Clean Water Council
Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) Meeting Agenda
Friday, May 8, 2026, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Hybrid – Webex and Online

2026 BOC Members: Steve Besser, Dick Brainerd, Steve Christensen (BOC Chair), Warren Formo, Brad Gausman (BOC Vice-Chair), Holly Hatlewick, Annie Knight, Fran Miron

9:00 Regular Business

- Introductions
- Approve agenda and February and March meeting minutes
- Chair and Staff update

9:30 Public Comment

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

9:45 (ACTION ITEM) 2026 BOC Goals

The draft goals document has been revised based on feedback received following the BOC and Council meetings in May. Please review and come prepared to discuss.

(ACTION ITEM) Proposal Review

At the end of this meeting, the BOC will be asked to submit initial considerations for funding directions and priority for each of the programs that were presented at the April Council meeting. These will be discussed at the May Council meeting for initial feedback from other Council members. Proposals will be heard in the following order:

- Source Water Protection (MDH)
- Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (MDH)
- Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (including TMDLs) (MPCA)

10:30 Break

10:45 Proposal review continued

- Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (DNR)
- Forever Green (MDA, UMN)
- Chloride Reduction Program (MPCA)
- County Geologic Atlas Part A (UMN)
- County Geologic Atlas Part B (DNR)
- MnWRL (MDA)

12:00 Lunch

(agenda continues on next page)

12:30 Proposal review continued

- Beach Portal (MDH)
- Stormwater Research (UMN)
- Tillage and Erosion Transects (BWSR)
- Future of Drinking Water (MDH)
- Manure and Water Quality Specialist (MDA)
- CWC Administration
- LCC Website

1:40 Finalize initial considerations for funding direction and priority

2:00 Adjourn

Budget and Outcomes Committee Meeting Summary
Clean Water Council (Council)
April 10, 2026, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Committee Members present: Steve Besser, Dick Brainerd, Steve Christenson (Committee Chair), Warren Formo, Fran Miron, and Annie Knight.
Members absent: Brad Gausman (Committee Vice Chair) and Holly Hatlewick.

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

Regular Business

- Introductions
- Approval of the February and March meeting minutes
- Motion to approve the April 10th meeting agenda by Steve Besser, seconded by Dick Brainerd. Motion carries unanimously.
- Motion to approve the February 6th and March 13th meeting summaries by Fran Miron, seconded by Warren Formo. Motion carries unanimously.
- Chair Update
  - Steve Christenson is having one on one meetings with members of the BOC. It is to hear thoughts on what is working well, and potential changes as we move forward.
- Staff Update
  - The meeting packet includes the letter to provide the recommendations of the Council to the legislature. Jen Kader will reach out and follow up with legislators and committee members regarding the Council's budget process, and other work from the last year.
  - On April 7th, the Senate Environment Legacy Committee provided a series of presentations on pollution in the state, looking at actions from state agencies on addressing it. They are looking at priorities, and the Council may want to pay attention to these conversations.
  - Jen will meet with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) at Camp Ripley next week, providing a presentation following up on their staff questions regarding the Council.
  - Jen and Fran Miron will present to the Metro Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in area 4, about the Clean Water Funds (CWFs) and the conversations the Council has been having.

No Public Comment *(Webex 00:24:00)*

2026 BOC Goals *(Webex 00:24:30)*
Chair Christensen and Vice Chair Gausman have drafted 2026 Goals and Actions. Feedback is welcome in the meeting or via email afterwards. The hope is this is something that can be finalized at the May meeting.

- 1: Deliver budget recommendations for FY28-29 to meet MMB forecasts and deadlines.
- 2: Monitor overarching outcomes to track water quality improvements and ensure CWF dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently.
- 3: Enhance communications about CWC budget processes and CWF outcomes to inform, consult, and involve the public and stakeholders per Minn. Stat. 114D.35.

Questions/Comments:

- Steve Besser: Thank you for composing these goals. This helps reveal our intent at the BOC.
- Jen Kader: This is similar to my work plan with the BOC. Will be reviewing against the Council's Participation Plan. There will be some edits to come, so please connect if you have thoughts. Those are the next steps.
- Dick Brainerd: I like that you include actions. We will need to continually update them. *Response from Steve Christenson:* I would like to review at the end of the year (December meeting) to review how we did.
- Jen Kader: This would be something we can have for the full Council and Policy Committee too. It would be good for transparency.

- Warren Formo: I would suggest the full Council review it. Then, if the Council reviews it, it becomes a Council document. We should establish precedents.
  - *Response by John Barten:* I think the bylaws specify what the BOC and full Council would do. Jen and I can review it to make sure it is okay. As a summary, or working document, I don't think we need to go through that process.
  - *Response from Steve Christenson:* The bylaws were vague. I thought it could be useful to have this document for the BOC.
- Annie Knight: As it relates to the Council, in the goal section, the BOC is not making the recommendation to the Legislature. It is the Council that does it. The BOC makes recommendations to the full Council, which approves and provides the approved recommendations to the Legislature.

Proposal Review *(Webex 00:34:45)*

At the end of this meeting, the BOC will be asked to submit initial considerations for funding directions and priority for each of the programs that were presented at the March Council meeting. These will be discussed at the April Council meeting for initial feedback from other Council members.

- One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) (BWSR) *(Webex 00:41:00)*
  - No additional questions after the last meeting.
  - BOC members view high priority, and steady funding.
- Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) (BWSR) *(Webex 00:43:30)*
  - Written questions provided in meeting.
  - BOC members view high priority and increase funding.

  Questions/Comments:
  - Steve Christenson: What outcomes have been delivered from the funds spent on this program? *Answer from Julie Westerlund, BWSR:* We put together a worksheet to share with the Council members. We collect data from grantees, collecting outcomes as grants close. There are many open grants right now, as they can be up to three years. Looking at the projects that have been done, it is significant the amount of implementation that has been identified. We are in a long game. We know the incremental efforts over time make a difference. We are starting to see positive trends in water quality, we can contribute to more, we are providing the resources for long-term sustained efforts. There is a value beyond the outcomes you see in the fact sheet. That has to do with the durable relationships that have been formed. It is also the ability to have all the tools in the toolbox to do watershed management, to make incremental progress towards improving water quality and protecting high quality water resources. It has not been provided before, so this is transformational. We do not want to only focus on the tons of load reduction; we also want to include the success stories. Links are provided of the stories outlining WBIF-supporting protection and restoration efforts.
    - Rum River example provided (March snapshots from BWSR). They would encourage Council members to read about it (also included in meeting packet).
  - Annie Knight: Regarding the budget, there was a graph on the trajectory of the CWF investment from now until 2034. With all the watersheds being funded at their max, what does that look like on an annual basis or biannual? What does the max number look like? *Answer:* There are a few ways we looked at the trajectory. If the funding stays on target, it could look like that, but that is no longer anticipated due to the impact of the economy (inflation and other costs). The plans are fundamental to the work; the implementation is tied to the work. It is hard to look back. Now, it is about the opportunities moving forward. It is an old trajectory, from a decade ago, put forward by an external group.
- Riparian Protection and Soil Loss Assistance (BWSR) *(Webex 01:24:00)*
  - BOC members view medium priority and reduce funding.
  - Written questions were provided in meeting packet.

  Additional Questions:
  - Steve Christenson: What would be the outcome if we stopped funding this program? *Answer from Tom Gile, BWSR:* We would see compliance rates slip backwards. I can say that with confidence. I don't know how fast or how far. The SWCDs are tasked in statute with doing monitoring, and BWSR is tasked with funding their work. The enforcement of the law does not start unless the SWCD informs the enforcement

entity. So, it would remove that enforcement element. The CWFs currently go towards the SWCD enforcement role. The program would need funding, and right now it comes from the CWFs. If there is a policy for the funding to come from another source other than the Council, I would be supportive of being an advocate. For now, I am supportive of the CWFs being used here.
    - John Barten: Regarding the origin of the buffer law, there was initially discussion about it before I was on the Council. The Council had a policy statement that said we should have a buffer for public waters. Governor Dayton made the proposal, pushing for Buffer Law. It was supported. The Council's advocacy for the law helped push it forward. A lot had to do with research ongoing for years about the effectiveness of buffers. Response from Steve Christenson: It is helpful to know this impact of a Council policy statement.
    - Fran Miron: When the Buffer Law went into effect, the counties were offered the enforcement task and provided funding to do the work. At the time, it was a couple hundred thousand we were eligible to receive, and it made sense to me to take the funding, because it was little need to enforce because our landowners were already quite complaint. We directed that funding to the SWCDs to do that work. Is that money still coming to the counties? I assume it is, and we are still directing it to the SWCDs. *Answer:* The funding is still going to the counties that elected jurisdiction of enforcement. Their choice within the law is if they want to do the enforcement. There is no requirement for those funds to be sent to the SWCDs if they are not used for enforcement purposes. The riparian aid money is a state payment. There is no BWSR oversight or directive, other than acknowledging they have elected jurisdiction.
- Technical Evaluations (BWSR) *(Webex 01:42:30)*
    - A written response is included in the meeting packet for a question. Otherwise, no questions during meeting for this program.
    - Overall, BOC members view medium priority with steady funding.
- Nonpoint Source Restoration and Protection Strategies (DNR) *(Webex 01:44:30)*
    - Overall, BOC members view this as a high priority, for steady funding.

