

**Clean Water Council**  
**Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) Meeting Agenda**  
**Friday, June 5, 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 April meeting minutes
- Chair and Staff update

**9:35 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) 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 May Council meeting. These will be discussed at the June Council meeting for initial feedback from other Council members. Proposals will be heard in the following order:

- Point Source Implementation Grants (MPFA)
- Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program (MPFA)
- Wastewater/Stormwater TMDL Implementation (MPCA)
- Pesticide Testing of Private Wells (MDA)

**10:30 Break**

**10:40 Proposal review continued**

- Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater (MDA)
- Contaminants of Emerging Concern (MDH)
- Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning (DNR)
- Forestry BMP Evaluation and Lidar Hydrography Tools (DNR)
- Lake Biological Monitoring and Assessment (DNR)
- Stream Flow Monitoring (DNR)
- Fish Contamination Assessment (DNR)
- Groundwater Assessment (MPCA)
- River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment (MPCA)

**12:00 Lunch**

*(agenda continues on next page)*

**12:30 Proposal review continued**

- River Watch and River of Dreams (Red River Board & International Water Institute)
- River Watch (Friends of the Minnesota Valley)
- Natural Shorelines

**1:00 (ACTION ITEM) Olmsted/BWSR Addendum**

Following the review of the BWSR Soil Health Program and the new proposal from Olmsted County, the Budget and Outcomes Committee encouraged the proposers to explore how the new program could be incorporated into the BWSR program. The addendum in the packet illustrates how that discussion has unfolded and is available for BOC feedback at this time.

**1:15 (DISCUSSION ITEM) Budget meetings recap and FY28-29 budget target**

As this meeting comes to a close, we will take a look back across the four meetings to review what emerged for funding directions and priorities, and discuss how to present this information to the full Council as a part of the June 15 meeting. Additionally, we will take a moment to identify a reasonable target for developing the budget.

**1:50 (INFORMATION ITEM) Confirmation of next steps**

**2:00 Adjourn**

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

**Committee Members present:** Steve Besser, Steve Christenson (Committee Chair), Brad Gausman (Committee Vice Chair), Holly Hatlewick, and Annie Knight.

**Members absent:** Dick Brainerd, Warren Formo, and Fran Miron.

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
- Motion to approve the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting agenda and the April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting summary by Steve Besser, seconded by Brad Gausman. Motion carries unanimously.
- Chair Update
  - Chair Steve Christenson and Vice Chair Brad Gausman of the BOC, met to come up with BOC goals (*see meeting packet*). This helps to understand the reasoning for an increase, decrease, or hold steady (modest increase to cover for inflation) of the budget recommendation. They also reviewed prioritization, for what it means for high, medium, or low prioritization. Therefore, the meanings of the funding directions and prioritizations have been given some clarity.
    - John Barten: We need the monitoring and assessment, but it is not detailed in the descriptions.
    - Steve Christenson: Our scoring rubric has tension surrounding the outcomes part.
    - Brad Gausman: If we add the word “achieving or understanding water quality outcomes” would that help to integrate some of the monitoring?
    - John Barten: Yes.
    - Steve Christenson: I think that is a good addition.
    - Jen Kader: It is good to highlight the watershed monitoring network here, where the monitoring is important for the implementation. Perhaps you want to acknowledge it in the description as well?
    - Annie Knight: I can go either way.
    - Brad Gausman: Motion to add “or understanding” after achieving and before water quality, not to take away from the watershed management framework integration. Monitoring is within achieving understanding. Seconded by Steve Besser. Motion carries.
  - At the last full Council meeting, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) mentioned one program that has been completed! There is \$2.3 million that was requested in the last biennium that will not be requested in this biennium. There are at least three new programs looking for funding. Additionally, inflation will be impacting how much additional funding is actually available.
- Staff Update:
  - Two more program proposals came to the Council, and two more new programs that will be listed at the next full Council meeting.
  - The final batch of proposal questions and scores have been sent to the proposers. Jen will connect if there is any clarification needed, so Jen can pass it along for the presentations.
  - Jen is working on the format for the public input conversation at the June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. The next newsletter will have that invitation for the public. Note, public comments are always welcome. Jen is also working on a document to consolidate public feedback for Council members to review in one place.
  - Jen has been connecting with state agency staff regarding communications.
  - There was a celebration of the We Are Water program reaching ten years. Jen Kader, Glenn Skuta, and Rich Biske attended from the Council.

**No public comments for items not included on the agenda (Webex 00:20:30).**

**2026 BOC Goals (Webex 00:21:00)**

The draft document has been revised based on feedback received following BOC and Council meetings in May.

- There have been some minor changes to be clear about the BOC versus the role of the full Council. Additionally, some communication clarification was pulled from the Council's Public Participation Plan.
- Motion to approve the BOC 2026 goals by Steve Besser, seconded by Brad Gausman. Motion carries unanimously.

### **Proposal Review (Webex 00:24:00)**

The BOC provided initial considerations for funding directions and priority for each of the programs that were presented at the April Council meeting.

- Source Water Protection (MDH) (Webex 00:24:00)
  - Scores reveal an average of 43.1.
  - They did not receive any additional questions.
  - The program is going to be requesting a modest increase, when the numbers come out from the ICT.
  - Majority of BOC members view this as a high priority and to increase funding.

