrate areas. It is accelerating the work in these areas. We have met with these partners in the last few years, we are in conversations with them, establishing these partnerships and relationships. There are no new staff funds in increase of the request.
- Forever Green Agriculture Initiative, *UMN (Webex 03:55:00):*
    - Some Council members would like to see an increase (funding it up to $10 million)
    - Peter Schwagerl: I support this program and would like to see it funded as much as possible, up to the $10 million. It took a cut this last biennium, and with the impact of inflation, it is getting back to where it was before. We need to take advantage of the transformative landscape change. Members of the public and members on the Council have identified it as a high priority. I think it should be brought up for discussion on an increase in funding.
    - Rich Biske: I heard system change a lot at the June engagement workshop, and this is a program that represents that system change. We need to keep that going. $8 million is maybe the floor for it.
    - Chris Meyer: I have had people reach out asking it to be prioritized as well. It has been viewed as a high priority by different groups. I would like to see it increase as well.
    - Brad Gausman: I think $8 million would be wise.
    - Margaret Wagner, MDA: We are supportive of additional funding for FGI. It is scalable. As that program has grown, there is a lot of intention to link that with agency programs and get those crops in critical areas that are priorities within other MDA program areas.
    - John Barten: It was one of our highest scoring programs. I think we should support it.
    - Rep. Pursell: I want to chime in with support for FGI. This is the kind of investment we need to be making for the future of Agriculture, water quality, and soil health. As the former Vice Chair of the Ag Committee at the Legislature, we do not have a lot of general funds for it. So, it is good to have a high priority for the CWFs. I think $8 million is good, but we will need more investment in the future to help us get to where we need to be.
- Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation & Technology Transfer, UMN *(Webex 04:01:00)*
    - The ICT recommends restoring it to the previous level to $2 million. A Council member recommends increasing it to $2.5 million.

- Steve Christenson: I suggested increasing it to get it back to where it was previously. This helps address chloride contamination issues. I think it is important research and technology transfer.
- Joel Larson, UMN: Yes, in FY26-27 we had taken a cut. This program is scalable. So, additional funds would go straight into the research projects.

- National Park Water Quality Protection Program (pass through MPCA) *(Webex 04:04:30):*
  - Steve Christenson: There was a lot of debate at the BOC. Personally, I think it is a good program, with a proven track record of the first phases as efficient. This area is a unique crown jewel, and I think investments in these areas are important. The Legislature will fund it at $3 billion regardless of what we decide. We would be foolish not to fund it because they will likely change it.
  - Rich Biske: Making a poor decision on this can impact our ninety-seven percent alignment we have with the state agencies. That misalignment is my concern. The Council recommends funding for programs, we evaluate those, and that is what we are best at. Those that are best at programs should administer them. This is a deviation from that. I would hope these programs would fit within a different program, but they will not. Given the desire to have the funds stay together, given an unknown administration and legislature ahead of us, in the interest of the good work we have done here, I would agree to $3 million.
  - John Barten: I agree with the $3 million. Given the politics, we will need the votes to get our budget passed. So, I can support this.
  - Gail Cederberg: Political pressure to fund, thinking long term and about when this work will be done, we may need to sunset this program.
  - April Swenby: It sounds to me that this is more of a political reason to fund. I understood the same conversations happened in the last budget cycle, and it was agreed that the funding then was the last time it was going to be funded. Will this round now be the last time it is funded? What will this look like next time?
    - Response from John Barten: My understanding from the presentation was this is the last of the four phases. When this is implemented, it should be done. There was no official answer from the Council that it would be the last time.
    - Jeff Anderson, VNPJPB and St. Louis County: You are correct that the phase remains to be complete. It is a $30 million dollar estimated phase, so as it seeks bonding and leverage funds, it may not be the last time the project is in front of you. However, once the phase is done, it will be the end of the project here.
  - Peter Schwagerl: If there is additional interest in this project, or funds like it, perhaps it can be incorporated into a specific program.
  - April Swenby: How much funding have we put into septic systems in the state of Minnesota?
    - *Dana Vanderbosch, MPCA:* The MPCA receives funding that we pass through to counties for septic system replacement and repair. The amount varies, as it is scalable. However, it is usually between $7-8 million. The Ag BMP program can also be used for SSTS upgrades, and MDA may be able to track that number down. There are a few different programs, a few different kinds, that are funded by the CWFs.
    - *April Swenby:* There could be about $8 million in the whole state, plus or minus?
    - *Answer from Glenn Skuta, MPCA:* Likely more like $10 million.
    - *BWSR:* Even in our 1W1P, we have money set aside for septic systems (through WBIF).
    - *April Swenby:* So, we would be offering about a quarter of the funds to the whole state, versus the Voyageur's whole area?
    - *Glenn Skuta, MPCA:* It is hard to say, because the WBIF could have a larger amount. The point you are making is it is a significant amount of money, and it is.
- River Watch in the Minnesota Valley *(Webex 04:18:00):*
  - This is a new program (similar to the Red River Watch program). The BOC suggested $75,000. One Council member suggested zeroing it out.
  - Dick Brainerd: We had a fair amount of discussion on this program. We did talk about possibly having it be absorbed into an existing program.
  - Glenn Skuta, MPCA: This is pass through funding from the MPCA. If there is funding out of the monitoring budget, it compromises MPCAs ability to get their work done.

    - Jen Kader: There has also been conversations to set up a competitive program for river watch across the state. At this point in time, that would be a conversation for the future. Note, a full program would pick up additional administrative costs too, versus pass through funding.
    - Steve Christenson: The reason it is $75,000 is because we split the difference (some wanted $150,000 and another wanted $0). Feedback from non-BOC members would be helpful.
    - Brad Gausman: I would like to see $75,000. I think it should be for Minnesota Valley.
    - Jessica Wilson: I would support zero. It feels like a program, but I think we need to have more conversation about how we fund education and engagement programs as a whole. We are not ready for this request yet.
    - Rich Biske: Would they be eligible under the Legacy Partners program? *Answer from Justin Hanson, BWSR:* They have applied, but have not ranked high compared to other programs that applied. It is a competitive program, so it is not as stable over the biennia.
    - John Barten: We need to think about how to fund this in the future.
    - Dick Brainerd: This program connects to the Minnesota youth. I think these kinds of programs are important. This program impacts close to the Twin Cities as well.
- Next Steps: Jen Kader will send out to voting members a table that shows the proposed changes, and people could place their adjusted funding numbers, based on feedback from members and agencies at the meeting today. This response will help with discussions at the BOC. If non-voting members have thoughts, you can send them as feedback too. Note, the total funding number will be $342, instead of $340, based on budget feedback from Minnesota Management and Business (MMB). Council members should not discuss it with each other, to avoid violating open meeting laws. At the September full Council meeting, members will need to review and accept a preliminary budget recommendation.
- *Motion to adjourn by Dick Brainerd. Seconded by Brad Gausman. No discussion. Motion carried unanimously.*

Adjournment *(Webex 04:33:07)*

Clean Water Council
September 28, 2026, Meeting Summary

Members present: John Barten (Chair), Steve Besser, Eunie Biel, Rich Biske (Vice Chair), Gail Cederberg, Brad Gausman, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Justin Hanson, Holly Hatlewick, Sen. John Hoffman, Bonnie Keeler, Peter Kjeseth (Margaret Wagner), Chris Meyer, Fran Miron, Ole Olmanson, Rep. Kristi Pursell, Peter Schwagerl, Glenn Skuta, April Swenby, Jamison Wendel, Jessica Wilson, and Frieda von Qualen.
Members absent: Dick Brainerd, Steve Christenson, Annie Knight.

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

Council members held a moment of silence in remembrance of Warren Formo. Members spoke about their experiences with Warren, and how much of an impact he had on the Council.

Regular Clean Water Council Business *(Webex 00:13:00)*

- Council member introductions—please declare any perceived or actual conflict of interest
  - Frieda von Qualen, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): She will be the new strategic initiatives coordinator at the Water Policy Center. She will officially be the MDH seat on the Council.
  - Bonnie Keeler: The University of Minnesota Water Resources Conference will take place October 13-14.
- Motion to approve the June 15th meeting agenda and July 20th meeting minutes by Steve Besser, seconded by Dick Brainerd. No discussion. Motion carries unanimously with a roll call.
- Council Updates
  - Council Chair:
    - The Star Tribune had an article published on the Riverview West River Expansion in Morris, MN. It is drawing a lot of attention. This is a large-volume water user, with an impact on water resources, which can be significant if we do not plan ahead. It is good that the Council has the large-volume water policy.
      - Fran Miron: Regarding Minnesota's standing nationally, our dairy has diminished within the state. The cow numbers have remained stable. The state overall is stable. Each cow will cost 60-80 gallons of water a day, which adds up.
      - Glenn Skuta, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA): It will be the biggest in the state historically. There are 18,000 cows (animal units). The dairy is sent to the processing plant. I have toured a few of their places lately. As part of their water usage, they capture water roof runoff, and essentially stormwater reuse onsite. The DNR has the authority to permit the projects to complete pump tests on the aquifers, which they are doing often. It is a regulatory structure in place, which dovetails with the Council's policy.
  - Budget and Outcomes Committee:
    - Brad Gausman: This is drafted by Steve Christenson, who is out of the country today. The BOC last met on September 11th. This meeting addressed Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) outcome reporting, Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) and auditor report, and the budget planning. The committee also spent time remembering Warren Formo. Regarding WBIF, it is among the more controversial programs funded by Clean Water Funds (CWFs), for FY28-29 it was for an increase to $96 million. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) staff presented a two-year work plan to address outcomes of the program, between implementation activities and water quality outcomes, with a proposed $1.1 million dollar budget increase for measurement, analysis, and reporting of outcomes. The BOC passed a motion to recommend the funding. Regarding the MAWQCP, the BOC recommends the Council continue to fund the program based on the data supporting the program's water quality protection benefits, as well as the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)'s ongoing work to measure and monitor program outcomes. The BOC also reviewed the budget homework. Note, we adjusted the CWF budget to be a total of $342.6 million (versus $340 million), which came

from the updated information from Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB). The forecast will be updated again in November, so the number will change again. The BOC went through the line items one at a time. The meeting packet includes a document, for the updated recommendations for review. The BOC Chair and Vice Chair recommend supporting this budget because it reflects our bias for implementation and outcomes; fosters a watershed approach enabling local empowerment; increases drinking water protection; as well as innovation with the new programs for shoreline protection, manure management, and the new merged Olmstead County/BWSR cover crop program.