  Questions/Comments:
    - Dick Brainerd: How do you select the projects you will aid? *Answer from Jamison Wendel, DNR:* We develop a stream prioritization list of the projects. We work closely with local efforts, and the engagement of the local efforts can impact too. There is a prioritization strategy and support at the local level to move forward.
    - Steve Besser: Nonpoint source inputs more pollution than any other source? *Answer from Glenn Skuta, MPCA:* In the aggregate we can agree.
    - Dick Brainerd: Can the DNR talk more about the leveraged funds? How do CWFs fit?
        - *Answer from Jamison Wendel, DNR:* A lot of the stream analysis work is funded by CWFs. We have also leveraged funds through Game and Fish fund. There are a lot of interrelationships here, and it would be complicated to place a hard number.
        - *Jason Moeckel, DNR:* The projects that are done through technical assistance are also being funded by LSOHF. The state of Minnesota made a historical investment of "Get Out More" funds (six-year investment), which also connect to this work. It is one of those interlaced projects, where the funds assist in other areas. It is hard to pinpoint it. It also varies from year to year.
- Technical Assistance (MDA) *(Webex 01:53:00)*
    - Non-BOC members' feedback: Hold steady funding, and one that felt was a medium priority for funding.
    - Overall, BOC members feel it is a high priority, and to increase funding.

  Questions/Comments:
    - Warren Formo comment: This sort of data is extremely important within the Ag community, especially the field work they do. It informs models. It is important work.
    - Dick Brainerd: This program has been in place for a long time. The funding has stayed close to the same amount. You have 7.5 FTEs working on it. Why is the funding staying the same? Is it meeting the goals? *Answer Margaret Wagner, MDA:* It is some of the first staff hired with CWFs, and building expertise with that type of monitoring and technology. We have shared it with other agencies, and it is connected to published research. It is a good example of how we are working directly with the Ag community. Regarding the stability of the program, it has been intentional. We have been cautious about adding any new staff. It reflects that portfolio, and we have been able to leverage funding. In those instances, we have worked

with partners to fill in funding as well. The cost-of-living increases have been impacted, but this investment is for the staff, because that is the main use of funds, then it is the edge of field work.
    - Dick Brainerd: How does it enter 1W1P? *Answer:* It is unique to the area. However, where we have these sites, we see them references in those plans. This is an avenue to work with farmers.
    - Steve Christenson: Regarding edge of field monitoring stations, can any help with the MAWQCP on if it delivers measurable outcomes for water quality? I have witnessed the edge of field monitoring and how it works. I was impressed. *Answer:* As we set up a monitoring station – a lot is site selection. The approach would be the same (same equipment, same technology), but if we want to answer the question on the outcomes of implicating certification on an individual farm, we would have to really think about it, perhaps as a before/after situation (monitoring, baseline, changes, and find the differences). We could also do a paired farm situation to give a direct comparison. We want to answer those questions, but we need to design a site, set a budget, and work towards that. We can do that if you'd like.
    - Annie Knight: Is it your preference to hold steady or increase? *Answer:* As we are talking about the actual budgets right now, we are interested in discussing an increase to build more work directly with crop retailers. The increase reflected in this budget is to design and build out a more robust engagement with crop retainers (different areas in environmental services, curriculum, training, business model, etc.)
    - Dick Brainerd: What kind of increase are you looking for? *Answer:* We have not discussed it internally yet. Some pilots have been successful. I think it is a fair estimate to say $300,000-$500,000 over multiple years.
- Native Mussel Restoration (DNR) *(Webex 02:10:00)*
    - Written answers to follow-up questions are included in the meeting packet.
    - Overall, BOC members view this as high priority and increase funding.

  Questions/Comments:
    - Steve Christenson: One of the questions was regarding an increase in funding. Could you speak about that topic? *Answer from Jamison Wendell, DNR:* We discussed this within our team. There would be some potential for expansion. This is new technology, and I want to be cautious with how quickly we expand. There could be another species of mussel that could be raised in the lab and released.
    - Steve Besser: This is a critically important program. I would say hold steady, because that is what they are asking. However, if they can increase, I support that as well. We need to be aware of the balance in the ecosystem.
    - Jen Kader: Note, two non-voting members reached out asking to learn more. Perhaps we can visit the labs.
    - Jamison Wendel, DNR: About $150,000 additional would be an incremental amount to increase production.
    - Jason Moeckel, DNR: The ICT listens to the direction of the Council. This is a sense of where the Council wants to see investments as well. Providing us with feedback plays into our budget recommendations too. So, this is part of that process.
    - Dick Brainerd: I like this program. It has been in existence for a while. It will play out overtime. It will be great to see the results over time. I am hopeful to see more from the DNR, on the results, of the impact of this program over time. *Response:* We know these mussels do the work; we cannot know how many other variables may be impacting nature. So, keep that in mind over time.
- Great Lakes Restoration Projects (BWSR) *(Webex 02:20:00)*
    - BOC members had a split priority, looking at medium and high priorities. They agreed to hold steady.

  Questions/Comments:
    - Dick Brainerd: Are there any other grants for this? *Answer:* The goal of this fund is to leverage those federal funds. The SWCDs are applying and leveraging funds for this request.
    - Dick Brainerd: Do you want to increase funding? *Answer:* At this time, we want to remain steady but can see funds increasing in the future (as it builds overtime with additional capacity and larger projects ready).
    - Annie Knight: Can the WBIF be used as federal match funds? Is that not enough? *Answer:* Correct. We are using WBIF, but we are still leaving money on the table when it comes to leveraging those funds.
- Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa (BWSR) *(Webex 02:27:00)*
    - The scores were a wide range (26-50). This highlights some of the tension of the new scoring rubric, regarding the outcomes. It is a hard program to apply the new rubric to.
    - Overall, BOC members consider medium priority and hold steady.
- Irrigation Water Quality Protection (MDA) *(Webex 02:35:30)*

- Overall, BOC members view high priority, with steady funding.

Questions/Comments:

- Member of the public pass-through question: Why is this an MDA program versus a UMN program? *Answer:* The arrangement is historical. It was decided early on by the Council. There was streamlining and efficiency by going through the MDA, regarding monitoring, reporting, and integrating the programs into other areas of our work. At this point, I see it as valuable, and it allows our intention to bring these programs together. There is an agreement that we do not take any overhead money (funds go directly to the university). If it did go through the UMN, there would be a lot removed for overhead costs. It also aligns with the reporting requirements of the state agencies.
- Warren Formo: Within the agriculture irrigation community, Dr. Sharma has been there a long time and has a lot of connections and relationships. She is an important resource. She has done a great job. Surveys within the Ag community reveal farmers are making significant changes, and it is work related to what Dr. Sharma is doing. It is extremely important work. *Response:* This position was moved from a non-tenure track to a tenure track to retain Dr. Sharma. They have made that contribution to keep that position retained. It pays for the position for staff and salary. There is also an extension educator. There is a commitment from the university to build a program around her.

- Nitrate in Groundwater (MDA) *(Webex 02:48:00)*
  - Feedback form non-BOC members: One person would like to see the funding held steadily for funding direction. Another noted it as a high priority.
  - Majority of BOC members view this as a high priority and to increase funding.

  Questions/Comments:
  - Steve Christenson: Can you remind us how this is different from the BWSR soil health program and proposed Olmstead Country program on nitrates and groundwater. *Answer:* Big picture is about implementing the strategy. There has been a big focus on working with local teams and local community. It is unique in the strategy of technical information from the monitoring all the way to the practice adoption. As we work through this, in these communities, and identify practices, we are coordinating it with BWSR to think about funding. There are solutions we are working on at the local level, coordinating with other state agencies. Where BWSR is focused on the implementation piece, but that is only one component of it. For the proposed Olmstead County program, we are supportive of the groundwater program.
  - Steve Besser: Do at fault parties contribute to this issue?
    - *Response from Warren Formo:* That is an important and widely held perspective. From the Ag perspective, looking at the changes farmers have made as this problem has become publicized, is important. The MAWQCP, have jumped through the hoops to become certified, but it does not count the other farms doing these practices too. When we look at sales data from the vulnerable areas, we see a lot of progress in those areas. So, if you are looking at charging the farmer, it would be extremely difficult to show connections. There is the age of water that may have an impact. Even if I had a mind to punish the polluter, I do not know how to do it. We used to do a lot of things, and now we need to dispel the knowledge that those are widespread.
    - *Fran Miron Comment:* The Fertilizer Research Institute, there is a fertilizer users' tax, and the funds are being directed to research. It is paid by the users, which are the farmers.
- Water Sustainability Support (Metropolitan Council) *(Webex 03:07:15)*
  - Scores were 23-45 range, average of 36.7. A broad range of perspectives from Council members.
  - Written response to follow up questions provided in meeting packet.
  - Feedback from non-voting members: hold steady from one, another mentioned it is high priority.
  - Majority of BOC members view this as medium priority and hold steady funding.

  Questions/Comments:
  - Fran Miron: As you look at stormwater reuse, have you identified the reductions in groundwater use based on stormwater use? *Answer:* That is something required in the grant application process. They will fill out an estimate with their practices. Once we have a grant cycle or two in place, we will learn more.
- Enhanced SSTS Program Support (MPCA) *(Webex 03:18:30)*
  - Feedback from non-voting members: One said it was a medium priority program. Another person identified it as hold steady.
  - No further follow up questions.