#### *Questions/Comments:*

- John Barten: The surface water source water protection plan, of the plans that have been completed, how are they addressing the nitrate issue?
  - *Answer:* The best example may be with the City of Fairmont; the city uses Lake Budd as a source of water. The watershed is fairly localized and subject to agricultural land uses. That community in about 2016 experience a short-term exceedance of nitrate levels, over the standard. It prompted a lot of local activity. We focused on Fairmont that we developed source water protection for surface water. Now, they are focused on mitigating the high levels of nitrate in that watershed.
- Steve Christenson: You mentioned there were about 900 public water supply systems with about 800 with plans complete, correct? *Answer:* It will be in the low 800s when we are done. While there are about 920 systems that use groundwater as a supply, about 100 do not have an independent source. They buy water from another system. It should be completed in about the next 18 months. We focus on vulnerable areas with high population locations.
- Steve Besser: Does Duluth have a surface water source water protection plan? *Answer:* Yes, Duluth is that system as well. We have not gotten there yet.
- Brad Gausman: Once the plans are complete, how long is it good? Is there a renewal? *Answer:* They are good for ten years. So, eventually, on average we will need to maintain the amendment process of about eighty plans a year. It is laid out in our rule. Some provisions may require an earlier amendment.
- Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (MDH) (Webex 00:38:00)
  - Scores reveal an average of 42.1.
  - They did not receive any additional questions.
  - Majority of BOC members view this as a high priority and to hold steady for funding.

#### *Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Christeson: There are 60 Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS) plans, are they all done now? For all the watersheds? *Answer by Carrie Raber, MDH:* We are striving to complete every GRAPS for each 1W1P. We are a little over halfway in our effort. We have trimmed off five years of our revised timeline, so we can now invest in our tool development, assisting projects moving forward.
- Steve Besser: GRAPS and Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) are important programs. Groundwater are not just local; they run between districts and states. Do we cooperate on this between states, or any federal fundings? *Answer:* We have not leveraged federal funds. However, some of our partners leverage federal funds to take advantage of implementation. GRAPS has been developing data. It does not follow watershed boundaries, so it is an area to explore.
- Jen Kader: Regarding supplement and supplant. Supplement is adding to existing work prior to 2008 or existing work since then that has already been funded in the General Fund. This is thinking about the value that the CWFs add. The GRAPS program did not exist prior to Clean Water Funds.
- Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (including TMDLs) (MPCA) (Heather Johnson and Chad Anderson) (Webex 00:50:30)
  - Scores reveal an average of 43.1.
  - No additional questions submitted.
  - BOC members reveal high priority and hold steady.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Christenson: Can you describe the difference between the MPCA and the DNR WRAPS? *Answer from Heather Johnson, MPCA:* We have focused on the different priority areas. You need that information to understand where to complete the implementation. They are tailored to our local partners. *Response from Chad Anderson:* We hope to have 36 of our WRAPS updated by the end of June 2029. We are making faster progress than during the first ten-year cycle.
- Steve Christenson: How many WRAPS are completed versus the total number of 1W1Ps? *Answer:* We have completed all 80 of the WRAPS and currently have eleven updated, looking at 36 by end of June. The 1W1P folks are just finished with their first round. We are working hand in hand with BWSR. Our local project managers coordinate with the 1W1P meetings, coordinating with each other.
- Steve Christenson: This is a big staff (33 FTEs), how should we be thinking about supplements and supplants and what the legislature is already doing? *Answer:* We have other funding playing for this work. We did not take away other funding, we have additional funding to grow it. We are really efficient at this funding and have been decreasing FTEs and working on decreasing contracting outside. When someone leaves, we work to decrease the FTEs. It is staff heavy, but it is science heavy. If you don't have this information, the next part of the watershed framework is impacted.
- Steve Besser: We are the major funding for the two WRAPS and GRAPS. We would be blind without these. The score does not define the program, and we need these three programs.
- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: There was a small amount of preexisting funding before the CWFs for this work. The bad news is it has not been kept up from inflation. We hope those funds will continue. We are losing federal funding but are not asking for more CWFs to cover it.
- Brad Gausman: Is some work duplicative in what is happening in 1W1P? Is this informing the work? If it is duplicative, is it confirming data? I can see why they would be additive but want to make sure we are doing appropriate work. *Answer:* That is a good question. I worry we may be doing some of that, but we work closely with BWSR's Board Conservationists. You may see it in the 1W1P, but they are taking it from the WRAPS reports to include it. It is a conversation we continue to have, to make sure we are working efficiently with each other. The WRAPS is the science, and the 1W1P is the actionable level.
- Holly Hatlewick: The MPCA did a great job explaining it. We are reviewing a WRAPS right now. We have had some de-listings, but I'm not sure where those were from. We are having a meeting to figure out which practices were applied and where to follow up on what impacted those improvements. The 1W1P are revealing the BMPs, so we can figure out what those BMPs do for the reductions. It is a real-life example that we are doing right now.
- Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (DNR) (*Webex 01:08:30*)
  - Scores reveal an average of 42.7 (like the score of the other WRAPS program)
  - No additional questions submitted in advance.
  - BOC members reveal high priority and hold steady.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Christenson: Compare and contrast WRAPS with the MPCA? *Answer from Jamison Wendel, DNR:* Our efforts are primarily focused on geomorphology and hydrology. There are connections with the other components with the other state agencies too.
- Steve Christenson: Holly, can you share the on-the-ground experience for this program? *Answer:* It is more the structure of the channels. The MPCA is about what is coming through the streams and channels (nutrients) and the DNR is focused more on the sediment/structure of the landscape. Both inform 1W1P.
- Steve Besser: Are you putting floodplains in? *Answer:* Yes, it is part of the work.
- John Barten: Are you able to target certain stream reaches? So, you can say it is critical to connect the stream to the flood plain? *Answer:* Yes, it is part of the work. We can target those areas for implementation. We are trying to quantify data from it too. We connect it to the overland, using LiDAR, and identifying those areas as well.
- Steve Christenson: We Are Water is funded through the MPCA WRAPS, how much? *Answer:* Each agency used to put in a little funding. It was not efficient and was complicated. The Legislature did not want it to be a separate line item and was asked to be with the MPCA WRAPS.
- Forever Green (MDA, UMN) (*Webex 01:24:30*)
  - Scores reveal an average of 43.3