- Policy Committee:
  - Two items at the last meeting. First, the Water Resources Conference in October will include the chloride de-icer policy statement. As it will be presented there, the group discussed possible questions and expectations from the session. Second, we reviewed and approved a summary of the new and updated policies. This includes a brief description of our most recent policies, the chloride de-icer policy and large volume water policy. It also includes brief descriptions of policies from the past. This document is included in the meeting packet. It should be reviewed, so it can be approved and sent along with the Council's recommendations to the Governor's Office.
    - April Swenby: Will the full Council have time to comment on the policies? *Answer*: There is time on the agenda later today. Many of these policies are on the current policy platform of the Council. The de-icer is open for comments. Otherwise, the policies mentioned are brief, and not the full language, and they were previously approved in the past.
- Council Staff
  - Jen Kader joined and presented at the Minnesota Watersheds and BWSR tour in Detroit Lakes.
  - Jen attended a three-day community based social marketing training last week focused on how to design and conduct effective behavior change campaigns.
  - The Council will have the de-icer policy statement up at the Water Resources Conference coming up October 13-14 for feedback.
  - Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) long-range planning team, as part of their 2100 water futures conversation, will have a special session at the Water Resources Conference. They are seeking feedback on how to approach this work going forward.
  - Ten folks will be up for reappointment in January. Please contact Jen if you are planning to re-apply. Council members up for reappointments should keep attending for their position, until the new Governor approves or reappoints the position.
  - Jamison Wendel with the DNR will be officially in the Clean Water Council, and it will be updated on our webpage. Frieda von Qualen with the MDH will be updated as well, with her new position.
  - The 2027 calendar is included in the meeting packet, to be reviewed and discussed later in the meeting.

No General Public Comment *(Webex 00:46:30)*

Overview of meeting and FY28-29 Preliminary Budget Recommendations *(Webex 00:47:30)*
After further discussion today, the Council will vote to adopt the preliminary budget recommendations for the FY28-29 biennium. This is a review of the work done, leading up to this point.

- The Council looked back at the previous two years, to create the proposal and scoring rubric (which helps to capture the Council's values and priorities). The proposal was filled out by the proposers (proposal review phase from February to June). This rolled into the preliminary budget development phase (June to September).
- Budget Recommendations Overview:
  - CWFs at $342.912 million from the February forecast
  - This is about $39 million more than FY26-27
  - There were 63 proposals across agencies and external proposers. There were 23 seeking increases, new programs seeking funding, and even programs listed as "hold steady" could include inflationary increases

    - There was more demand than available funding.
- Public comment included a record number of comment letters received in advance, about thirty participants in a four-hour workshop, another 300 + response to survey workshop outcomes (key considerations for the Council to consider). This provided valuable input for this budget process now and for the future.
- The Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) reviewed the memo and feedback from the Council provided to develop a first draft of the preliminary budget. There was alignment for seventy-five percent of the programs. Where there was disagreement, it was usually focused on the degree of increase or decrease of the funding. The Council reviewed and amended the draft. At the August BOC meeting, members dug into the Clean Water Council (CWC) preferences, and larger sticking points. Public input was provided as well at this point. Additionally, more support from legislators came forward for support to the Voyageur's National Park funding. The BOC came back with further recommendations to the full Council.
- A memo regarding Council homework is included in the meeting packet. This reveals data the BOC used to help create the final budget proposal amounts for the final preliminary budget.
- Fall will include strategies if there is more or less funding from the estimates.
- Summary of the Final Change (since August Council meeting):
    - The Council opted to allow up to current MMB forecast
    - Further increases for the following programs: BWSR's Critical Shoreland Easements; BWSR's Watershed Partners Legacy Grants; BWSR's Measures, Results, and Accountability; as well as MDA's Forever Green program with UMN.
    - Increases above FY26-27 amounts but less than proposer's requests for the following programs: MDH's Private Well Initiative, BWSR's Wetland Restoration Easement, and the Friends of the Minnesota Valley's River Watch program.
    - Funding consistent with FY26-27 amounts but less than propose requests include the Voyager National Park Clean Water Project.
    - Slight reduction from FY26-27 amounts: Metropolitan Council's Demand Reduction and Water Efficiency Grants.
    - These changes and the overall recommendations were unanimously supported by BOC members. There are a few pie charts included in meeting packet that give a few glimpses at the nature of the recommendations if these move forward as is.
    - Council members should consider the following before finalizing the preliminary recommendations: rubric scores, public input, balance of and interaction between programs, context (including opportunities or challenges), flexibility of programs, and what is needed now versus later.

Budget-related Comments from Interested Parties *(Webex 01:06:30)*
Before discussing the draft recommendations from the Budget and Outcomes Committee, interested parties will be invited to provide comments for Council consideration. Those who would like to do so are asked to notify Council staff, and comments will be time limited.
Questions:

- Dick Brainerd: Can you speak about the impact of inflation? *Answer:* We knew inflation was going to take up a lot of the funds. Different programs are impacted more (materials, cost of living or wage increases, etc.). Even if there was no change to the deliver of the program, the would still be an impact because of the inflation. The state agencies and BOC anticipated an impact, so there was an understanding before the numbers. With inflation along, it was going to take up about $39 million of the extra funds. Then, it was tight if there was programmatic changes, or desired changes for the programs, was still expensive.
- Rich Biske: Can we have breakdowns regarding how the funds are distributed on an annual basis (common breakdown options)?
    - *Answer:* We can connect with state agencies about it.
    - *Frieda von Qualen, MDH:* When the state agencies are figuring out their budgets, they do have them broken down into different categories within our agencies. We would not have any pass-through funds to categorize. It is public information, so once it is submitted it is something we can provide.

Public Comment:

- Trevor Russel, Friends of the Mississippi River: We appreciate the Council's leadership and commitment to Minnesota's waters. You have created a clear and transparent process, and it takes a long time to get to where you are today. We know the budget recommendations process is a grind. We want you to know we appreciate it and thank you. From our view you are making a lasting difference in protecting our sacred water resources. We think these recommendations are terrific and urge the Council to adopt them moving forward.

Council Members Passing Along Comments Regarding the Council's Budget Process:

- Chris Meyer: Paul McDonald, on the Voyageur's Park Board, did reach out to her this morning hoping the Council would fund their projects at the $3 million. They said if it wasn't through the Council, they would approach the Legislature for the funds.
  - Jen Kader: I also received an email regarding the current funding allocation ($1.5 million)
  - Fran Miron: The Voyageur's folks reached out to me as well. Cuts were made to programs, and the St. Louis County contributed $3 million and were looking for that match form the CWFs. The BOC had discussions, and programs had cuts. It is the amount the BOC landed on.
- Dick Brainerd: We should be cognizant, and we do not know what the final budget will look like. There are a lot of costs increasing, especially building and construction costs.
- John Barten: The lakeshore homeowners associations and organizations are happy with the new program for shoreline improvement and protection efforts.

Discussion and Adoption of Draft Budget Amounts *(Webex 01:18:30)*

The meeting packet includes a spreadsheet showing draft budget amounts for each program for which a proposal was submitted for FY28-29. Any final changes discussed and approval of the preliminary budget is adopted.

Discussion:

- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: The ICT met following the BOC meeting. There were no issues that came forward. The ICT is in agreement with what the BOC recommended here.
- Ole Olmanson: I appreciate all the work and understanding that went into the funding for the Watershed Partners Legacy Grants program (BWSR). It is good to get the exact amount that we need, but there are a lot of people that need funding too.
- Rich Bisk: Regarding the significant increase to BWSR's program regarding the WBIF Outcomes and Reporting. I appreciate the additional funds in this area, but can someone speak on the impact of those funds?
  - *Justin Hanson:* There is a PowerPoint presentation included in the meeting packet. We will be pursuing technical capacity to gather and assess the data we have, to build our work with the reporting methods we have. We want to display it in a way for the public to better understand. We talked about having interactive maps and dashboards, along with some communication pieces to share the outcomes.
  - *Rich Biske:* Will this be some standardization with the WBIF? Will there be some data governance and outcomes for it? *Answer:* We need to get the plan in place first to understand what we have, and how to communicate it, so that is our first focus. The goal is for folks to understand the data.
  - *Rich Biske:* What is the expectation of the other agencies who are doing implementation and evaluation. How are they participating in this, and do they have the capacity within their programs? *Answer:* We have just started the conversation with our agency partners about what is possible. We are not committing our other agencies to work, but we have been in communication with them. If there is capacity and we agree together to pursue it, the capacity funding could and should work across agencies to help support the work. BWSR will take the lead on it. We cannot do this without help. Next steps as we move forward will become clearer through this process.
  - *Glenn Skuta, MPCA:* I like the general direction this is heading. Starting with the very large WBIF program, and moving forward to other programs, with BWSR leading the effort. Our agencies want to support with data and tools to assist. It will be a collaborative effort and figure out what is best for everyone. Rarely is there a silver bullet to satisfy everything, but this likely will help satisfy a lot.
  - *Rich Biske:* This will help the Council regarding outcomes. The Council will be following along as part of this process. Starting with WBIF and branching out to other programs. BWSR may be leading,

but I want it to be as inclusive as possible, and it sounds like that is the intention at this time. It can help tell the story of the impact of CWFs.