- Majoring of BOC members view it as a high priority, and to increase funding.

- National Park Water Quality Protection Program (Voyageurs National Park Clean Water JPB) *(Webex 03:20:15)*
  - For non-voting Council members' feedback: One member encouraged a reduction of support, and one viewed it as a medium priority.
  - Overall, BOC members view it as a high priority and increase funding.

  Question/Comments:
  - Steve Christenson: Dick Brainerd, can you share from your trip up there? *Answer:* We saw how they moved wastewater through pipes and taken it out of filtering into the lakes. These are hard, and expensive to do.
  - Steve Christenson: Our fund is not the only fund you are using. Can you comment on other sources of funding? How would you use a flat amount from CWFs. *Answer Jeff Anderson:* Thank you for the contributions of the CWFs in the past. We have successfully used CWFs to leverage funds from other sources. St. Louis County recently invested $3 million this year, for hopefully future funding from the CWFs. We continue to seek federal funds. Looking back at the past biennium, we have asked for larger amounts. These projects are not getting cheaper to complete. We asked for more because we are trying to move the needle and continue to get the work to move along. Whatever funds the CWFs provide us, we leverage.
- Private Well Initiative (MDH) *(Webex 03:34:15)*
  - Feedback from non-BOC members: On member provided additional input and views this as a high priority program. No one provided funding directions.
  - Overall, BOC members view this as a high priority, and to increase funds.

  Questions/Comments:
  - Warren Formo: I like this program. I like this idea. Statewide, rural folks are concerned about arsenic. The results from the well testing were that around forty percent of wells contain Arsenic. Can you speak on addressing arsenic, if you have a plan yet? *Answer:* All our programs under the private well initiative, they test for five areas (nitrates, arsenic, lead, manganese, and bacteria). We know CWFs cannot be used to take out arsenic. They are naturally occurring, and nature is putting them there. Therefore, we provide folks knowledge so they can act on it. Do we want funding for mitigation, yes. We continually look for that funding but have not hit on those sources yet. We need to find a funding source for it. *Frieda von Qualen, MDH:* The knowledge is in different forms as well – phone calls and info sheets on our webpages. We are working to build that capacity at the local level as well.

Finalize initial considerations for funding direction and priority *(Webex 03:57:00)*

The BOC is partway through the process. There are opportunities for adjustments. In the summer will be when the Council and BOC first see numbers placed on the programs. Next time around, there could be brackets, for when BOC members say increase funding as able. So, the view is captured as well.

- *Motion to provide this feedback to the full Council on BOC items by Steve Besser, seconded by Warren Formo. Motion carries.*
- *Motion to adjourn by Dick Brainerd, seconded by Warren Formo. Motion carries unanimously.*

Adjournment *(Webex 04:07:09)*

DRAFT CWC BOC Goals - 2026

Theme	Goal	Actions (calendar year quarters)
Budget	Deliver budget recommendation for FY28-29 to Clean Water Council by legislative deadlines	• Utilize new program scoring rubric & process to inform budget recommendations favoring clean water outcomes (1Q-2Q) • Engage interested parties in development of recommendations (continuous) • Review accumulated proposal scores and input, and develop initial recommendation (2Q-3Q) • Capture lessons learned from initial season of using scoring rubric for future improvements (2Q-4Q) • Develop final recommendation to CWC in line with MMB forecasts by December (4Q)
Outcomes	Monitor overarching outcomes to track water quality improvements and ensure CWF dollars are being spent effectively and efficiently	• Support the biennial Performance Report measurement of outcomes (2Q) • Review Outcome updates embedded in proposal form for program-based outcome tracking (2Q-3Q) • Finalize KPI dashboard to review outcome updates (3Q)
Communication	Enhance communications about CWC budget processes & CWF outcomes to inform, consult, and involve the public and intersted parties per Minn. Stat. 114D.35	• Communicate BOC goals for 2026 (2Q) • Leverage communications capabilities of CWC fund recipients for external stakeholder audiences (continuous-4Q) • Increase transparency of BOC discussions and decisions for both CWC and public audiences in line with CWC Public Participation Plan (continuous) • Highlight how public input was used to inform decisions to close the loop with interested parties (2Q-4Q) • Provide input into the biennial recommendations report (3Q-4Q)

BOC Directional Scoring - DRAFT

Funding Direction	Meaning
Increase	Recommend additional investment (program scope expansion, scaling up, or other major change)
Hold Steady	Maintain current funding level (may include increases for inflation)
Reduce	Could be a potential program for reduced funding in FY28-29.

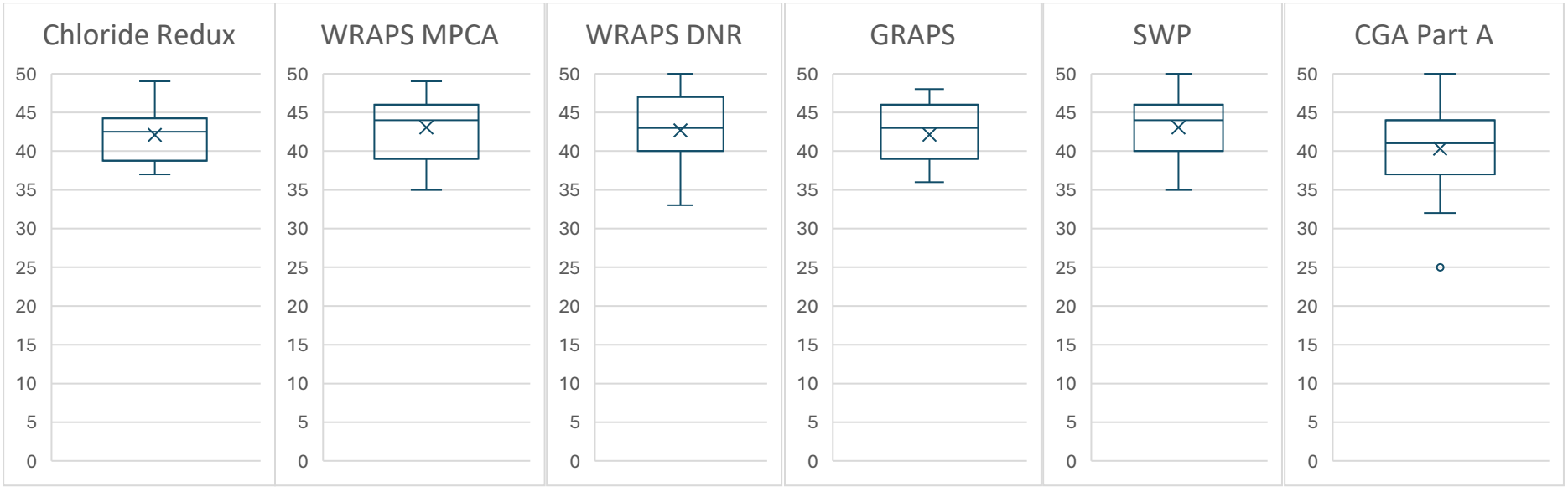
Priority & Strategic Alignment	Meaning
High	Strong alignment with CWC goals; critical for achieving water quality outcomes; if feasible, CWC would support expansion of program
Medium	Moderate alignment; contributes meaningfully but not central
Low	Limited alignment or lower impact relative to other programs