- No additional questions submitted in advance.
- BOC members reveal a high priority and to increase funding.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Besser: I was concerned about the sociology and social aspect. It is tough for farmers to change. We have enough corn and soybeans. Market development is critical. This program is critical; it is the future of Ag. Climate change is impacting, and farmers need assistance to shift to these new crops.
- Steve Christenson: Can you speak more about the balance between inventing new crops and technology transfer of new crops? *Answer:* We have research and development, and the CWFs provided support for the first implementation program along with the partnerships program. There are risk assessment payments and environmental benefit payments, and the cost-share is traditional for Ag conservation. It also supports positions, and there is a full-time agronomist. A recent hire outside of CWFs is a Winter Camelina specialist (also an agronomist). So, there are two agronomists providing technical assistance, along with financial assistance for implementation. Additionally, the UMN and the MDA work often overlaps with vulnerable groundwater areas. There are benefits to surface waters, so it is not excluded, but we want to focus on groundwater. Also, the UMN partnership with Cargill. The MDA is also now connecting with Cargill as well. The agronomists, farmers, Cargill (market), are all at the table.
- Peter LaFontaine, public member from Friends of the Mississippi River: They request the Council recommends an increase in funding for Forever Green. They strongly believe support for continuous living cover (CLC), agricultural research and implementation, is the single most impactful investment to hit those long-term clean water goals. When it comes to protecting groundwater, CLC are impacting. They also have the potential to scale up overtime because of their market value, especially the oil seeds (major opportunities in the sustainable biofuel and livestock feed areas). The updated Nutrient Reduction Strategy calls for millions of acres of CLC. The soil needs to be covered year-round. We would like to invite Council members at the May 27 Forever Green field tour for policy makers at UMN.

- Holly Hatlewick: I appreciate the amount of funds leveraged.

- Chloride Reduction Program (MPCA) (*Webex 01:34:30*)

- Scores reveal an average of 42.1. There was a lot of public input on this program.
- There were additional questions asked after the last full Council meeting, see written response included in meeting packet.
- Overall, the BOC members reveal a high priority and hold steady.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Christenson: Does most of it come from road salt or water softeners? *Answer:* In the system, more comes from road salt than water softeners. The wastewater treatment facilities are areas to focus on as well. The facilities will have limits in the future, because their discharge is high. These are all over the state (heavily driven by water softeners). Of the facilities, about forty percent cannot afford the treatment. A lot of the communities are very small. Without some kind of assistance, they will not be able to work on the problem. Yet, this is a well-known source. The state is looking at the things we can control, working to make these things happen. The Council has a policy on water softeners and road salt, so are recognizing these two areas of chloride.

- Brad Gausman: Make it Legislation required – cities want this and need this. Let's take a good idea and roll into Legislation.

- Steve Besser: MnDOT needs to be more active on it.

- County Geologic Atlas Part A (UMN), Barb Lusardi (*Webex 02:11:00*)

- Scores reveal average of 40.3 (wide range of scores 25-50).
- No additional questions submitted after the full Council meeting.
- Overall, BOC members reveal a high priority and increase funding.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Holly Hatlewick: The SWCDs use this work in their water management. They are valuable and lay the groundwork. When we are trying to find water, it is expensive to poke around. There is value in these, for access for use, as well as BMPs for critically sensitive areas. Everyone should have these maps. We look at them often.

- Annie Knight: What would an increase look like? *Answer:* We proposed a million for this year's program, because it was previously a reduction year. We receive funding from different areas as well.

- Brad Gausman: Will this project reach a completion stage? *Answer:* Ideally it would continue. However, we would consider the project complete when all counties have received atlases. There are updates that would be good to do. We always need new information. The better informed we are, the better we can do the work. It will formally end when all county atlases are complete. There are about ten more to go.
- County Geologic Atlas Part B (DNR), Jaimeson Wendell, DNR (*Webex 02:19:30*)
  - Scores reveal an average of 41.6 (wide range of 26-50).
  - No additional questions provided.
  - Overall, BOC members view this as high priority and steady funding.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Holly Hatlewick: It is a tool the SWCDs use when developing 1W1P when targeting areas and setting priorities. It is something we use to impound or restrict water. We utilize these.
- Steve Christenson: If we had additional funds, is there value in increasing? *Answer:* Only seven percent is from CWFs. Most of our funding is from other sources.
- MnWRL (MDA), Margaret Wagner, MDA (*Webex 02:23:45*)
  - Scores reveal average of 34.9.
  - The MDA is looking at a small decrease (only need funding to maintain in maintenance mode). It would hold steady going forward.
  - No additional questions after the full Council meeting.
  - BOC members recommend high priority and support the decrease of funding.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Besser: This is a necessary cost. I found it hard to score on the rubric.
- LCC Website (*Webex 02:28:00*)
  - Scores reveal an average of 36.2 (wide range of 15-50). All of the Legacy funds pitch in a small percentage (based on the biennium). It would hold steady at \$7,000. They use their tracking data for website functionality.
  - BOC members recommend high priority and hold steady. Note, this is required by law.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Besser: This is required, but I also feel they could do more work in this area.
- Steve Christenson: I have been asked about fraud a lot when speaking with constituents. It is nice to point them to this webpage. It was hard to score on the rubric.
- Beach Portal (MDH) Trisha Robinson, MDH (*Webex 02:34:00*)
  - Scores reveal average of 35 (wide range of 15-36). This is a newer initiative.
  - No questions submitted after the last full Council meeting.
  - No questions or comments from this BOC meeting.
  - Overall, BOC members viewed this as medium priority and hold steady funding.