- *Motion to adopt the preliminary budget as documented in the FY28-29 CWF proposed budget, by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Brad Gausman. No further discussion. Motion carries unanimously with vote by roll call.*
- Next steps include the December forecast, to review the budget and possibly update at that time.

Scenarios for Adjustments *(Webex 01:41:45)*
The November budget forecast will give us the number that will be used in the Council's biennial recommendations report. The number will very likely be different than the one used to approve the budget today. There was a discussion on how the Council will respond if the number is higher than $342.912M, and how to respond if it is lower.

If there is a Positive Budget:

- Brad Gausman: I would like to see more funds go toward the Watershed Partners Legacy Grants program (BWSR). It did not get up to the $3.75 million described by program staff to be fully funded (approved by Council at $3 million).
- John Barten: I would like to see the Voyageur's National Park funds also be brought forward for discussion.
    - Steve Besser: I agree. We are protecting a unique area of the state. They have also indicated they will go to the Legislature for an increase.
- Fran Miron: I would identify the Surface and Drinking Water Protection/Restoration Grants (BWSR). We increased it beyond the previous budget, but reading through the narrative, there are significant requests that are going unfunded within that area. There is good work happening. Due to the popularity and opportunity to do additional projects, additional funds go there.
- John Barten: I would also like to see an increase in Stormwater Research (UMN) to the original request. Some of the research they are doing links directly to our chloride issue, so it could be beneficial to fund it more.
- Peter Schwagerl: I would say the Private Well Initiative (MDH). I am in support of the other items suggested too.
    - *Gail Ceberberg:* I also support the Private Well Initiative. It helps individual Minnesotans in their houses.
    - *Brad Gausman*: I understood at a previous BOC meeting, there may not be the appetite for too much more funding.
    - *Gail Cederberg:* I believe there is an appetite for them.
    - *John Barten:* There can be further discussion on this item at the BOC.
- Rich Biske: I like it for Watershed Partners Legacy Grants program (BWSR), the Voyageur's for certain reasons (such as support for our water-based national park), and Wetland Restoration Easements (BWSR). In that order.
- Holly Hatlewick: The BOC would still have discussion and a vote, before bringing it to the full Council for discussion and approval.

If there is a Deficit Budget:

- John Barten: We can highlight certain programs to take the cuts and look to restore funding in the future. We can receive feedback from the ICT on these cuts.
- Steve Besser: In the past, we received input from the state agencies, who are doing the work, and we listened to them. They are scientists and know the priorities. We all have our constituent groups, but they are going to know where the cuts can be made. *Response from Justin Hanson:* I can speak for BWSR and let the other agencies speak for themselves. It is for the Council to decide, and we can provide feedback. Most programs are relatively scalable. However, there are impacts to those as well. We will help. We can always help. We are sensitive about overreaching as well.
- Margaret Wagner, MDA: We see this as a partnership, so any guidance you can provide us will help us answer your questions as well. Even the rankings help us directionally. At this point in the process there has been a lot of adjustments, so it does feel tight. We are here to provide an opinion.

- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: We would also re-review the initial recommendations. It is a good discussion point, comparing them to the current recommendations. Guidance is appreciated at that point. The Council can share programs they do not want touched, and the ICT would understand that request.
- Next steps: There is a quick turnaround after the November forecast. There is one BOC meeting, and one final full Council meeting, to be able to meet the recommendations timeline for the report to the Legislature.

Draft Policy Content for the Biennial Recommendations Report *(Webex 02:20:00)*
In addition to new and updated policies since the FY26-27 report, the Policy Committee has suggested the inclusion of a teaser section for topics on the horizon. To insert these into the Governor's process, a motion is requested to include this as additional draft content alongside the budget recommendations. A draft of what the Policy Committee will be reviewing at their September 25 meeting is included in this meeting packet.

- It has been understood for some time that CWFs alone will not achieve Minnesota's clean water goals.
- This current draft explains why the Council has a policy committee, shares brief examples of outcomes from past statements, details the new or updated policies for this biennium, includes summaries of other existing platform items, highlights value of public input, overviews upcoming topics, and invites ongoing public input.
- Historically, policy recommendations have been in just the report to the legislature. This is a shift to attach them alongside the budget recommendations. Submitting them can support agencies in pursuing relevant items within the policy recommendations. The de-icer policy statement will be adjusted slightly after receiving feedback from the Water Resources Conference, but most of the policies are already Council-approved.

Questions/Comments:

- April Swenby: Looking at the chloride reduction, I see the first incentive listed as "implement a granular salt fee", and I want to know if this is still a topic of discussion? *Answer:* The Council had a chance to look at the Chloride Reduction (De-icer) Policy back in August, to review it before going to the Water Resources Conference. At this point, it is adopted by the Council as a general response and will have feedback from the conference as well. Council members are welcome to continue to talk about this policy.
- April Swenby: Would now be a good time to talk about a few items of concern? Would it be better in a letter? Response from Rich Biske: We could hear some now. However, the draft recommendations as they have been through the Policy Committee, and it was deliberate that it was not brought to a vote at the last full Council meeting, so additional updates from the Water Resources Conference could be reviewed and included for approval with the Policy Committee. It would be good to hear your concerns now, and there will be an opportunity at the Water Resources Committee as well as an upcoming Policy Committee. This can be in person comments, or written comments. However you would like to provide them.
    - *April Swenby:* Regarding the salt fee and what direction it would go. Would that be passed back on to the taxpayer. How would counties and road authorities react to it? Would it impact the taxpayers? Additionally, MPCA's map that showed where the impairments are is often around the more densely populated areas. Therefore, folks in the rural areas, are we treating everything as one size fits all for salt? How is that working? How does it impact the areas that are more rural? How does it impact the taxpayers there? I just want to make sure those kinds of questions are considered when creating these policies?
    - *Rich Biske:* When we make these recommendations, we do not get specific on the implementation or execution of them. This is for a few reasons. First, it is the legislator's preview. This is to introduce this idea, as (like with the fee) a way to support these efforts. Some of these efforts will need to continue beyond CWFs if it is not renewed. We are looking for ways to sustain these efforts over time. This is one of the examples of a way to do that work. As impairments increase, as the development of these implementation actions continue, the specifics on how a fee is enacted are details that would need to be worked out.

- *Jessica Wilson:* This question has come up before, on who would pay the fee. We do not get into much detail here, which is intentional. The original idea was that public road authorities would be exempt from that. Part of the policy is to encourage more judicious use. We have heard from Washington County that they're already regulated and demonstrating progress. We are aiming for the private side, where salt is so cheap that it is less expensive to overapply than to take it back and store it. I am not a legislator, and I do not know where this will go. I have spoken to MPCA chloride reduction staff if public authorities were not exempt, they would not get support from cities or counties, and it would probably be dead on arrival. For rural versus urban, we have talked about it at the Policy Committee. There is increasing chloride in a lot of places where folks are looking, and it is downstream of developed areas, not necessarily in the metro (downtowns) and there are different risk levels, and they are all unique. The places that are most excited tend to be the metro areas, so they are happening first. Different communities at the larger end can still opt into these things based on their own priorities. This should not compromise safety in any way. You can keep things safe and reduce the overuse of salt.
- *April Swenby:* Thank you. I hear you saying the policies do not try to highly implement those suggestions. Would it be more comfortable if we placed some concerns into it?
- *Response from Jessica Wilson:* We have heard that from others. It would be something to consider with the policy committee. If several groups have brought it up, it would be something to consider. We are at a high level, but it is something to consider.
- *John Barten:* Some additional text in the background statement may be useful.

- *Motion to approve the policy recommendations text to be sent with the CWF budget recommendations to the Governor's Office by Eunie Biel, seconded by Dick Brainerd.*
  Discussion of motion:
  - *Glenn Skuta, MPCA:* This is a draft with the updated changes of market incentive, to reduce overuse, to make public authorities exempt, with modifications after the Water Resources Conference.
  - *Jen Kader*: Yes. This is different and expanded than what was in there initially, the expanded version will be included for the Governor's Office.
  - *Motion carried unanimously with a vote by roll call.*

Upcoming Meetings and 2027 Council Calendar *(Webex 03:04:00)*
The Council reviewed a rough plan for the remaining meetings of 2026 and discussed the focus and schedule for 2027. *See calendar in meeting packet.*

- 2027 Meetings should avoid major holidays (connect if any issues arise so a meeting can be adjusted). Note, there will be a field tour in September 2027.
- For the remainder of 2026, there is a focus on Outcomes work:
  - October: Council will review background items (level-setting, accessing the information, and how it can be communicated)
  - November: Examples, recent studies, and discussion on next steps.

Questions/Comments:

- John Barten: I would like to see more conversations on implementation versus protection. If we need to increase one or the other. Perhaps, we can increase protection. I am not sure how we would do it, but having a conversation may be helpful.
- Bonnie Keeler: I have a book recommendation for members on the Council: "Please be Good at Philanthropy", by Jen Ford Reedy who is President of the Bush Foundation. It is a book about grant making strategies and practice, and it provides good insights into how to provide a clear theory of change. I know the Council does not think of themselves as a philanthropic organization, but this book has a lot of good info that can help us in our work. It is about 150 pages. There could be a discussion after reading it.
- Senator John Hoffman: I wanted to connect on the Voyager National Park project. Where is that at?
  - *Response from John Barten:* We did address it and have CWFs at $1.5 million. Additionally, if additional funding is available with the November budget forecast, it will be reviewed for additional funding.