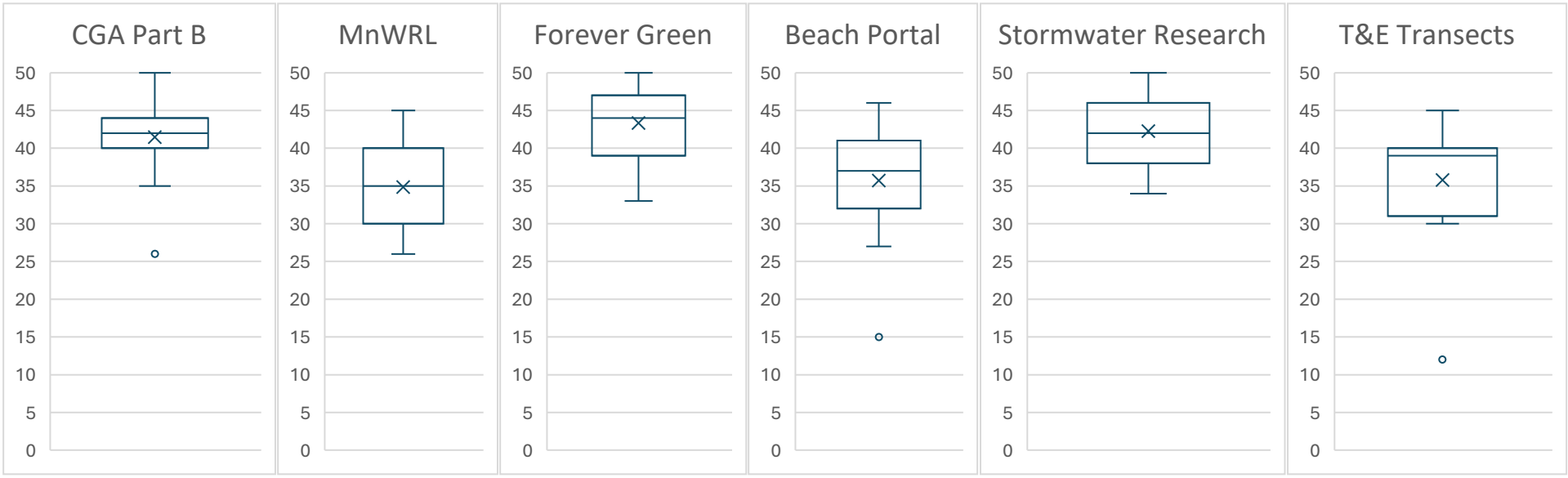
Overview of CWF Budget Item Changes

FY26-27 vs FY28-29

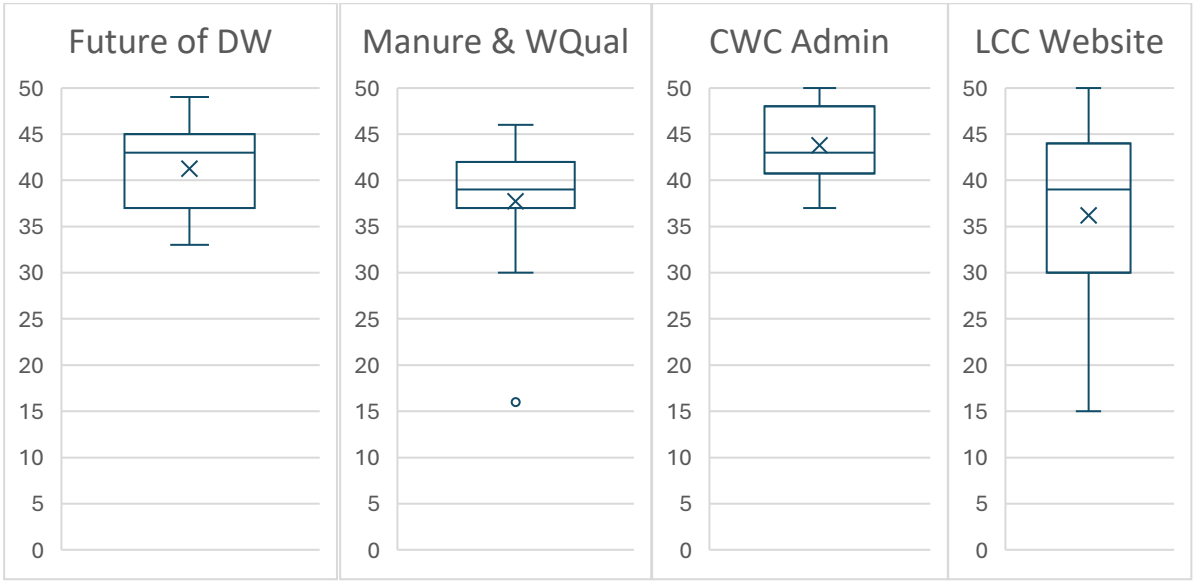
	Program Changes	Budget Implication
FY26-27 Appropriation Baseline		$303M
Completed programs	-MDA Ag Weather Station Network	-$2.3M
New Proposed programs	+Olmsted County proposal (merged with BWSR proposal) +MDA Manure Land Application and Water Quality Specialist +River Watch and River of Dreams	+$xM-TBD +$0.2-$0.3M +$0.xM
Inflation of ~5%-10% to hold steady existing programs	Hold steady	+ ~$15M-$30M range
MMB Forecast Increase for FY28-29		+ ~$30M range

Box and Whisker Plots for May 8, 2026 Budget and Outcomes Committee Meeting





Box and Whisker Plots for May 8, 2026 Budget and Outcomes Committee Meeting



ID	Program	Proposer	Brief Description	26-27 Amount	Proposed Change	Range (Mean)	BOC priority	BOC direction
32	Chloride Reduction Program	MPCA	The MPCA Chloride Reduction program provides assistance, grants, training, and education & outreach to communities, permittees, and partner organizations to help reduce chloride at its source and protect water quality. Chloride is a permanent pollutant—it does not break down over time—so preventing it from entering the environment is the most effective and cost-efficient strategy for protecting both surface water and groundwater from chloride contamination.	$ 1,300,000	Increase	37-49 (42.1)		
33	WRAPS	MPCA	WRAPS Updates provide the scientific basis to LGUs for prioritizing and targeting watershed planning and implementation via 1W1P. WRAPS Updates can include, but are not limited to, stressor identification reports, TMDL reports, in-depth water body characterization, modeling, and enhanced studies, like lake protection reports. WRAPS Updates contain pollutant reduction and waterbody protection goals to guide the creation of a comprehensive watershed management plan and resulting protection and restoration implementation activities. WRAPS scientifically inform water quality permit programs to assist with appropriate level of regulation. Beyond the work the program does, MPCA's Watershed Program carries We Are Water for the CWC/CWF.	$ 14,500,000	Hold Steady	35-49 (43.1)		
34	WRAPS	DNR	This program adds geomorphology, hydrology, and connectivity data to the WRAPS process and suppoers the Watershed Health Assessment Framework (WHAF), supplementing MPCA's biomonitoring and water chemistry data to promote robust watershed health assessments and bridge gaps in watershed science. MPCA and local water managers use DNR data to help identify root causes of water quality problems, compare restoration and protection strategies, and implement resilient, multiple-benefit solutions. The WHAF encourages resource managers, scientists, landowners, and others to explore extensive spatial data at nested watershed scales, without using desktop GIS. Users can save and share custom views, ecological health scores, and more.	$ 4,750,000	Hold Steady	33-50 (42.7)		
35	GRAPS	MDH	GRAPS serve an important purpose in the Water Management Framework aggregating existing state information and data to characterize groundwater and drinkng water at a watershed scale. The information sharing begins with the generation of a GRAPS report providng the foundation of what is known regarding potential risks, monitoring data, along with the the identification of strategies for LGUs to adopt to protext and restore groundwater and drinking water resources. Prior to the GRAPS initiative it was difficult for LGUs to obtain state agency data resulting in limited protection across the state.	$ 3,500,000	Hold Steady	36-48 (42.1)		
36	Source Water Protection	MDH	Source water protection planning and implementation supports the efforts of local public water systems to identify issues that threaten their source of drinking water as well as opportunities and activities that help to protect it. Implementation of priority activities are supported with financial and technical assistance. Emerging water quality threats are identified through ambient monitoring of drinking water sources and finished water.	$ 7,540,000	Increase	35-50 (43.1)		

37	County Geologic Atlas Part A	UMN	The distribution of geologic materials defines the location natural resources including aquifer boundaries and the connection of aquifers to the land surface and to surface water. Geologic atlases provide maps and databases that are essential for improved ground and surface water management. This foundational data supports drinking water management, domestic and industrial supply, irrigation, and aquatic habitats. Atlases enhance education, provide technical assistance for management and regulation, and facilitate wise use of natural resources. They support permitting, land-use planning, wellhead protection, remediation, nutrient management, monitoring, modeling, and well construction. Atlas information is used by citizens and government agencies.	$ 800,000	Increase	25-50 (40.3)		
38	County Geologic Atlas Part B	DNR	County Geologic Atlases provide information about the region's geology and groundwater: location and depth of aquifers, direction of water flow, pollution sensitivity, connections to surface waters, and other characteristics like natural quality and age of groundwater. This information is essential for local planning and environmental protection efforts. Water supply planning, source water protection, and well sealing programs are examples of local programs that need geologic and groundwater information. Other typical uses include providing information for permit applications, resource management, monitoring needs, and emergency response to contaminant releases.	$ 200,000	Hold Steady	26-50 (41.5)		
39	MnWRL	MDA	The Minnesota Water Research Digital Library (MnWRL) is a user-friendly, searchable inventory of water research relevant to Minnesota. It provides access to peer-reviewed articles, technical reports, and CWF-supported documents, including MPCA WRAPS, and BWSR 1W1P reports. MnWRL enables water managers, researchers, and residents to easily find and share research information that informs science-based decisions to protect, conserve, and restore Minnesota's water resources. By centralizing thousands of publications, MnWRL improves transparency, reduces duplication, and accelerates adoption of BMPs statewide.	$ 100,000	Hold Steady	26-45 (34.9)		
40	Forever Green Initiative	MDA	The Forever Green Initiative (FGI) develops Minnesota-specific winter annual and perennial crops that provide continuous living cover to protect and restore surface and groundwater quality. Through integrated research, farmer adoption support, and market-building efforts, the program accelerates adoption of cropping systems that reduce nutrient loss, enhance soil health, and support farm profitability. Clean Water Fund support advances research, implementation, and partnerships that expand these crops across Minnesota's agricultural landscape. The program serves farmers, rural communities, and the public by promoting agricultural systems that deliver durable	$ 5,000,000	Increase	33-50 (43.3)		
41	Beach Portal	MDH	Beach monitoring determines if beach water is safe for recreational activities and minimizes the risk of waterborne illnesses. Funding from the 2024-2025 CWFs established Minnesota Beach Portal (launching summer 2026), the first centralized source for statewide beach monitoring results an dtrends. This proposal will optimize the portal through evaluating and expanding its functionality, ensuring Minnesotans can access beach alerts for anywhere in the state. This proposal aligns with the vision of the Clean Water Council that Minnesota will have fishable and swimmable	$ 600,000	Hold Steady	15-46 (35.7)		
42	Stormwater Research Program	UMN	The program will lead to the development of new and revised stormwater practices and management techniques that are used on both public and private properties to prevent, minimize and mitigate the impacts of runoff to Minnesota's water resources. The program accomplishes this by investing the majority of the funds (~70%) into research through competitive or direct pass-through processes. Research is and will be conducted by a variety of Minnesota's academic institutions, public agencies, and private industry and by collaborations of all three. The program also provides technology transfer; training, outreach, and Extension education to Minnesota professionals, practitioners, and policy leaders.	$ 1,600,000	Increase	34-50 (42.3)		