- Stormwater Research (UMN), John Bilotta, UMN (*Webex 02:38:30*)

- Scores reveal (42.3), with wide range of scores 34-50.
- No additional questions were submitted in advance. There are comment letters from stakeholders included in the meeting packet.
- BOC members view this program as high priority with increased funding.

*Questions/Comments:*

- John Barten: This program does a great job of sharing outcomes. Most people live and recreate in the Metro area, so a program like this is critical to engage those folks and share about the Clean Water Funds.
- Holly Hatlewick: It is not evident, but there are some applications on the smaller communities that could be used. I would agree with John Barten, when the time to vote comes, this is a good program for highly populated area folks to acknowledge, so for that reason, I would prioritize it.
- Annie Knight: I rank this program high and see it as important. The proposals submitted during the competitive process; it brings a lot of value for doing the best research that we can for the state.
- Steve Besser: The greater Minnesota communities are using these funds as well.
- Steve Christenson: In the past this was funded at \$3 million. If funds were available to restore it to the \$3 million dollar level, how would you use the additional funds? *Response:* We can scale up or scale down. An increase would be for more research. The other proposals are of high quality, but we don't have the

funds to use. The research is not good for us sitting on the shelf, we would do more training and outreach following up on the data from the research.

- Steve Christenson: Anything that would involve chloride research? *Answer:* The stormwater research program is not directly funding research on chloride alternatives. Instead, we are looking at decrease chloride use through improving design, effective application, how effective training programs are and how to increase attendance and growth in that area. We have a research project looking at design and roadways – how can design decrease application of deicers.
- In the last biennium the program went from \$3 million down to \$2 million down, and the state auditor adjustment pulled it further down to \$1.6 million. So, they would like to be back to the \$2 million, if funding is available.
- Tillage and Erosion Transects (BWSR) Udai Singh, BWSR (*Webex 02:52:00*)
  - Scores reveal average of 35.8 (wide range 12-45).
  - No additional questions provided after the full Council meeting.
  - BOC members view this as high priority with steady funding.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Christenson: I would encourage Council members to view the Daily Erosion Project webpage. It covers Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska. You can look at your own family's farm and view the soil erosion for that day. It is like the water resources library, providing data to the local landowners and local government units. I was unaware of this webpage until your presentation last month. *Response:* Just to note, it helps us speed up our process, but the funding is from elsewhere for this webpage. We collaborate with others, and this assists us in our work.
- Steve Besser: It is critical to understand what is going on in greater Minnesota.
- Holly Hatlewick: Another piece to point out is this is historic data that USDA, and that data sat on a shelf. It was valuable in the county boundary. So, this website is fantastic, you can make assessments from upstream (and not from a dusty piece of paper).
- Annie Knight: How many people access the dashboard? *Answer:* I can follow up on that information.
- Future of Drinking Water (MDH) Frieda von Qualen, MDH (*Webex 03:03:00*)
  - Scores reveal average of 41.3.
  - No additional questions after the full Council meeting.
  - The BOC members view this program as high priority for steady funding.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Annie Knight: There are various plans, can you provide a high-level review of how this plan is unique from other plans we support with CWFs. *Answer:* The Minnesota Drinking Water Action Plan is the only one that is focused on drinking water (both public and private well) thinking about all the pieces that need to be in place from source to tap. It brings in the elements the state is focused on and also illuminates the concerns we see in drinking water.
- Brad Gausman: Is there work to fold it in with source water protection? *Answer:* We work closely with source water protection. Their work is represented in the slate of activities for safe drinking water. The benefit of it being outside of it allows an equal focus on private wells and public water systems. They are distinct functions for future of drinking water that are separate from source water protection.
- Steve Christenson: When would this program end? *Answer:* We should always be looking ahead. We recognize 2034 is an important year, but we need to have some form of permanent approach to always be looking forward to making sure everyone everywhere has safe drinking water. The work is never done. Within the drinking water action plan, there are specific measures named with key target dates, so we can be tracking dates. Ultimately, it is working on and working toward is an ongoing frame of mind.
- Manure and Water Quality Specialist (MDA), Margaret Wagner, MDA (*Webex 03:19:00*)
  - Scores reveal average of 37.7 with a wide range (16-46).
  - No additional questions after the full Council meeting. This is a new program.
  - BOC members view this program as high priority, and steady funding because the funding will be to be determined as it is a new program.

*Questions/Comments:*

- John Barten: How would this position fit, would it be set up to help folks comply with the new feedlot rules? Or would this be totally separate? *Answer:* I envision this position to serve across the state with a

focus on vulnerable areas. The smaller to medium-sized facilities is where we see a lot of need for technical assistance. Manure is a resource and time is a constraint, so there can be improvements there. There are many scenarios that could be helpful.

- Holly Hatlewick: This position would be a training position too. We are seeing the small to medium farmers want to utilize the manure resources well. There is a gap between the technical staff supporting the customers, so this person would help get local technical staff up to speed, so we are all working to get that training and outreach going. *Answer:* This would build in that capacity statewide.
- Steve Christenson: I would assume the funding would be like an irrigation specialist.
- CWC Administration, Jen Kader (*Webex 03:29:00*)
  - Scores reveal an average of 43.8 (range of 37-50).
  - No questions were submitted ahead of time.
  - BOC members view this as a high priority and increase for funding.