    - *Senator John Hoffman*: Good, it will all depend on what the budget forecast is at. It is an election year, but I hope I get to be back on the Council next year! Thank you for the update.
- Dick Brainerd: Will we have the same budget process for the next round?
    - *Response from Jen Kader:* I have a debrief process to review it. Please think about what worked and what did not.
    - *Glenn Skuta, MPCA:* Perhaps review the process of high, medium, and low versus the numerical scoring.
    - *Jen Kader:* There was a secondary benefit to scoring the programs, it forced folks to review the details of the programs.
    - *Brad Gausman:* This process helped me as a Council member to be more engaged and learn more about the Council's programs. I think this system is going to help new members.
    - *Margaret Wagner, MDA:* As we move forward for topics of strategy here. Out of the Nutrient Reduction strategy there was a commitment and vision for a continuous living cover workgroup. It would set a road map and lay out what it would require for building things out to scale. It would be good to have the Council be part of this process.
    - *Rich Biske:* The rubric was a good experiment. I think it would be helpful to have a revision, to make it more manageable. Also, I want to acknowledge the role of the public in their input. I think we want to create a way to make stakeholders engaged up to the next budget process. We need to make space for them, so we can keep in touch. Perhaps, revisit the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, to review where we are in the process.
    - *April Swenby:* As a new member, I can say Jen Kader can get new people caught up to date, she did great. The rubric was helpful. However, it was hard to rate some of the projects. There was too much information in each category. I would say that it may be possible to have a more detailed rubric, to rate them easier (less vague categories).
- Council members can reach out to Jen Kader at any point to request discussion topics.

Adjournment *(Webex 03:28:38)*

Adjustments for scenarios

During the September 28, 2026 meeting, Council members began discussing what to do in the event that there is more or less funding available in the November forecast. This document summarizes the feedback received at that time.

If there is more money in the November forecast…

Agency	Program	Current FY28-29	Increase by	To
BWSR	Legacy Partners	$3M	$0.75M	$3.75M
VNP	VNP Water Quality Project	$1.5M	$1.5M	$3M
BWSR	Surface Water and Drinking Water Restoration and Protection Grants	$7.5M	Some additional	
MDH	Private Well Initiative	$9.5M	$0.5M	$10M
UMN	Stormwater Research	$2M	$0.5M	$2.5M
BWSR	Wetland Restoration Easements	$7M	$1M	$8M
	TOTALS	$23M +	$4.25M +	$27.25M +

In addition to the table above, the Budget and Outcomes Committee should review the table showing where other reductions below the ask were made.

If there is less money in the November forecast…

This one is a bit harder, as there will be a big difference in how this is approached if the reduction is $1M or $10M. The Council would be interested in hearing from the agencies where cuts could be absorbed without damaging long-term program delivery. If the Council has strong opinions on programs that should not be considered for reductions, that needs to be made known in advance.

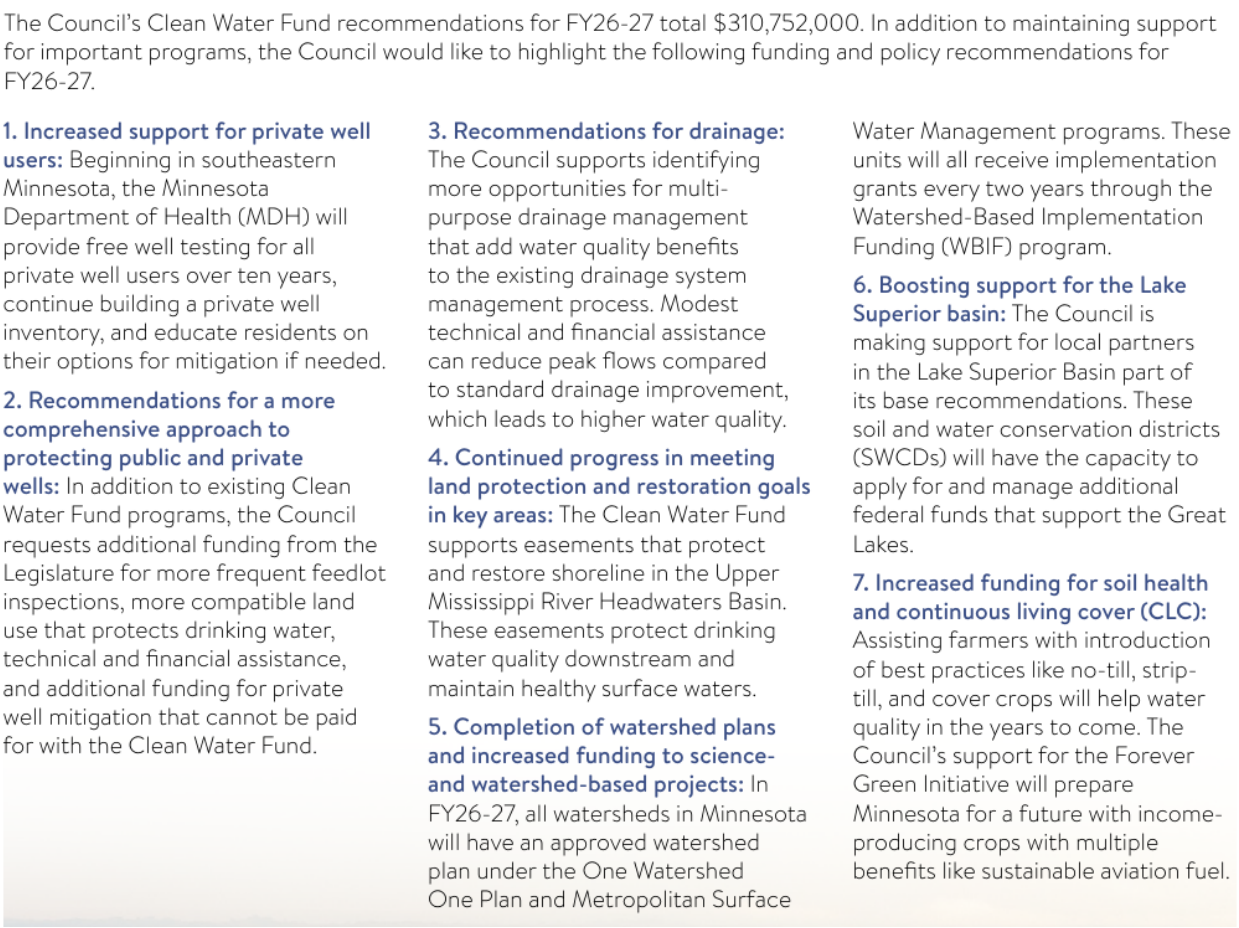
Otherwise, Council members suggested review of the rubric scores and public input, as well as look to programs that were not more significantly impacted by cuts in the FY26-27 biennium (such as easement programs).

Background for the FY28-29 recommendations report highlights

In recent cycles, the biennial report has included a summary of highlights or things the Council was especially proud of in the recommendations. While the budget is still in preliminary form, it is not too late to begin drafting the highlights section.

At the October 19, 2026 meeting of the Clean Water Council, members will be invited to begin isolating highlights to include in the FY28-29 biennial recommendations report. To help seed and kickstart the conversation, this document includes both the FY26-27 executive summary content as an image, and the text included in the most recent newsletter highlighting the contents of the preliminary budget recommendations.

The FY26-27 report included the following summary:



The Council's Clean Water Fund recommendations for FY26-27 total $310,752,000. In addition to maintaining support for important programs, the Council would like to highlight the following funding and policy recommendations for FY26-27.

1. Increased support for private well users: Beginning in southeastern Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will provide free well testing for all private well users over ten years, continue building a private well inventory, and educate residents on their options for mitigation if needed.

2. Recommendations for a more comprehensive approach to protecting public and private wells: In addition to existing Clean Water Fund programs, the Council requests additional funding from the Legislature for more frequent feedlot inspections, more compatible land use that protects drinking water, technical and financial assistance, and additional funding for private well mitigation that cannot be paid for with the Clean Water Fund.

3. Recommendations for drainage: The Council supports identifying more opportunities for multi-purpose drainage management that add water quality benefits to the existing drainage system management process. Modest technical and financial assistance can reduce peak flows compared to standard drainage improvement, which leads to higher water quality.

4. Continued progress in meeting land protection and restoration goals in key areas: The Clean Water Fund supports easements that protect and restore shoreline in the Upper Mississippi River Headwaters Basin. These easements protect drinking water quality downstream and maintain healthy surface waters.

5. Completion of watershed plans and increased funding to science- and watershed-based projects: In FY26-27, all watersheds in Minnesota will have an approved watershed plan under the One Watershed One Plan and Metropolitan Surface Water Management programs. These units will all receive implementation grants every two years through the Watershed-Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) program.

6. Boosting support for the Lake Superior basin: The Council is making support for local partners in the Lake Superior Basin part of its base recommendations. These soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) will have the capacity to apply for and manage additional federal funds that support the Great Lakes.

7. Increased funding for soil health and continuous living cover (CLC): Assisting farmers with introduction of best practices like no-till, strip-till, and cover crops will help water quality in the years to come. The Council's support for the Forever Green Initiative will prepare Minnesota for a future with income-producing crops with multiple benefits like sustainable aviation fuel.