43	Tillage and Erosion Transects	BWSR	The Tillage and Erosion Transects survey is a comprehensive, long-term program to systematically collect data on high residue cropping systems and cover crop adoption to produce county, watershed, and statewide estimates of soil erosion caused by water and wind. This valuable information can then be used by local and Tribal government staff to help them reach their water quality goals by using the information to both identify critical areas, and to select and prioritize potential projects based on a more accurate estimate of projected impacts.	$ 850,000	Hold Steady	12-45 (35.8)		
44	Future of Drinking Water	MDH	This initiative arose from a 2016 Clean Water Council policy recommendation and companion appropriation. While the federal Safe Drinking Water Act provides a basic level of protection for customers of public water systems, this activity engaged local and national experts to develop an action plan that goes beyond current regulatory requirements to address emerging threats and ensure long-term safe public and private drinking water in Minnesota. With the release for the *Minnesota Drinking Water Action Plan* in 2025, the initiative now focuses on implementing the Plan and providing regular updates on progress and where there are key risks to address.	$ 500,000	Hold Steady	33-49 (41.3)		
45	Manure and Water Quality Specialist	MDA	Funding will support a manure land application and water quality specialist to develop and promote BMPs and update guidance, with a focus on regions at elevated environmental rish, including SE and Central Minnesota. Data from the USDA and MDA indicate that nutrients from manure are frequently under credited when farmers calculate the total amount of nitrogen applied to the crop, resulting in overapplication of commercial fertilizer. Improving manure crediting accuracy--and ensuring manure is applied at the right time, in the right place, in the right amount, and from the right source--will reduce nitrate leaching from manured fields to groundwater and decrease manure related runoff to surface water. The UMN's current manure program would benefit from additional staff capacity dedicated to land application technologies, producer support, and technical assistance. The position will strengthen statewide efforts to improve nutrient management, protect vulnerable water resources, and support farmers in implementing practical,	$ -	NEW	16-46 (37.7)		
46	CWC Administration	MPCA	This program funds the operation of the Clean Water Council and related expenses, including reimbursements, per diem, communications and engagement expenses, overhead, and staff.	$ 922,000	Increase	37-50 (43.8)		
47	LCC Website	LCC	The LCC has been tasked with developing and maintaining a website that shows how revenues generated by the Legacy Amendment and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund are utilized. It is required by law.	7000	Hold Steady	15-50 (36.2)		

May 1st, 2026

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

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

Dear Clean Water Council members,

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

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

The Forever Green Initiative

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

CLC crops can:

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

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

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

Investing in the farmers of today and the crops of tomorrow

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

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

FRIENDS OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

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

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

May 1st, 2026

Dear members of the Clean Water Council Budget & Outcomes Committee,

As you continue your FY 28-29 Clean Water Fund deliberations, Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) respectfully requests that you recommend an increase in funding for the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative.

The Forever Green Initiative

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

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

Alignment with Nutrient Reduction Strategy and drinking water protection goals

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

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

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

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

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

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

Scaling up CLC cropping systems over time

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

- **Putting Down Roots**: The 2023 Putting Down Roots report, prepared by FMR and the University of Minnesota, found that under a moderate adoption scenario, Forever Green CLC cropping systems could reduce nitrogen loss by 23% and soil erosion by 35% in Minnesota by 2050 while enhancing on-farm profits by 20%.

- **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) market.** Winter annual oilseeds are particularly well-positioned as a low-carbon aviation fuel feedstock. The emergence of the Minnesota SAF Hub, improved State SAF tax credit, industrywide low-carbon fuel commitments, and federal SAF production incentives have opened the door to rapid commercialization. With robust public investment and policy support, researchers estimate that statewide camelina acreage could - under the right circumstances - achieve one million acres within as little as 10 years.

- **One Million Acres Scaling Study (1MASS)**: The University of Minnesota, MBOLD, and many project partners (including FMR) are collaborating on a One Million Acres Scaling Study for Camelina, identifying a pathway to securing the 1st million acres of camelina.

Alignment with the Clean Water Council Strategic Plan

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

- **Vision: Groundwater is clean and available to all in Minnesota**
    - Goal 1: Protect groundwater from degradation and support effective measures to restore degraded groundwater.
    - Measure: Alternative land management activities supported that protect groundwater such as easements, perennials, and market-based continuous living cover.

- **Vision: Drinking water is safe for everyone, everywhere in Minnesota.**
    - Goal 1: Public Water Systems

[1] Jungers et al. 2019. Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment.
[2] Weyers et al. 2019. Journal of Environmental Quality.
[3] Randall et al. 1997. Journal of Environmental Quality. strategic and

    - Measure: Landowner adoption of practices that protect drinking water through technical assistance, conservation equipment support, financial assistance, easements, drinking water protection/restoration grants, targeted wellhead protection grants, market-based living cover, soil health grants, etc.

- **Vision: All Minnesotans value water and take actions to sustain and protect it.**
    - Goal 1: Build capacity of local communities to protect and sustain water resource
    - Measure: Number of acres with continuous living cover, with a target of five million acres by 2034.

- **Vision: All Minnesotans value water and take actions to sustain and protect it.**
    - Goal 1: Build capacity of local communities to protect and sustain water resource
    - Measure: Acres of income-generating continuous living cover planted.

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

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

We must find ways to keep the soil covered year-round through economically viable CLC cropping systems that work for farmers and our environment.

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

Sincerely,

Trevor Russell
Water Program Director
Friends of the Mississippi River

Protect it. Pass it on.

MISSISSIPPI WATERSHED MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

2522 Marshall Street NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418

612-746-4970
contacts@mwmo.org

www.mwmo.org

April 30, 2026

Jen Kader
Clean Water Council
520 Lafayette Rd N
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Ms. Kader,

The Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) finds significant value in the Minnesota Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation and Technology program (also known as the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council). We strongly encourage the Clean Water Council to continue funding this effort at or above the requested levels for the 2028-2029 fiscal years.

This program conducts essential urban stormwater research that addresses the priority needs of the MWMO in our work protecting and improving water quality, habitat and natural resources in our urban watershed that drains to the Mississippi River. As a fully developed watershed, we need to work creatively with our partners on projects that protect the river, often working within small areas and underground. We are able to utilize outcomes from projects funded by the program, such as those that investigated the performance of underground sand filters, compared different phosphorus binding medias, and identified sources of contaminants in urban stormwater, to ensure our stormwater projects will be successful.

The science-based training and outreach provided by this program ensure that local stormwater management is guided by the best information available. We appreciate the Council's continued investment in these vital clean water goals.

Sincerely,

Kevin Reich
Executive Director
Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

Nine Mile Creek Watershed District
12800 Gerard Drive
Eden Prairie, MN 55346
(952) 206-0980
ninemilecreek.org

12/29/2025

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

Dear Members of the Clean Water Council,

On behalf of the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, I am pleased to share the attached letter that was submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) on December 29, 2025. This correspondence outlines the District's ongoing concerns regarding chloride pollution and formally requests increased funding support for the MPCA's Chloride Reduction Program.

Chloride contamination continues to present a significant and growing challenge for water resources within our watershed and across the state. As detailed in the attached letter, despite sustained local efforts, meaningful progress will require stronger statewide coordination, expanded technical support, and increased financial investment.

As you consider priorities for the upcoming Clean Water Fund budget, we respectfully ask that you support enhanced funding for chloride reduction initiatives. Increased investment in this area represents a critical opportunity to accelerate progress toward meeting water quality standards and protecting Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and streams.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to safeguarding Minnesota's water resources. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Erica Sniegowski
Administrator
Nine Mile Creek Watershed District

Nine Mile Creek Watershed District
12800 Gerard Drive
Eden Prairie, MN 55346
(952) 206-0980
ninemilecreek.org

12/29/2025

Katrina Kessler, Commissioner
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
520 Lafayette Road North
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Commissioner Kessler,

On behalf of the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, I am writing to share our concerns regarding chloride pollution and to request increased support for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's chloride reduction program.

Chloride pollution remains one of the most difficult pollutants for the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District to address, both in terms of its widespread and persistent impact on water quality and the limited tools available to effectively address it. Despite long-term, sustained efforts by our district—including education, partnerships with other local governments, and implementation of chloride reduction best management practices—chloride concentrations in Nine Mile Creek and other waterbodies in our jurisdiction continue to increase.

Nine Mile Creek is subject to an approved Total Maximum Daily Load for chloride and requires an estimated 62 percent reduction in chloride loading to meet state water quality standards. This level of reduction illustrates the magnitude of the challenge. While watershed districts can and do take meaningful action at the local level, chloride pollution is a regional issue driven by winter maintenance practices and land use patterns that extend beyond individual jurisdictions.