*Questions/Comments:*

- Steve Christenson: We are missing Dick Brainerd today, especially his thoughts on organization capabilities for a government agency.
- John Barten: When I was first on the Council, the Clean Water Council Coordinator was not allowed to be at the legislature when there were hearings on the budget. There needs to be capacity for the staff to go to the Legislature, the conferences, to reach out for engagement. There needs to be an increase to manage these issues.
- Annie Knight: The increase for FY24-25 was \$675 and FY26-27 was \$922. That would be an increase to bring it to about \$1 million for the ask? *Answer:* Correct, one of the big uses was the change of the per diem from \$55 to \$125. It was a substantial increase for a large body of folks to come together multiple times per month.
- Holly Hatlewick: Can you clarify, currently 1.85 FTE. *Answer:* We have 1.85 staff currently (Jen and Brianna). The additional .15 was for communications staff, it pays for their time as it is needed or available, but that is limited and it's not within one individual's work plan. Some of the communication staff is helping with developing CWFs specific component for the We Are Water.
- Holly Hatlewick: You mention an intern or FTE, especially around the 20th year of the CWFs. Has there been conversations around subcontractor or consultant, versus bringing on an FTE that we would have to maintain? *Answer:* Thinking through the communications component, if we had an intern, it would be communication on the Newsletter, policy research, keeping track of the bills in the Legislature, policy context and understanding of current research. It would be good communication skills, but there was also funding for comms contracts in addition to that. If it was an additional person, there would be additional responsibility and opportunities to take on, to lead or carry some of the work forward.
- Holly Hatlewick: Could this be a consultant, or marketing tactic, versus a supervisory approach? *Answer:* As someone who has supervised staff, I can affirm that it does change the workload. So, there is a trade off there. But that is an option.
- Steve Christenson: Did we use a consultant at all in the last year? *Answer:* We use a consultant for the development of the biennial report. It is every other year's expense where the field tour is in the off year, as they are both around the same cost.
- Brad Gausman: Compared to other Councils, like Outdoor Heritage Fund, we are still relatively low-cost to run. Inflation, travel, it is all expensive. I have a high level of trust in the staff here to let us know what they need.
- Steve Christenson: I am strongly in favor of support for this work, especially with the twenty-year anniversary coming. I assume about \$1.25 million.
- John Barten: I would say, Rep. Heintzeman complimented us on our hiring of Jen Kader. So, I believe he would not have an issue with it. Especially, if we can share the costs of the comparable councils and when you compare the amount to the total CWFs. It was a legislature who increased the per diem.

**Finalize Initial Considerations for Funding Direction and Priority** (*Webex 03:46:00*)

Members reviewed the scores from the BOC meeting today. These scores will be brought forward to the full Council, to flag any items for future discussion. There were fifteen programs reviewed today, fourteen were

identified as a high priority and one medium. For funding direction, there were six for increase, eight for hold steady, and one in alignment with the state agency to decrease.