The Clean Water Council newsletter put out last week included the following for the budget recommendations:

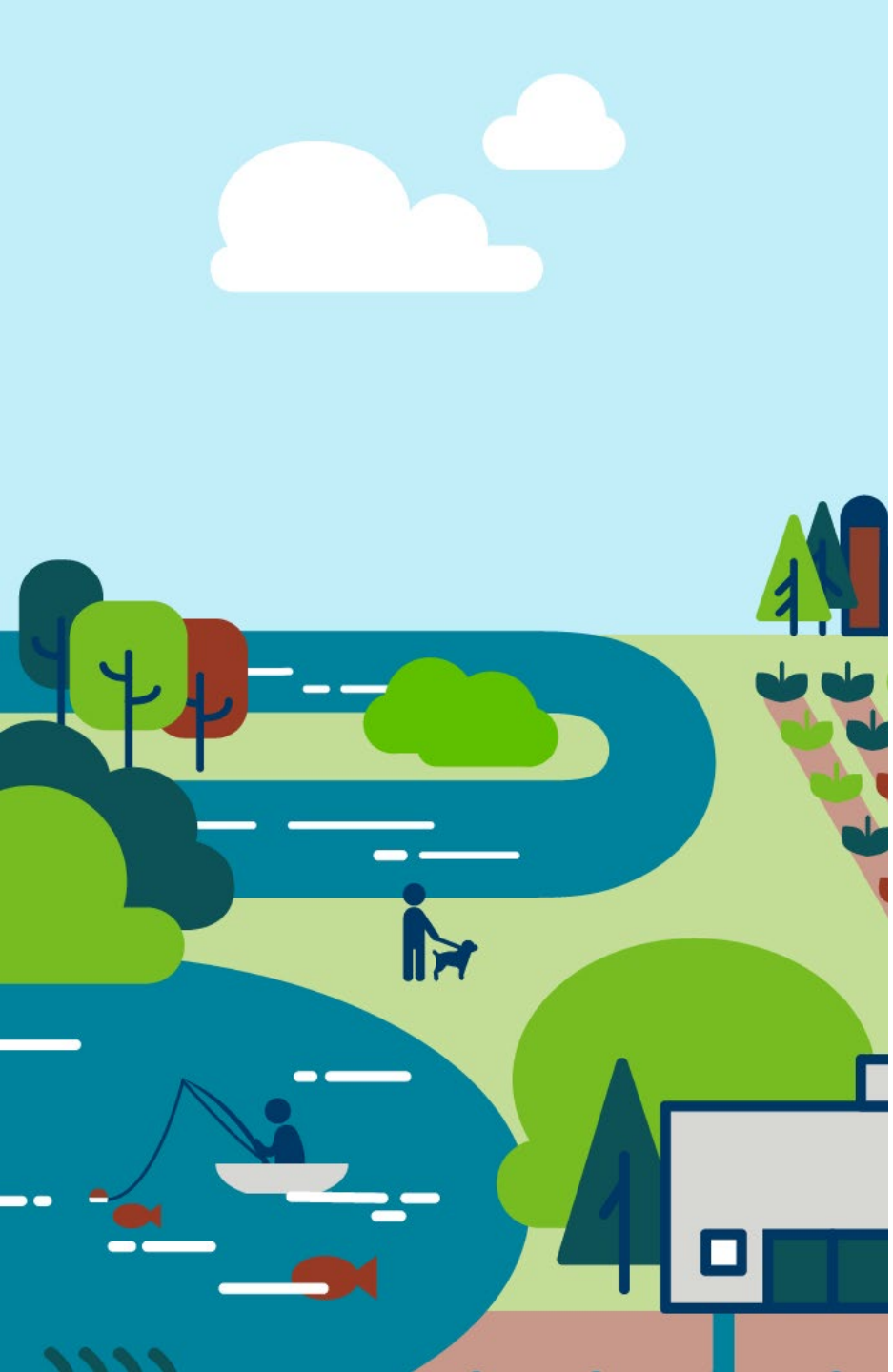
- An expansion of easement programs to permanently protect lands and waters
- A new program to protect and restore natural shorelines, which are disappearing across the state and play a critical role in maintaining and improving water quality
- A new program to work with producers using manure on their fields to enhance water quality outcomes
- Completion of plans designed to protect drinking water sources for all community systems in the state
- Funding for every single watershed partnership across the state to implement targeted, high-priority items in plans developed through One Watershed, One Plan
- Updates to strategies and identified stressors for 18 watersheds, as well as focused reports with similar strategies to address 129 non-mercury impairments and 81 mercury impairments
- Completion of the second round of statewide monitoring, giving up to date information to support science-based approaches to clean water
- Hosting of We Are Water in 10 communities across the state, deepening connections and relationships between people and water

When Minnesotans voted for the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment in 2008, they did so to protect, restore, and enhance the state's surface water, groundwater, and drinking water. As a result of investments provided by the Clean Water Fund, Minnesota now has a wealth of information to understand current conditions and trends, determine how to address issues in scientifically-informed and locally-prioritized ways, and then support local partners to get the work done. In fact, more than two thirds of the Clean Water Funds recommended for the next biennium are for implementation.

Outcomes, outcomes, outcomes!