As we enter a new Clean Water Council budget year, and recognize that the MPCA will be submitting funding requests, we strongly encourage the agency to prioritize increased investment in its chloride reduction program. Expanding funding for the established MPCA chloride reduction program represents one of the most immediate and effective opportunities to accelerate progress to protect Minnesota waterbodies from chloride pollution. Additional funding would support expanded training and technical assistance, local implementation efforts, outreach and education, and would support the increased capacity needed to make progress on chloride reduction goals.

We appreciate MPCA's leadership on water quality issues and thank you for considering this request to increase chloride reduction funding to protect Minnesota's water resources from chloride pollution.

Sincerely,

Erica Sniegowski
Administrator
Nine Mile Creek Watershed District

Capitol Region Watershed District
595 Aldine Street
Saint Paul, MN 55104
(651) 644-8888 • capitolregionwd.org

4/10/2026

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

Dear Members of the Clean Water Council,

On behalf of the Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD), I am writing to share the attached letter we submitted to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) on January 29, 2026. In this letter, we voiced our concern over chloride pollution in our watershed and requested increased financial support for the MPCA's Chloride Reduction Program.

CRWD views chloride pollution from road salt to be one of the most significant and detrimental issues facing our District water and natural resources as well as stormwater infrastructure. Our recent work to develop a Chloride Pollution Prevention Plan for our District has reinforced our view that prevention through source reduction is the most effective strategy for reducing chloride pollution.

As described in our letter to the MPCA, the continued effort by local organizations like watershed districts will fall short to protect our water resources without stronger regional and state coordination and increased financial support. Therefore, we want to affirm our support for the Clean Water Council (CWC) Policy Statement: Reducing Chloride Pollution from Winter De-icing Chemicals, and express our strong commitment to chloride reduction in CRWD and the state of Minnesota as a whole.

As you consider priorities for the upcoming Clean Water Fund budget, we respectfully ask that you support enhanced funding for chloride reduction initiatives that would help carry out the solutions outlined in the CWC Policy Statement.

Thank you for your continued leadership in this and other important issues affecting Minnesota's water resources. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Bob Fossum

Bob Fossum

Deputy Administrator

Capitol Region Watershed District

RAMSEY-WASHINGTON
METRO WATERSHED DISTRICT

April 30, 2026

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

Dear Members of the Clean Water Council,

On behalf of Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (RWMWD), I am writing to share our concerns regarding chloride pollution and to request increased support for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) chloride reduction program.

Chloride pollution remains one of the most difficult pollutants for the RWMWD to address, both in terms of its widespread and persistent impact on water quality and the limited tools available to effectively address it. Despite long-term, sustained efforts by our district—including education, partnerships with other local governments, and implementation of chloride reduction best management practices—chloride concentrations within waterbodies in our jurisdiction continue to increase.

Four waterbodies within RWMWD are considered impaired by State of MN standards due to high chloride levels and many others are exhibiting notable worsening trends (10-year RWMWD monitoring average). This level of impairment illustrates the magnitude of the challenge. While watershed districts can and do take meaningful action at the local level, chloride pollution is a regional issue driven by winter maintenance practices and land use patterns that extend beyond individual jurisdictions.

As we enter a new Clean Water Council budget year, and recognize that the MPCA will be submitting funding requests, we strongly encourage the agency to prioritize increased investment in its chloride reduction program. Expanding funding for the established MPCA chloride reduction program represents one of the most immediate and effective opportunities to accelerate progress to protect Minnesota waterbodies from chloride pollution. Additional funding would support expanded training and technical assistance, local implementation efforts, outreach and education, and would support the increased capacity needed to make progress on chloride reduction goals.

We appreciate MPCA's leadership on water quality issues and thank you for considering this request to increase chloride reduction funding to protect Minnesota's water resources from chloride pollution.

Sincerely,

Tina Carstens

Tina Carstens
Administrator, RWMWD
Tina.carstens@rwmwd.org

Chloride reduction (de-icer)

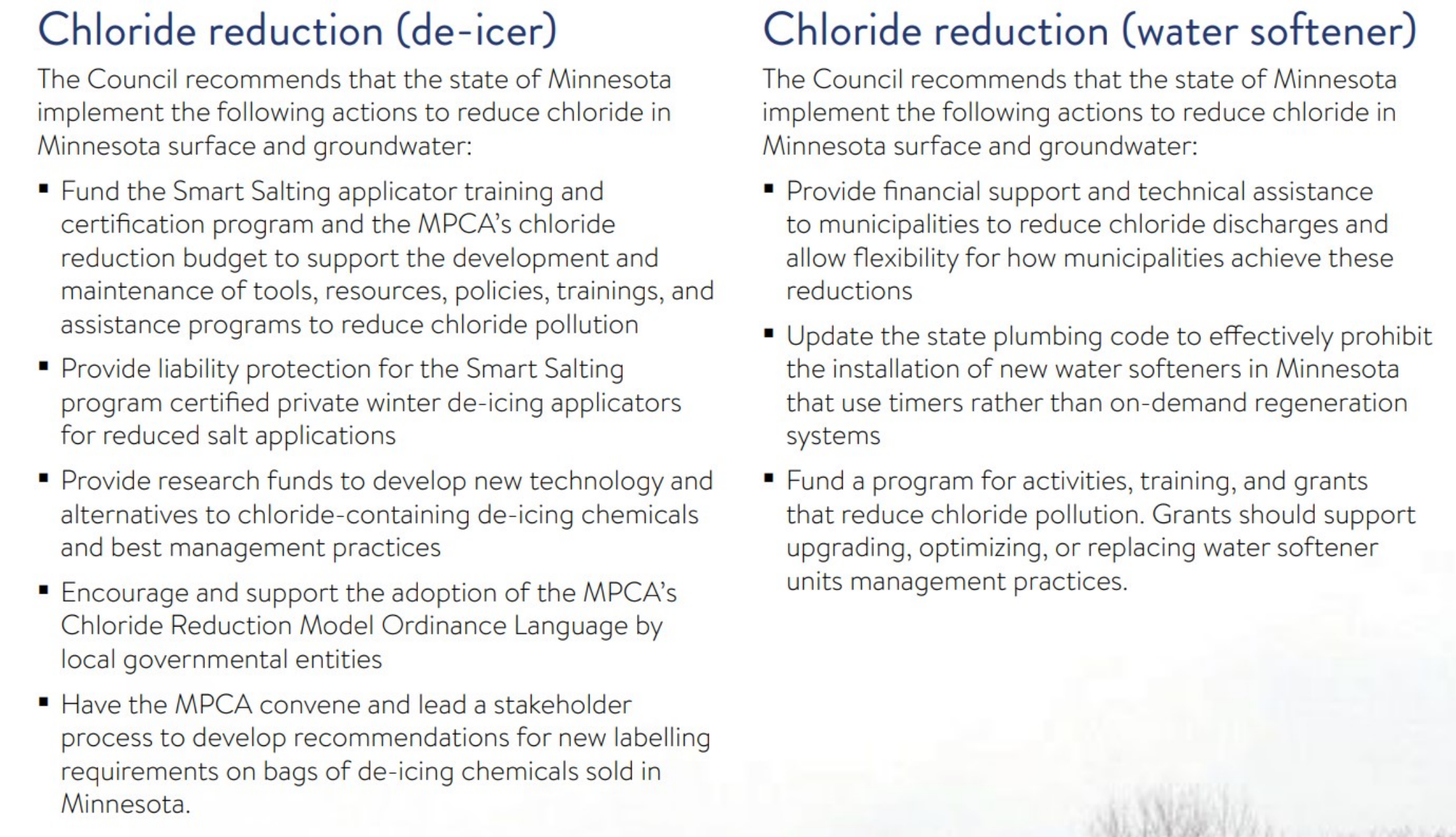
The Council recommends that the state of Minnesota implement the following actions to reduce chloride in Minnesota surface and groundwater:

- Fund the Smart Salting applicator training and certification program and the MPCA's chloride reduction budget to support the development and maintenance of tools, resources, policies, trainings, and assistance programs to reduce chloride pollution
- Provide liability protection for the Smart Salting program certified private winter de-icing applicators for reduced salt applications
- Provide research funds to develop new technology and alternatives to chloride-containing de-icing chemicals and best management practices
- Encourage and support the adoption of the MPCA's Chloride Reduction Model Ordinance Language by local governmental entities
- Have the MPCA convene and lead a stakeholder process to develop recommendations for new labelling requirements on bags of de-icing chemicals sold in Minnesota.

Chloride reduction (water softener)

The Council recommends that the state of Minnesota implement the following actions to reduce chloride in Minnesota surface and groundwater:

- Provide financial support and technical assistance to municipalities to reduce chloride discharges and allow flexibility for how municipalities achieve these reductions
- Update the state plumbing code to effectively prohibit the installation of new water softeners in Minnesota that use timers rather than on-demand regeneration systems
- Fund a program for activities, training, and grants that reduce chloride pollution. Grants should support upgrading, optimizing, or replacing water softener units management practices.



MPCA Responses to the Clean Water Council Questions Related to the Chloride Reduction Budget Proposal

Question 1. Chloride contamination is a growing as a cause of impaired waters in MN, and several public stakeholders are requesting program expansions to address the issue. Assuming that sufficient funding was available, how could this program scale up, revise its approach, or add new elements to meet the scale of the challenge? What would be needed to stop new impaired waters listings from chloride pollution?