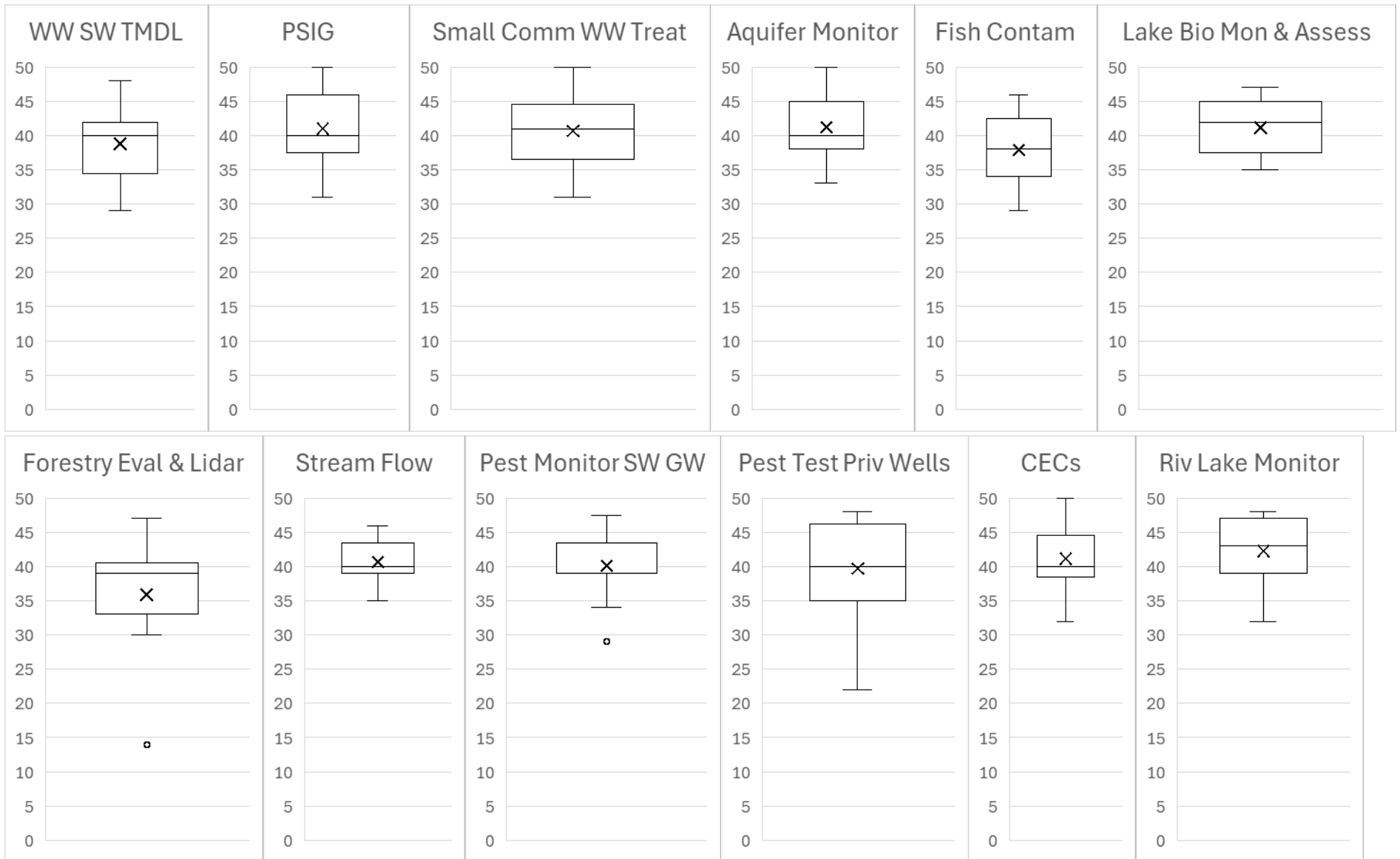
*Questions/Comments/Discussion:*

- Brad Gausman: Looking at this, we would want to have more information, like getting the Council's full direction information. We are a small group looking at this information, so perhaps we should pull from our full Council. If what we are doing is working towards a decision, the full Council's opinions of high, medium, and low, along with funding direction are critical.
  - Steve Christenson: What do you think should be done at the next full Council meeting? *Answer:* We can have a handout of the workbook and hand it in at the end of the meeting. It can be calculated and at least provide feedback. It would be a working group. Perhaps, a method to glean the information, or maybe a debriefing insight into what we are thinking.
  - Steve Besser: We are giving our recommendation to the full Council. They are responsible for the recommendations too. There is also time to allow people to comment on programs, if there is any disagreement. It is part of the decision-making process. An opportunity to chime in. Perhaps, members can provide Jen with anonymous comments – for anyone hesitant to mention a decrease in funding.
  - Steve Christenson: At the next full Council meeting, people have an opportunity to speak up. Perhaps, Brad and I can talk a little more to help pull that opportunity forward.
  - John Barten: We can also have members rank the programs in order, and which ones the BOC to date have suggested an increase. Ask the members if anyone has any issues. Most are to increase funding, and we will not have enough funding. The BOC makes initial decisions. For ranking, it helps the BOC make the budget numbers.
  - Annie Knight: I think it makes sense to have members rank the programs. It can be a good visual as well, to see where the Council is prioritizing the programs. Regarding the Interagency Coordination Team (ICT), how helpful is it?
  - Glenn Skuta, MPCA: It is hard to tell, but we will all be coming together as agencies, with starting budget numbers. Our goal is to balance the budget. There is always discussion and budget negotiations. To hear the Council's conversations, we can work to fit program asks into the budget. If everything is a high priority, it is less useful. All the programs are doing well, and doing great things, so it can be hard.
  - Jen Kader: To keep you informed, based on the conversation in the room, I will be changing what is submitted. It helps the state agencies, to have the Council wanting more funding, with their decisions on the process.

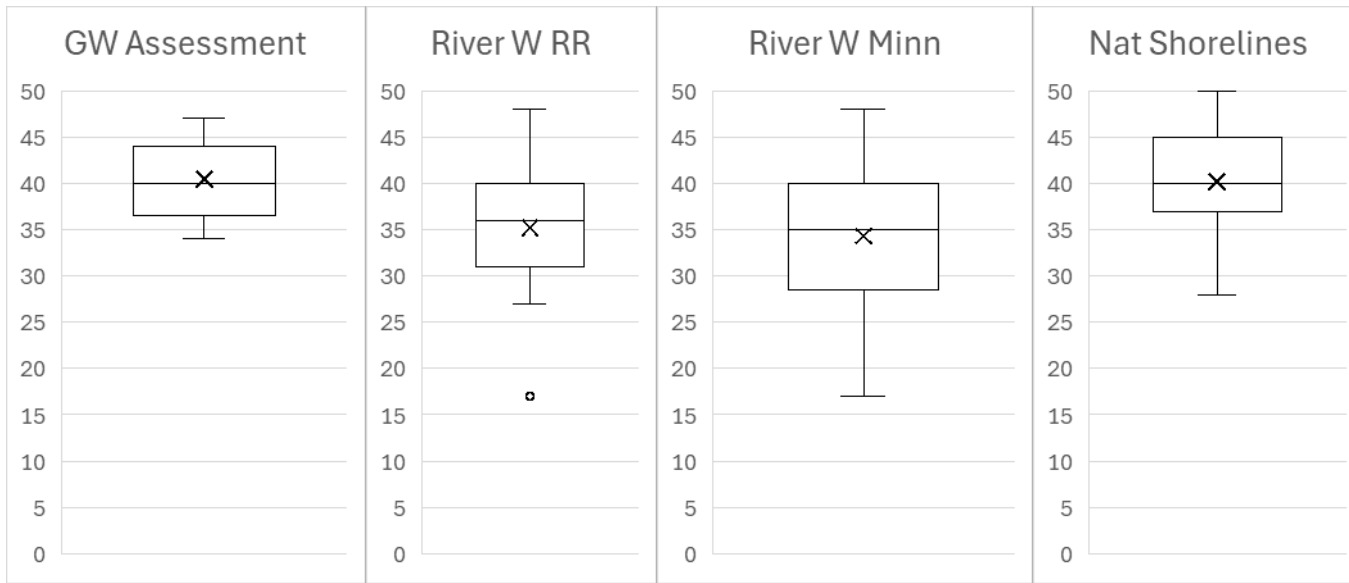
*Motion by Annie Knight for the approval of the directional scoring and prioritization as logged on Jen's spreadsheet, to provide to the full Council (once the last meeting is complete), seconded by Brad Gausman. Motion carries.*