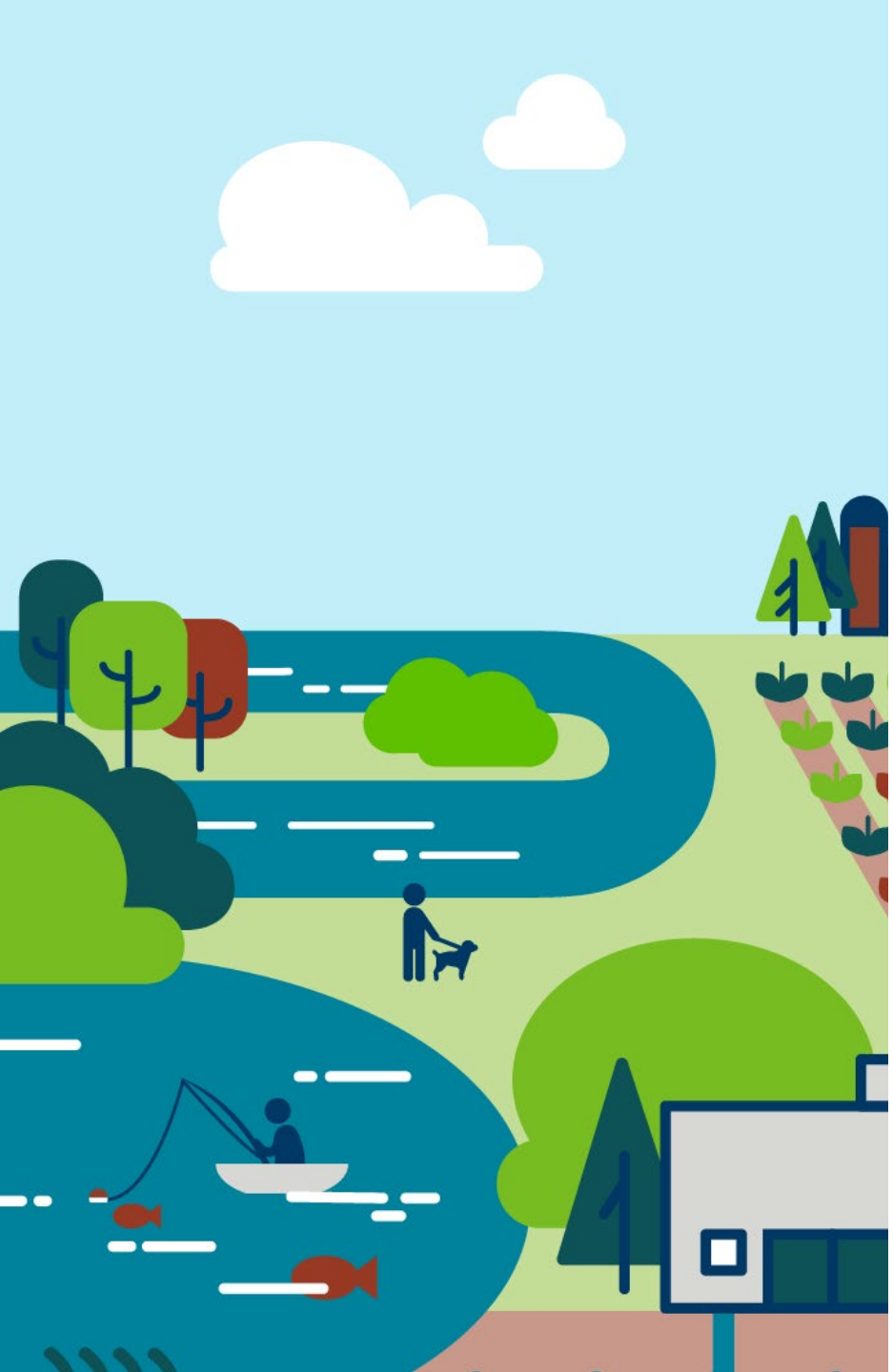
Setting up our conversations





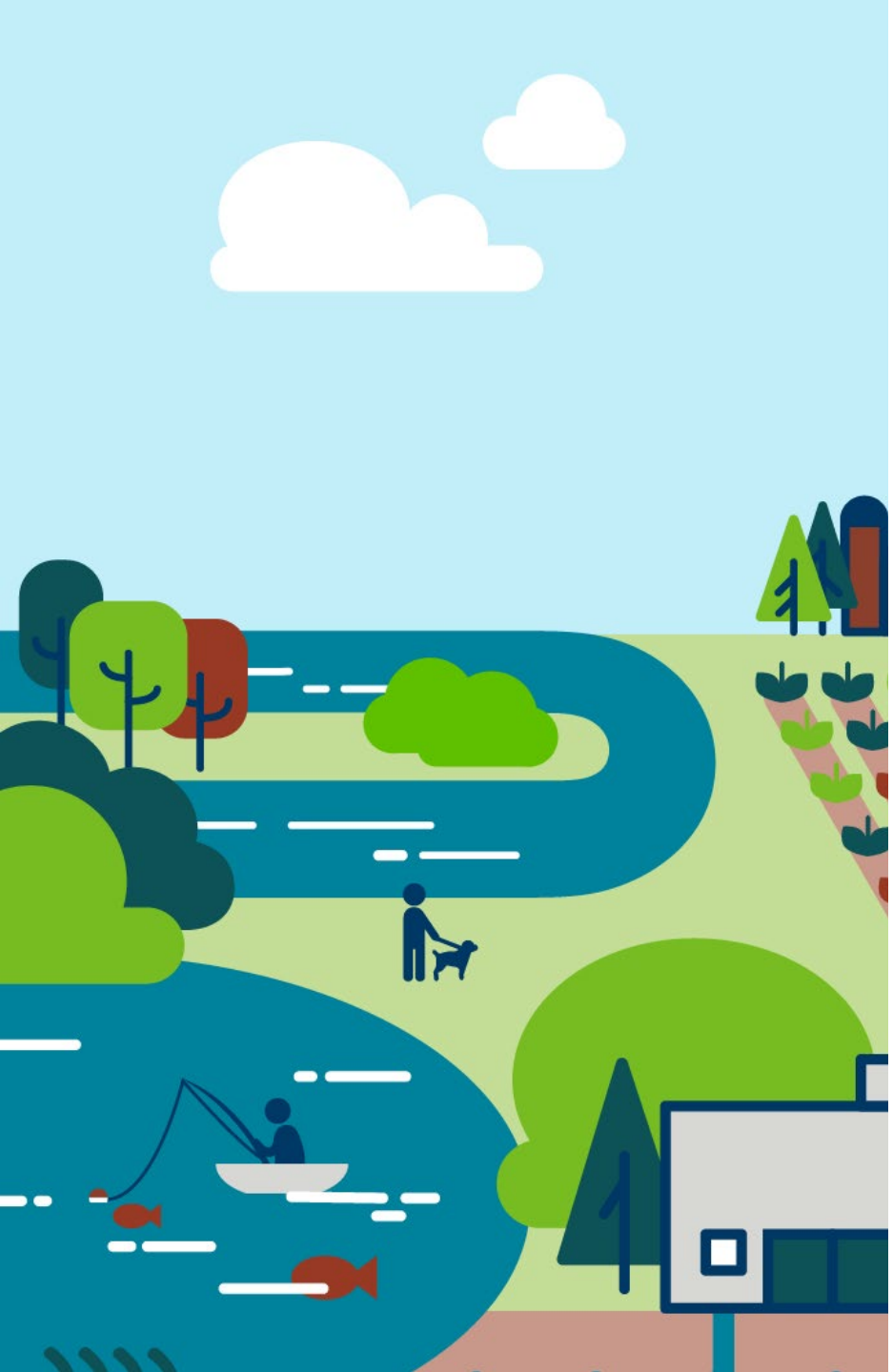
Jumping in

- Outcomes have been on the mind for quite some time
- There have been mixed reactions regarding CWC's ensuring of outcomes
- In the last year:
  - New rubric to include heavier weight towards outcomes
  - Amended proposal to more directly request information regarding past and anticipated outcomes
  - KPI Dashboard discussion and draft
  - MAWQCP audit
  - WBIF enhanced reporting request



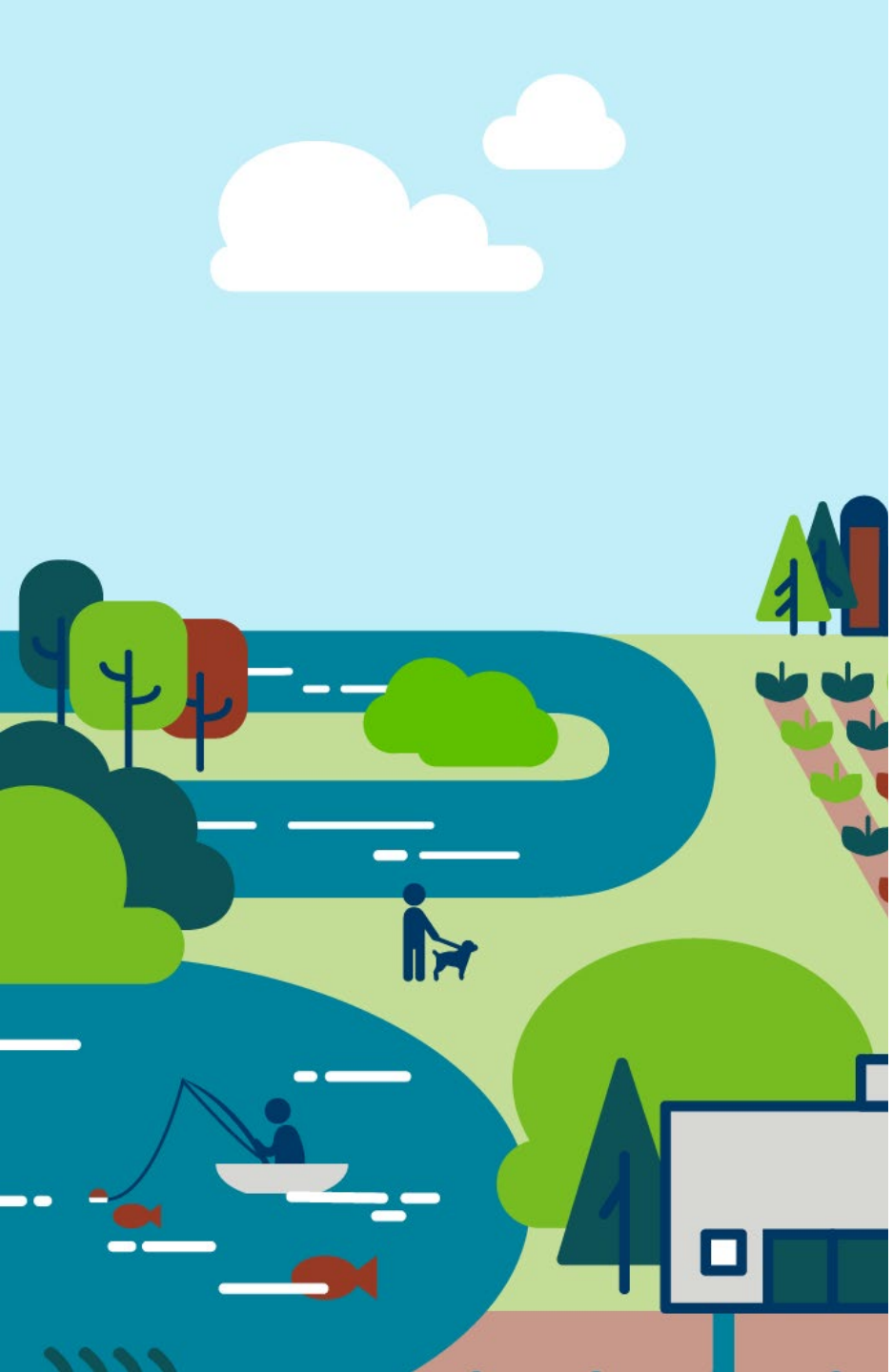
Questions remain

- Do we all mean the same thing when we say “outcomes”?
- Do we each have clarity for what is being tracked and assessed?
- Where does this information exist?
- How does monitoring information lead to changes in program design and delivery?
  - Local partners
  - Agencies, including use of each other’s data
- Where are we doing well, and where are there still gaps?



What's on the docket

- October:
  - Definitions
  - Background
  - Closer look at *outputs*
- Homework (yes, homework): closer look at *outcomes*
- November:
  - Bridging outputs and outcomes
  - Efforts underway to better understand CWF effectiveness



Our outcome

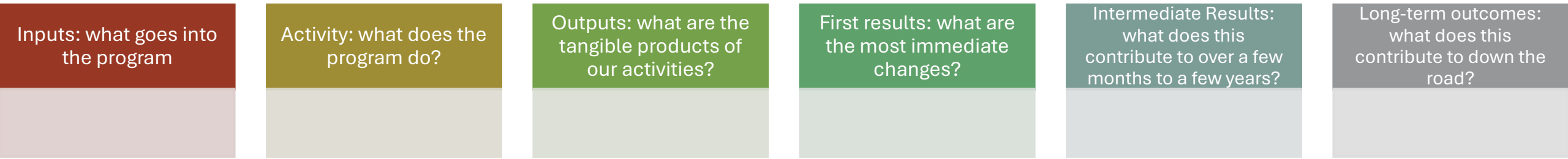
- **Increase confidence in and understanding of how Clean Water Fund dollars are producing results**
- **Identification of where more work is needed**
- Shared language
- Each Council member is familiar with where to find output and outcome information
- Clarity for what is working well, and what gaps remain (strategy year focus options)

Definitions

- Inputs
- Activities
- Outputs
- First results
- Intermediate results
- Long-term outcomes