Chloride enters lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater from a variety of sources. For highly developed urban areas, winter maintenance activities are typically the primary source. In rural areas, residential and commercial water softening represent the largest point sources of chloride to the environment.[1]

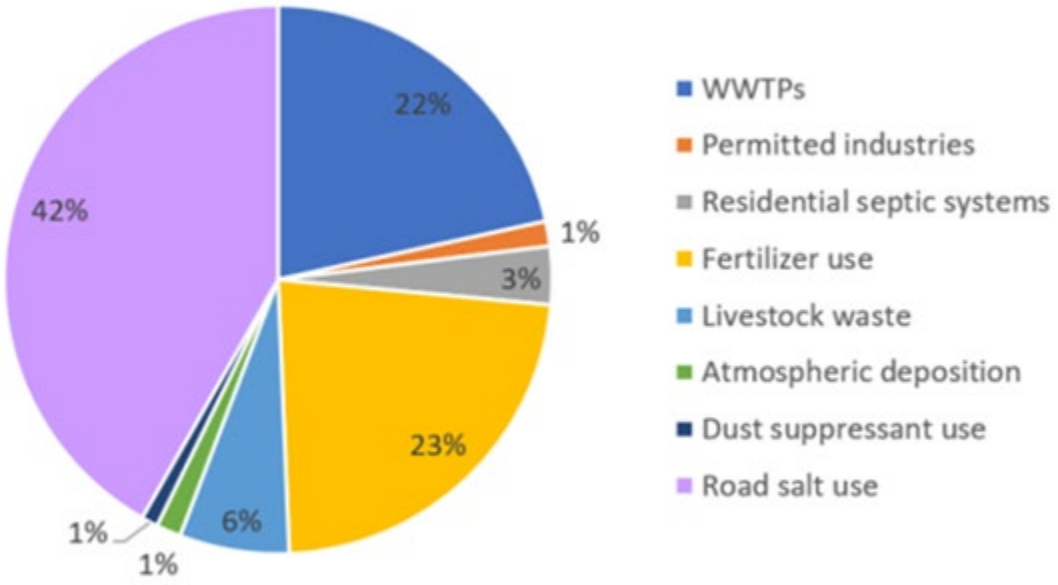


Figure 4: Fraction of annual chloride contributions from major point and nonpoint sources for State of Minnesota (Overbo et al. 2019)
**Please note that Road salt use is actually all de-icing salt applied to roads, parking lots, sidewalks, and trails.*

The Statewide Chloride Management Plan outlines a comprehensive strategy to reduce salt use from a variety of sources to protect our lakes, rivers, and other water resources. It is important to note that chloride pollution comes from point sources and nonpoint sources. Much of this pollution is outside of the MPCA's control and so we can only comment on

[1] https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/wq-s1-94.pdf

program areas that relate to the agency's work. The MPCA is planning on an increased CWF budget request for FY28/29, but the specifics of this plan cannot be communicated at this early stage in the budget development process.

1. Continue to support MPCA Smart Salting training

The MPCA's Smart Salting training program provides the science, information, tools, and resources to help organizations reduce their salt use while maintaining safety. Our important and impactful training program brings the latest technology, equipment and science-based information to help winter maintenance professionals, property managers and others make changes to their operations with confidence. Case studies have shown that participants in the training have been able to reduce salt use by 30% to 70%, without compromising safety. With an estimated 403,600 tons of chloride from road salt applied annually[2] a conservative estimate can be made that training has the potential to reduce more than 121,080 tons of salt annually (30% of total annual application in the road salt category). In addition to reducing chloride pollution, organizations report improved efficiency in their operations and cost savings to their programs.

While our training program is voluntary, it has become the desired program for many as it can fulfill training requirements for winter maintenance staff in stormwater permits. There is also a growing number of organizations, cities and watershed organizations that are putting requirements in their permits, request for services, planning requirements, and local programs to be certified in Smart Salting. This has increased the demand for our small, but impactful program. Some hosts/partners choose not to attend training because they lack the budget necessary to pay the training fee.

MPCA current offers 35-40 trainings (~1,000 people) per year. We will need to increase these trainings to meet the demand, and we need to develop a solution for the affordability issue. The program is evaluating the best options to provide trainings that meet the needs of all our customers.

2. Continue to support the Chloride Reduction Grant Program

Communities across Minnesota need support to reduce chloride at the source through equipment upgrades, adopting new technology, and implementing best practices. The Chloride Reduction Grant Program is a tool to help communities financially.

[2] https://www.mwqa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/U-of-M-Chloride-Study-2019.pdf

There are about 100 wastewater facilities (WWTF) across Minnesota that will have a chloride limit in their permit. Having a limit indicates that the treated wastewater exceeds the chloride water quality standard at times. Addressing chloride at the wastewater treatment plant is not feasible for many communities due to the very high cost of treatment technology. Therefore, many will need to reduce chloride from sources in the community, such as water softeners or industrial sources. Centralized lime or reverse-osmosis softening is another common strategy that wastewater facilities implement to address chloride, which is outside the scope of this grant program. The following is an example of what can be accomplished in such cases using the Chloride Reduction Grant Program.

The City of Altura has high chloride in their discharge that exceeds the chloride limit in their wastewater discharge (NPDES) permit, and they have been issued a variance by the MPCA as they work towards lowering their chloride levels in wastewater that discharges into local waterbodies. They partnered with Bolton & Menk to apply for a Chloride Reduction grant in FY20 to help reduce chloride delivered to their wastewater treatment facility (WWTF). Water softening was suspected as the largest source of chloride to the WWTF. The grant funds were used to create and offer rebates to commercial and residential customers for optimizing and replacing water softeners that discharge salt to the city WWTF. The Altura rebate program had 28 participants, 5 commercial businesses and 23 residential homes. This included 2 commercial softener replacements and 3 commercial optimizations, and 11 residential replacements and 12 residential optimizations. The largest contributor to this was a single commercial facility. The average estimated salt use of program participants before replacement or optimization was 43,400 lbs./year. After replacement and optimization, salt use is estimated to be 12,500 lbs./year, a reduction of 30,900 lbs./year (71% reduction) (table 4). This equates to a reduction of 18,790 pounds of chloride each year.

Table 4. Altura Salt and Chloride Reduction

Altura	Type	Salt Reduction lbs./yr.	Chloride Reduction lbs./yr.	% Reduction
Residential	Optimization	1,910	1,160	47
	Replacements	3,050	1,850	68
	Overall	4,970	3,010	58
Commercial	Optimization	600	360	22
	Replacements	25,420	15,420	79
	Overall	26,020	15,780	74
Combined	**Overall**	**30,990**	**18,790**	**71**

The requests for grant funding continue to exceed availability. In 2024, there were 6 eligible applicants requesting 2.5 million. We were able to award 4 applicants, for a total of $1,754,0000 awarded. Each applicant requests anywhere from 300K to 500K to complete their proposed community-scale chloride reduction projects. There continues to be requests for these funds as many new wastewater communities are beginning to work on reducing chloride.

3. Continue technical assistance by the Chloride Reduction Program team

The Chloride Reduction Program team provides valuable contributions to other agency programs and external partners. This work includes:

- Providing direct assistance to communities with wastewater chloride limits to discuss strategies and state programs that can support their chloride reduction efforts. Coordinates with the MPCA wastewater program regularly for understanding permittees chloride reduction needs.
- Collaborating with the MPCA's Small Business Loan Program to promote the program and review all chloride reduction loan applications for equipment and retrofit projects and ensures requests will result in environmental benefit (see Q5, below).
- Coordinating with the MPCA Stormwater Program to support chloride reduction through their regulatory work and better understand the requirements and needs for chloride reduction assistance of permittees.
- Maintaining an online tool (Smart Salting Tool) that estimates chloride sources for specific geographic areas of interest and calculates the impact of reduction activities. The reports generated from this tool are required in permitting processes and grant applications.
- Serving as state chloride expert supporting a wide range of internal and external needs for education, information and better understanding of all the work being done in chloride reduction across Minnesota and in other states.
- Maintaining and supporting partnerships with MnDOT, University of Minnesota, and many other organizations working on chloride.
- Collaborating with the Minnesota GreenCorps program to integrate chloride reduction work into their program and support all GreenCorps members working on chloride each year.

Question 2. Is it possible to recruit or target LGUs or watersheds that can have the biggest impact for grants?

Yes, within the State of Minnesota's competitive process, we do this through the scoring process, giving points where there are chloride-affected waterbodies and wastewater treatment facilities with chloride limits, and by promoting the grants in targeted areas. There is also a requirement that those applying have a chloride reduction plan, action plan, or other plan to demonstrate that the proposed projects have been adequately evaluated and will result in a significant chloride reduction. The MPCA Smart Salting Tool is a free resource that they can choose to use to help them develop this plan. The agency will continue to find ways to target local communities and watersheds in all future request for proposals.

Question 3. Is lack of legislative funding the reason MPCA charges for trainings now?

No. As demand for training rises, the agency sought the authority to charge a fee to help cover some of the costs and ensure long-term financial security for the program. The MPCA received legislative authority to charge a fee for training in FY24 and began moving towards a fee-based approach at that time. Charging for training allows us to stretch the program funding for more impact and creates long-term stability for the training program. The fee covers about 50% of the cost for offering trainings, allowing us to do twice as many with the same public money.