**Adjournment** (Webex 04:08:26)

Box and Whisker Plots for June 5, 2026 Budget and Outcomes Committee Meeting



Box and Whisker Plots for June 5, 2026 Budget and Outcomes Committee Meeting



ID	Program	Proposer	Brief Description	26-27 Amount	Proposed Change	Range (Mean)	BOC priority	BOC direction
48	Wastewater/Stormwater TMDL Implementation	MPCA	Funding for these program areas advances point source water pollution reductions by supporting point source implementation work, notably 1) integrating the watershed approach and pollutant restrictions into point source stormwater and wastewater discharge permits; 2) incorporating stormwater and wastewater point source discharges into TMDL projects and watershed restoration and protection strategy (WRAPS) reports; 3) supporting technical assistance for wastewater and stormwater permittees in achieving pollutant reductions; and 4) creating more opportunity for water quality pollutant trades.	\$ 3,200,000	Hold Steady	29-48 (38.9)		
49	Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) Program*	PFA	Through the Clean Water Council and the Clean Water Fund Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) framework, specific impaired and threatened water bodies are identified where pollutant reductions are needed to meet water quality standards. Watershed restoration and protection strategies are developed to guide implementation activities. The PSIG program provides grants to help municipalities construct wastewater, stormwater, and drinking water treatment projects when the Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) determines that higher levels of treatment are necessary to meet water quality goals. These include projects to meet Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements and water-quality-based effluent limits for phosphorus, chlorides, and other pollutants.	\$ 16,440,000	Hold Steady	31-50 (41)		
50	Small Community Wastewater Treatment Program*	PFA	Minnesota has many areas with significant numbers of noncomplying septic systems in close proximity that are polluting surface waters and groundwater. Local governments interested in community solutions submit projects to MPCA for ranking on the Project Priority List based on the density and condition of existing systems. The program provides technical assistance grants to help communities evaluate potential alternatives and prepare a community assessment report which is submitted for review to MPCA, and construction financing (loans and grants) for projects when they are ready to proceed.	\$ 200,000	Hold Steady	31-50 (40.7)		
51	Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning	DNR	The Minnesota DNR's groundwater monitoring program collects long-term aquifer level data through a statewide network of 1,257 observation wells. This program provides essential information on groundwater trends, sustainability, and groundwater-surface water interactions to protect drinking water, water supplies, and groundwater dependent ecosystems. By analyzing water level changes alongside climate, land use and water demand, the program supports planning that prevents water shortages and protects lakes, streams, wetlands, trout streams, and calcareous fens. The program serves state and local water managers, communities and resource professionals by supplying reliable data, modeling and shared tools for sustainable groundwater management.	\$ 4,700,000	Hold Steady	33-50 (41.2)		
52	Fish Contamination Assessment	DNR	The program analyzes fish tissue to detect mercury and other contaminants. The information collected is then used by the MPCA to determine whether lakes are impaired for these contaminants, and by MDH in establishing fish consumption advisories. Fish consumption advisories are for the Minnesota public to determine how much wild caught fish can be safely eaten from Minnesota waters.	\$ 1,100,000	Hold Steady	29-46 (37.9)		