Program domain

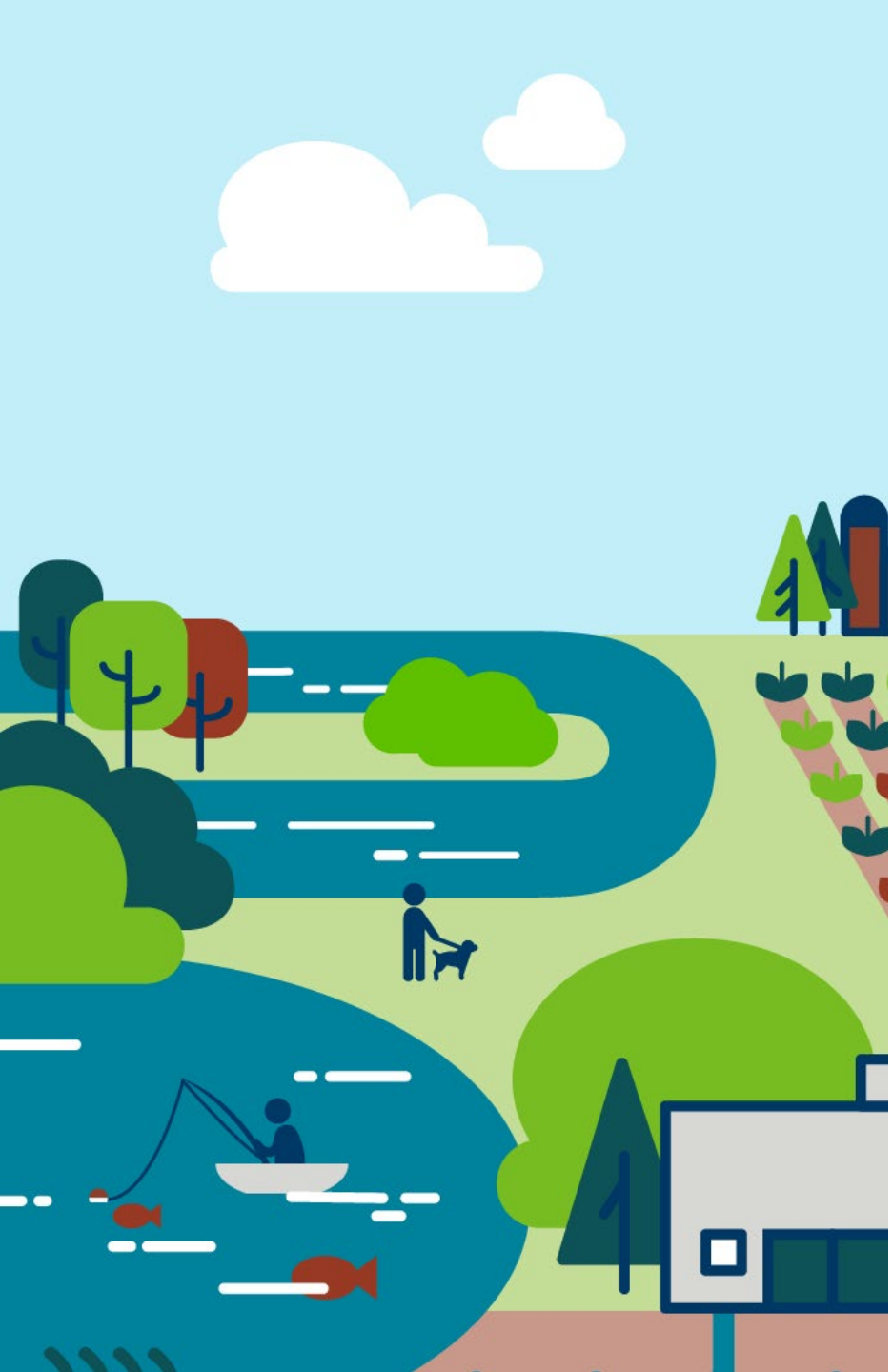


Outcomes: what has changed as a result of your activities and outputs

Program domain

Inputs: what goes into the program	Activity: what does the program do?	Outputs: what are the tangible products of our activities?	First results: what are the most immediate changes?	Intermediate Results: what does this contribute to over a few months to a few years?	Long-term outcomes: what does this contribute to down the road?
• Staff • Materials • Equipment • Money • Time • Etc.	• Host events • Provide technical assistance • Conduct workshops • Provide resources • Recruit priority landowners • Etc.	• Number of participants • New partnerships • Identification of priority projects or areas of concern, project selection • Etc.	• Project implemented • #s phosphorus reduced • #s sediment reduced • Etc.	• Down stream water bodies see improved water quality • Other voluntary participants sign up • Landowner pursues additional practices	• Receiving waters meet standards and are delisted or protected from becoming impaired

Outcomes: what has changed as a result of your activities and outputs



Before we break…

- Take a few min to write down your questions regarding this topic

What is required

- MN Statute 114D.50 (Clean Water Fund)
  - Subd. 4:
    - (a) Projects:
      - Must meet or exceed…constitutional requirements to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater and drinking water from degradation
      - Shall include:
        - measurable outcomes, as defined in section 3.303, subdivision 10;
        - a plan for measuring and evaluating the results;
        - and an assessment of whether the funding celebrates cultural diversity or reaches diverse communities in Minnesota, including reaching low- and moderate-income households.
      - Must be consistent with current science and incorporate state-of-the-art technology.

Accountability



What is required

- MN Statute 114D.50 (Clean Water Fund)
  - Subd. 4:
    - (e) Money from the clean water fund may only be spent on projects that benefit Minnesota waters.
    - (g) Future eligibility for money from the clean water fund is contingent upon a state agency or other recipient satisfying all applicable requirements in this section, as well as any additional requirements contained in applicable session law.

Accountability



What is required

- MN Statute 3.303 (Legislative Coordinating Commission)
  - Subd. 10:
    - (2) (viii) proposed measurable outcomes and the plan for measuring and evaluating the results;
    - (3) actual measured outcomes and evaluation of projects as required under sections 85.53, subdivision 2; 114D.50, subdivision 4; and 129D.17, subdivision 2;

Accountability



What is required

- MN Statute 114D.30 (Clean Water Council)
  - Subd. 6: Recommended appropriations
    - (3)(c) The council must **recommend methods of ensuring that awards** of grants, loans, or other funds from the clean water fund **specify the outcomes to be achieved** as a result of the funding **and specify standards** to hold the recipient accountable for achieving the desired outcomes.

Accountability



Program domain

Inputs: what goes into the program	Activity: what does the program do?	Outputs: what are the tangible products of our activities?	First results: what are the most immediate changes?	Intermediate Results: what does this contribute to over a few months to a few years?	Long-term outcomes: what does this contribute to down the road?
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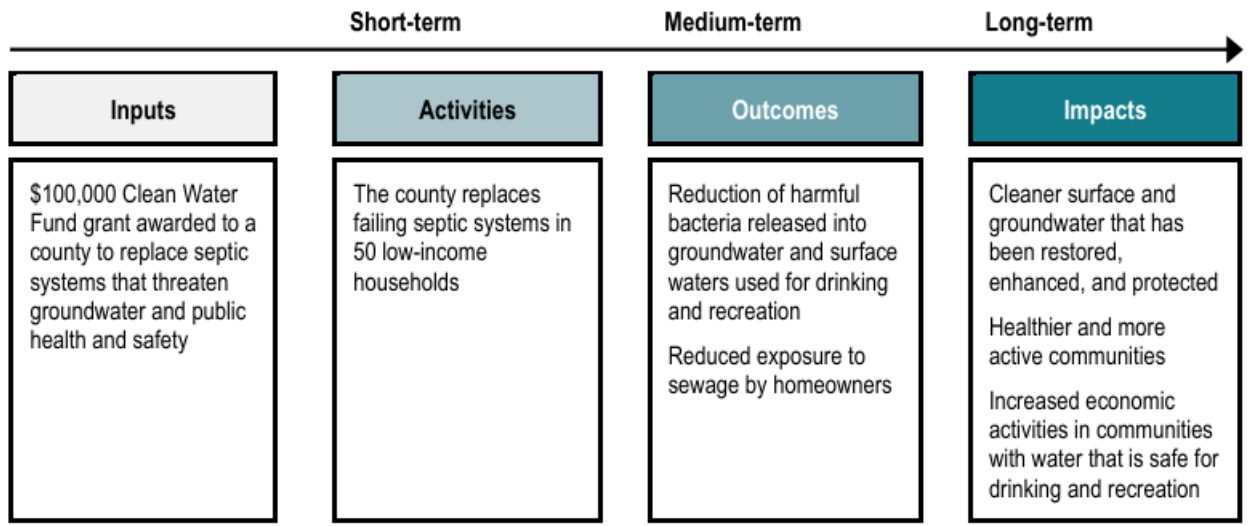
Outcomes: what has changed as a result of your activities and outputs

Clean Water Fund Outcomes

March 20, 2017

From 2009 through 2016, the Legislature appropriated $761 million from the Clean Water Fund to help support a wide range of programs and projects. While the state has developed a framework for measuring the outcomes, isolating the impact of money from the Clean Water Fund will always be extremely difficult. We recommend changes to improve reporting on the use of money from the fund.

Exhibit 2.1: It is easier to measure short-term activities than medium-term outcomes or long-term impacts.



More Information

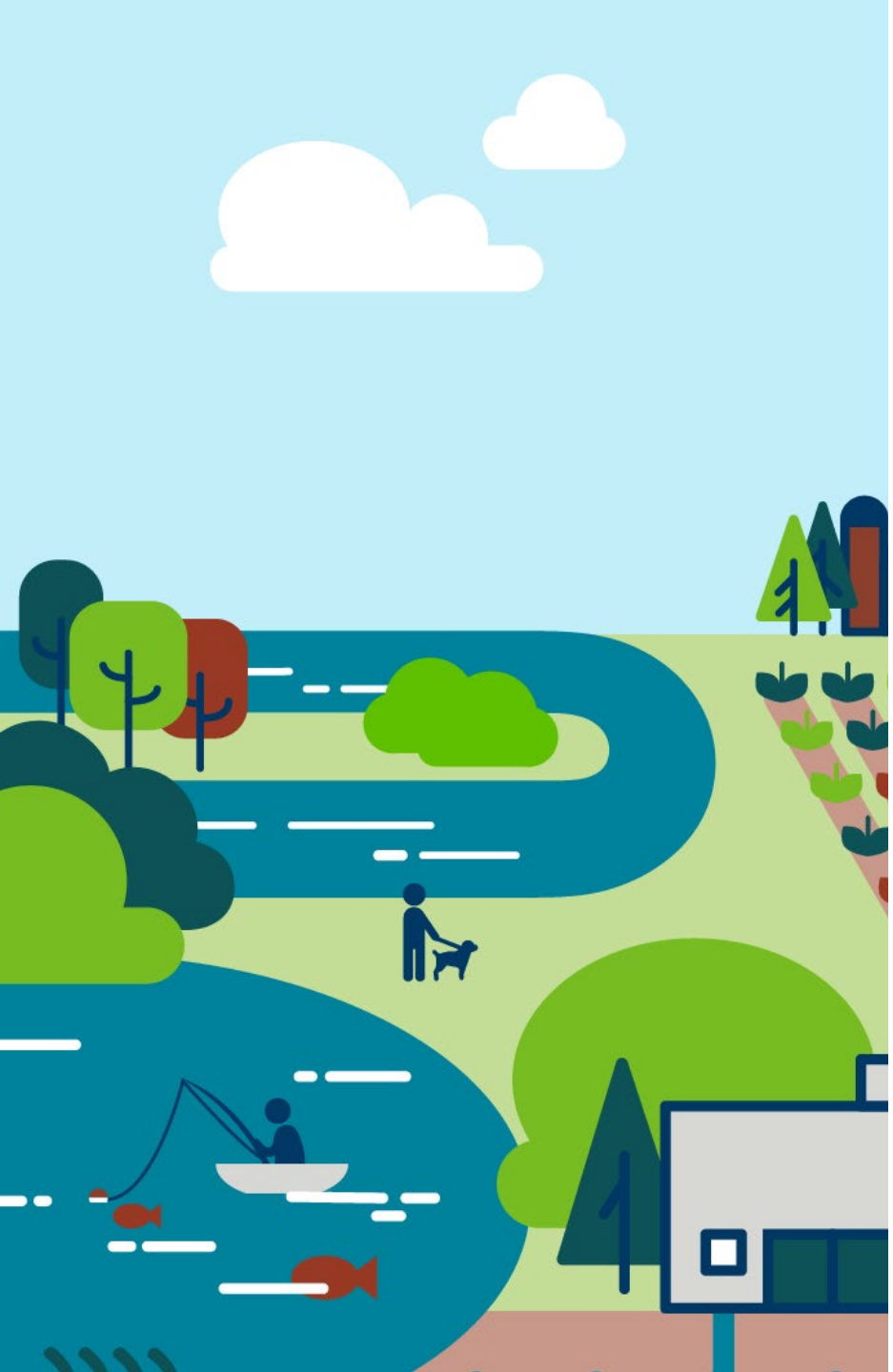
OLA

Summary Report (Text)