Question 4. Can you talk a little bit about why this program has focused on wastewater when road salt application is the single greatest contributor to chloride pollution?

The program currently works on providing assistance addressing both wastewater and deicing salts because these are major areas where salt is entering into state waters.

The MPCA chloride reduction **grant program** targets applicants who will provide measurable benefit to a waterbody that needs chloride reduction. Chloride pollution is not distributed equally across Minnesota's landscape. The relative significance of each source of chloride is dependent on the watershed. For highly developed urban areas, winter maintenance activities are typically the primary source.[3] Both wastewater and road-salt projects are considered.

Within our **training program**, there are now 11 different courses offered. Nine focus on de-icing salts in various contexts: MnDOT, roads, rural roads, parking lots and sidewalks, property management, and refresher courses. Our newest Smart Salting training course is

[3] https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/wq-s1-94.pdf

for plumbing and water softening professionals and focuses on the best practices to reduce chloride from water softening. We also offer a Smart Salting for Community Leaders that addresses all sources of chloride through a policy and program lens.

Question 5. If local governments need equipment upgrades to reduce salt usage, could MPCA administer a road salt equipment upgrade loan or financing program (similar to the MDA ag conservation equipment programs)?

The MPCA Chloride Reduction Program has been collaborating with the MPCA Small Business Environmental Improvement Loan Program since 2020. This collaboration has led to many small businesses (100 employees or less) applying for loan funds to upgrade winter maintenance equipment for salt reduction. This program is a potential model for local governments. While the Small Business Environmental Improvement Loan Program is not a water quality focused program, the projects mentioned above are eligible and have been popular for winter maintenance organizations. In addition, the MPCA offers Clean Water Partnership loans to local governments and recently started environmental assistance loans that are eligible to be used for chloride reduction. These programs are widely publicized through the MPCA Chloride Reduction program; however, at this time they are not commonly used by local governments for winter maintenance equipment upgrades. MPCA could look into why those programs are not being utilized and identify ways to communicate their availability and how to make them more accessible/appealing to local governments.

Here is an example of the impact that the Small Business Environmental Improvement loans awarded to small businesses on salt reduction have had. The average reduction achieved in salt use is 55% per year for each applicant. The estimated total amount of salt reduction from all applicants (~48) since 2020 is roughly 5000 tons/year and that is approximately enough to pollute (or protect) all of Lake Harriet in Hennepin County. The total amount awarded through this program to small businesses for winter maintenance equipment upgrades to date is roughly 1 Million dollars.

Salt reductions examples by Small Business Loan applicants (2024-2026)

Loan Recipient	**Equipment**	**Dollar amount**	**Est. Annual Reduction**
White Bear Lawn and Snow	Metal Pless Plowmaxx Live edge	$34,680.00	400 tons
Groundsman, LLC	Brine maker, Spray unit, Storage tanks	$31,246.23	8 tons
LNG Landscapes	Brine equipment	$75,000	100 tons

Avalanche Winter Services LLC	Hilltip spreader and VSI brine maker	$39,526	50 tons
Total Lawn Care and Landscape	Brine maker, 1600 spray unit, and (2) 5000gal storage tanks	$75,000.00	240 tons
RJ LandWorks Corporation	Arctic Sectional Snow Pusher	$30,000.00	160 tons
Corey's Outdoor Services	Sno-power plow and 750gal brine sprayer	$45,000	97 tons
Jerry & Sons LLC	Metal Pless Live Edge hydraulic wing plow	$31,892.13	300 tons
C&C Lawns Inc. DBA Nordic Snow Management	Brine equipment - (2) 750gal sprayers and an electric brine maker	$72,352.50	125 tons
Strong Enterprises LLC	Arctic LD Sectional Snow Pusher	$12,762.75	71 tons
Lawn Ranger Outdoor Services Inc.	Hilltip salter and flatbed equipment	$69,795.87	75 tons
LandSculpt Incorporated	Plow/broom - Bobcat skidsteer with angle broom, snow blower bucket.	$73,023.08	3 tons*
Cities Lawn and Snow	Boss Snowrator with brine tank	$26,375.00	44 tons
Total Turf maintenance	Brine making equipment - Spray unit and (2) storage tanks	$62,490.00	100 tons
JB Snow Removal LLC	Genesis brine maker, 1600 sprayer, and 1000gal tank	$48,416.78	60 tons
Ring Lawn Care	Brine making equipment	$37,072.88	219 tons

Question 6. I appreciate your response during the presentation about your commitment to acknowledging the clean water fund/legacy amendment. However, I'm not seeing any acknowledgement on your website or smart salting materials. Can you talk specifically about your plan to update these materials?

We currently include the CWF logo on all materials, products, and content that is funded with CWF dollars. The program uses the logo and verbally acknowledges the Clean Water Funds at every Smart Salting training. We see this as an important opportunity to inform the public about how the CWF dollars are going to great use that benefits all Minnesotan's. The logo is also included on the registrations and training promotional content. The MPCA is currently adding the CWF logo to webpages associated with all MPCA CWFed programs.

That work should be complete by the end of the first week in May. If the CWC knows of places where the logo should be displayed and it's missing, please direct us to that material or webpage.

PRIOR LAKE-SPRING LAKE
WATERSHED DISTRICT

Date: April 29, 2026

Subject: Support for the Minnesota Stormwater Research Program (FY 2028-2029)

Dear Ms. Kader,

The Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District is writing in strong support of the Minnesota Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation and Technology program (also known as the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council). We strongly encourage the Clean Water Council to continue funding this effort at or above the requested levels for the 2028-2029 fiscal years.

Two of the focal priorities of the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District are water quality and flood reduction. The Minnesota Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation and Technology program consistently provides essential research to advance our success in these aims and is instrumental in ensuring that our management is effective and efficient.

Supporting this program is **one of the clearest ways the Council can continue to support implementable clean water for the communities we serve.**

Sincerely,

Emily Dick
Water Resources Project Manager
Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District

Jen Kader, Clean Water Council Administrator
jen.kader@state.mn.us.

Subject: Support for the Minnesota Stormwater Research Program (FY 2028-2029)

Dear Ms. Kader,

In my 40 years of consulting, recently retired from leading the water resources group at SRF Consulting Group, Inc., I found significant value in the Minnesota Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation and Technology program (also known as the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council). As such, I strongly encourage the Clean Water Council to continue funding this effort at or above the requested levels for the 2028-2029 fiscal years.

This program conducts essential urban stormwater research that helps consultants like SRF identify stormwater management practices that achieve real results, not simply meeting permit requirements, for the clients they serve. By providing cutting-edge research and resources on revised BMPs and management techniques, the program allows them to design and maintain stormwater practices that are both effective and efficient.

The science-based training and outreach provided by this program ensure that local stormwater management is guided by the best information available. I appreciate the Council's continued investment in these vital clean water goals.

Sincerely,

David Filipiak, PE
SRF Consulting Group, Inc. (retired)
South Washington Watershed District Manager

April 28, 2026

Ms. Kader
Clean Water Council Administrator

Re: Support for the Minnesota Stormwater Research Program (FY 2028-2029)

Dear Ms. Kader,

WSB continues to find significant value in the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council. We encourage the Clean Water Council to continue funding this effort at or above the requested levels for the 2028-2029 fiscal years. WSB is an annual funding contributor because we feel so strongly about the program and its benefits.

This program conducts essential urban stormwater research that addresses the priority needs of WSB and the communities and clients we serve. By providing us with cutting-edge research and resources on stormwater BMPs and management techniques, the program allows us additional information to help efficiently and effectively design and maintain stormwater practices.

The science-based training and outreach provided by this program helps ensure that local stormwater management is guided by the best information available. We appreciate the Council's continued investment in this program.

Sincerely,

WSB

Jake Newhall, PE, PMP
Director, Water Resources

701 XENIA AVENUE S | SUITE 300 | MINNEAPOLIS, MN | 55416 | 763.541.4800 | WSBENG.COM

SOUTH WASHINGTON WATERSHED DISTRICT

May 5, 2026

Ms. Jen Kader
Clean Water Council
520 Lafayette Road N
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Support for the Minnesota Stormwater Research Program (FY 2028-2029)

Dear Ms. Kader:

The South Washington Watershed District (SWWD) finds significant value in the Minnesota Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation and Technology program (also known as the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council, or MSRC). We strongly encourage the Clean Water Council to continue funding this effort at or above the requested levels for the 2028-2029 fiscal years.

This program conducts essential urban stormwater research that addresses the priority needs of the SWWD and the communities we serve. This importance is further evidenced by SWWD's ongoing annual financial contributions to the MSRC and our commitment of staff time through involvement on the MSRC Advisory Board. By providing local governments and other practitioners with cutting-edge research and resources on revised best management practices and management techniques, the program allows us to design and maintain stormwater practices that are both effective and efficient.

The science-based technology transfer provided by this program ensure that local stormwater management is guided by the best information available. We appreciate the Council's continued investment in these vital clean water goals.

Sincerely,

Kyle Axtell
Planning & Projects Program Manager
South Washington Watershed District

cc: John Bilotta, U of MN Water Resources Center