Summary Report (PDF)

Full Report (PDF)

Manager: Sarah Delacueva



DO
Implementation

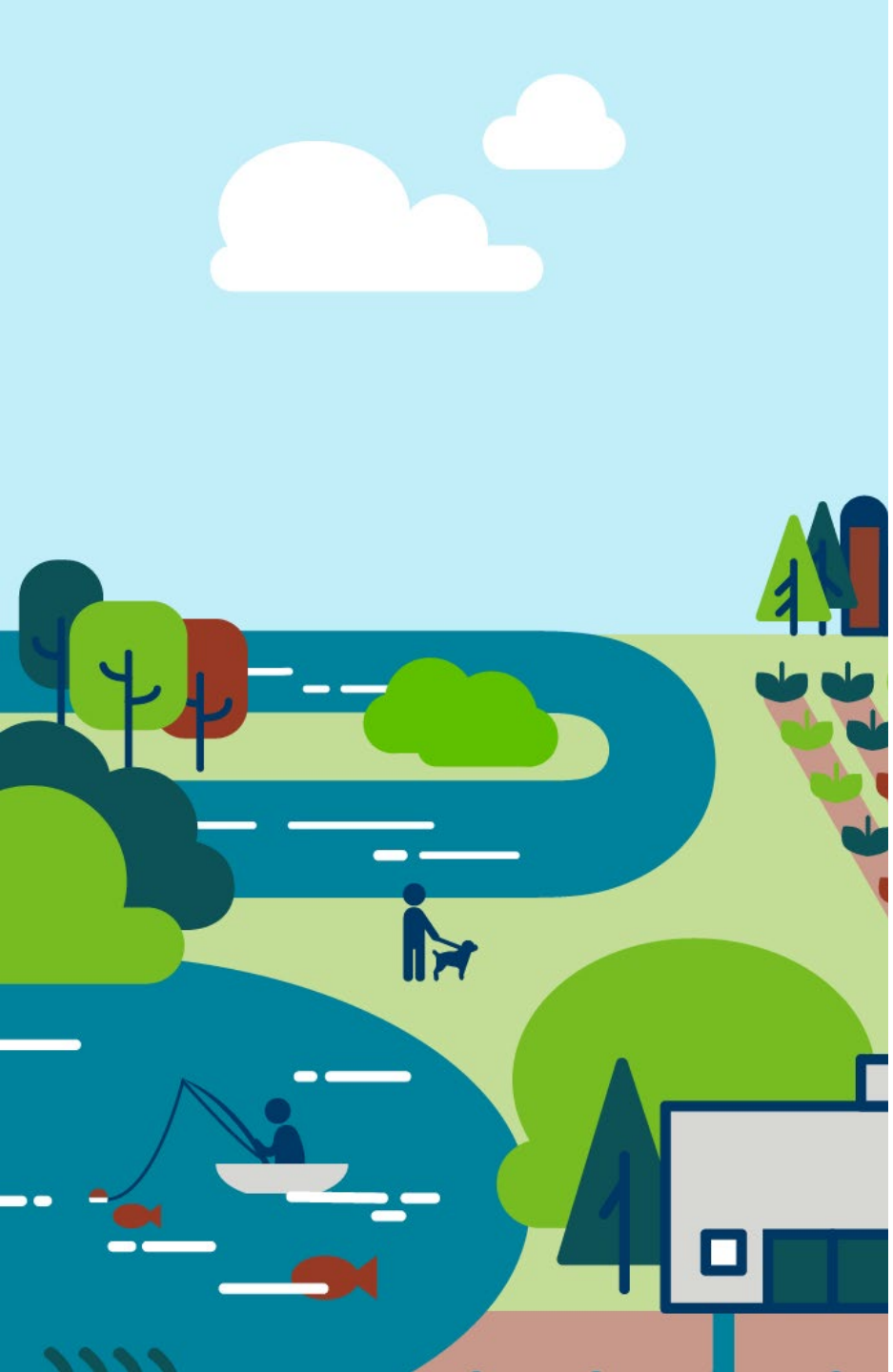
CHECK
Monitoring, Assessment & Characterization

UNDERSTAND
Problem Investigation & Applied Research

STRATEGIZE
Restoration & Protection Strategy Development

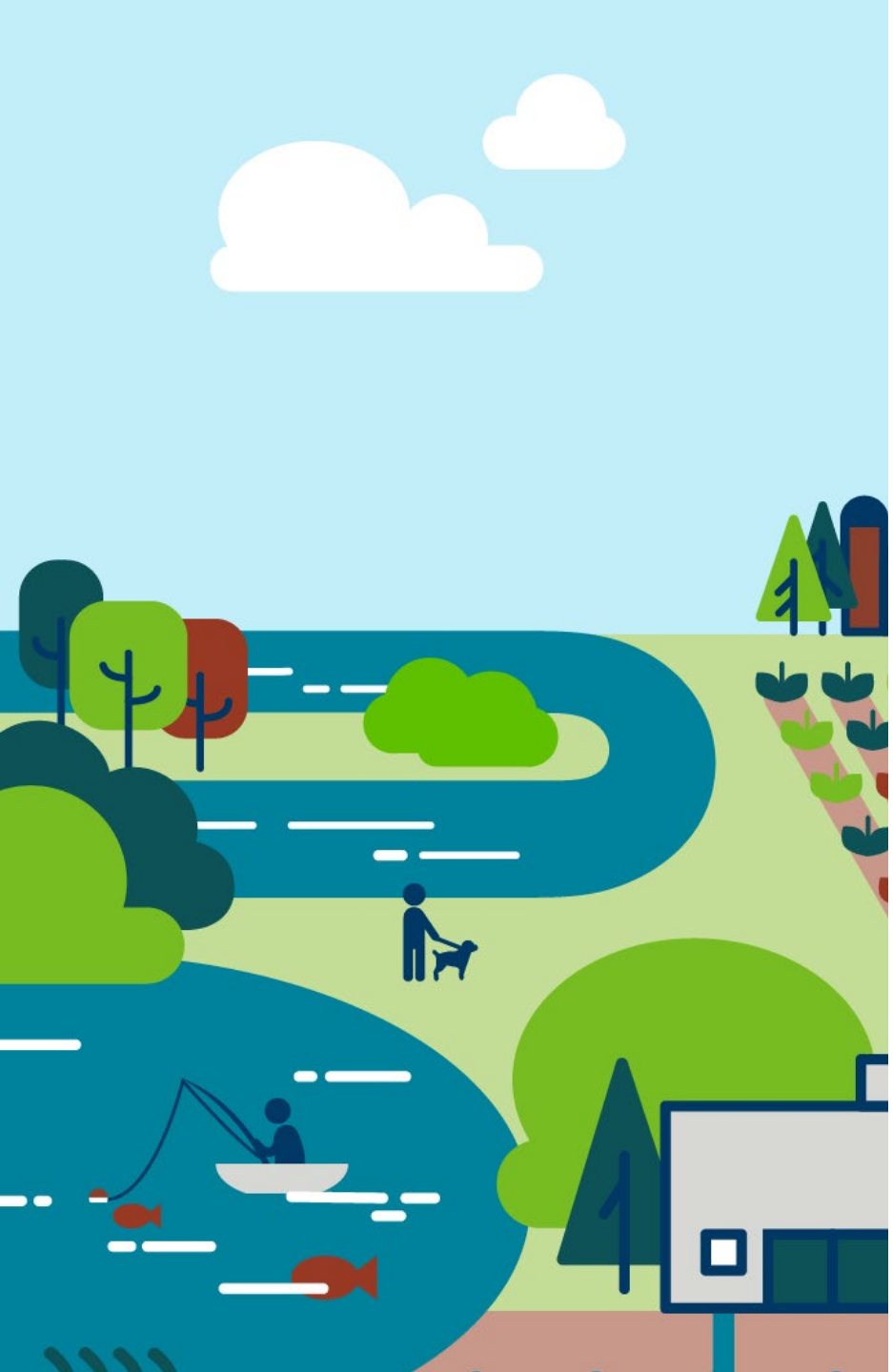
PLAN
Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan

GOAL:
Clean, sustainable water



Monitoring approaches

- Condition monitoring (quality, quantity)
  - Current
  - Trends over time
  - Various scales
- Problem investigation monitoring
  - Various scales
  - Where are issues coming from
- Effectiveness monitoring
  - Often individual project- or management action-based
- Special studies monitoring



Additional questions: ensuring outcomes

- At what scale?
  - Time
    - Short term
    - Mid term
    - Long term
  - Geography
    - Project site
    - Subwatershed
    - Watershed
    - Basin
- At what degree of certainty?
- How to account for natural lag and contextual pressures?
- How to account for other activities (including CWF-supported and otherwise)?
- How to balance results monitoring with implementation and other framework activities?