Notes

53	Lake Biological Monitoring and Assessment (formerly Lake IBI)	DNR	The program supports MPCA and Federal Clean Water Act evaluations by conducting biological surveys and aquatic life assessments for lakes. Fish-based Indices of Biological Integrity were developed and used to evaluate fish communities in 1,056 lakes within 47 watersheds to identify impairments, stressors and exceptionally healthy lakes. Monitoring has expanded to 13 northwestern watersheds. Standards to assess coldwater fish habitat in over 500 lakes have been developed, with assessments beginning once rules are promulgated. The program serves Minnesotans by informing watershed protection and restoration efforts, and by monitoring conditions and trends statewide.	\$ 3,050,000	Hold Steady	35-47 (41.2)		
54	Forestry BMP Evaluation and Lidar Hydrography Tools	DNR	The <b>Guideline Monitoring Program</b> monitors the implementation of forest management guidelines (FMGs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) at logging sites across Minnesota's forested watersheds. We analyze data on FMG/BMP implementation to identify risks to water quality and provide training and advising for forest managers and loggers to implement sustainable forestry practices. The <b>Lidar Hydrography Program</b> generates Minnesota's official statewide elevation data through lidar technology, enabling precise mapping of the state's landscape features that influence surface water movement and infiltration to groundwater. Specializing in 3D data collection and terrain analysis, the team develops authoritative digital contours, elevation models, hydrography, and watershed boundaries.	\$ 1,400,000	Hold Steady	14-47 (35.9)		
55	Stream Flow Monitoring	DNR	Stream flow information is essential for understanding the state of Minnesota's waters. Clean Water funding has allowed the DNR to expand the network of stream gages that support planning and implementation for clean water protection and restoration. Specifically, stream flow data are needed to calculate pollution loads for Total Maximum Daily Load studies and pollution reduction plans. Through the Legacy Amendment the DNR will continue to maintain at least one stream gage in each of the 81 major watersheds to provide water quantity information in support of the State's long term water quality trend monitoring efforts.	\$ 5,650,000	Hold Steady	35-46 (40.7)		
56	Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater	MDA	Funding supports the purchase and maintenance of laboratory instruments that provide greater capacity for pesticide monitoring throughout the state. Clean Water funding allowed the MDA to increase the number of detectable pesticides, increase the sensitivity of detection of certain pesticides, and increase the overall number of samples analyzed on an annual basis. This expansion allowed the MDA to test additional public water supply wells, lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands, including samples collected on Tribal lands. Data generated support pesticide management decisions to ensure groundwater, surface water, and drinking water resources are protected.	\$ 740,000	Hold Steady	29-47.5 (40.1)		
57	Pesticide Testing of Private Wells	MDA	This program provides homeowners and the public with information about pesticide occurrence in private drinking water wells located in geologically vulnerable areas. Earlier phases of the program analyzed up to 133 pesticide compounds in private wells across agricultural areas with vulnerable groundwater. Those results identified the herbicides cyanazine and atrazine--and their degradates--represent the greatest pesticide-related risks to private well users. Building on these findings, upcoming sampling will prioritize these compounds, along with nitrate and select neonicotinoid insecticides and fungicides in vulnerable aquifers, to ensure continued monitoring of contaminants most likely to affect groundwater quality.	\$ 1,000,000	Hold Steady	22-48 (39.7)		
58	Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern	MDH	MDH advances science-based public health responses to contaminants of emerging concern by strengthening health-based guidance development, water analysis, and laboratory quality assurance. Health Risk Assessment develops drinking water guidance, conducts risk assessments, engages stakeholders, and collaborates with state and federal partners. The Public Health Laboratory develops analytical methods and improves detection at lower concentrations. The Minnesota Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program ensures that accredited laboratories performing analytical water testing are accountable to standards that support defensible and accurate data. Clean Water Funds protect human and ecological health amid evolving contaminant risks.	\$ 11,850,000	Hold Steady	32-50 (41.2)		

59	River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment	MPCA	<p>Minnesota monitors and assesses surface waters to meet Clean Water Act requirements and support water protection and restoration. The state evaluates water quality every two years, identifies impaired waters, and reports results to the U.S. EPA. Monitoring includes intensive watershed studies, trend and pollutant monitoring, and 10-year lake and stream assessments using physical, chemical, and biological data. The program coordinates partners, supports volunteer monitoring, manages and shares data, tracks long-term and climate trends, and produces reports and analyses to inform water quality management and policy.</p>	\$ 18,900,000	Increase	32-48 (42.3)		
60	Groundwater Assessment	MPCA	<p>Most Minnesota residents receive drinking water from groundwater. Protecting and restoring groundwater quality requires reliable data on Minnesota's groundwater resources. Groundwater monitoring and assessment helps the MPCA, and its local and state partners, understand groundwater quality and investigate potential sources of contamination.</p> <p>The groundwater assessment program is responsible for:</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluating the presence and concentrations of non-agricultural pollutants, including contaminants of</p>	\$ 2,000,000	Increase	34-47 (40.5)		
61	River Watch and River of Dreams	Red River Board	<p>The Red River Basin River Watch (RW) and River of Dreams (ROD) programs provide hands-on watershed education for K-12 students across the Red River of the North Basin. The programs connect youth to local rivers through field-based learning, water quality monitoring, and creative exploration. Their purpose is to build environmental literacy and stewardship by increasing understanding of non-point source pollution, its impacts, and key watershed health concepts. By engaging students, educators, and communities, the programs support improved water quality awareness, long-term protection of MN's waters, and development of the next generation of informed watershed stewards.</p>	NEW (\$350,000)	NEW	17-48 (35.2)		
62	River Watch in the Minnesota Valley	Friends of the Minnesota Valley	<p>River Watch is a hands-on learning program operated by Friends of the Minnesota Valley for students in 28 high schools and in some middle schools during the 2025-2026 school year. Beginning with an in-classroom lesson aligned with state Science standards, students make 2 trips per semester to a river or stream to conduct water quality monitoring using a multi-function electronic probe and other tools. Macroinvertebrate surveys are conducted during the stream visits. Data is reported through the MPCA Citizen Science Portal.</p> <p>Most work is in the Minnesota River Basin, two High Schools serving Latino and Indigenous students in Minneapolis participate.</p>	NEW (\$150,000)	NEW	17-48 (34.3)		
63	Natural Shorelines	DNR	<p>We are proposing an integrated system to address the mounting challenges on Minnesota's most heavily used lakes. About half of Minnesota's natural shorelines have been altered or degraded, diminishing ecological function and lake water quality, as lawn-down-to-the-lake shorelines allow 7-9 times more pollutants to enter a lake than naturally vegetated shoreline. These pollutants accumulate in lakes, creating serious water quality problems. This proposal includes a Lake Steward program administered by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers and a lakeshore conservation easement program managed by Minnesota Land Trust for permanent protection of critical shoreland on popular lakes at risk for land use change. Another element of this overall effort will be submitted to the LCCMR to support a program to develop a certification and extension program for protection and restoration of natural shorelines.</p>	NEW	NEW	28-50 (40.2)		

# MPFA Program responses to Council member questions

## Point Source Implementation Grant program

- 1. How is PSIG promoted as an option to set up central softening for municipal drinking water treatment plants?**

Both MPCA and MDH engineers discuss options to address chloride reductions with communities when they receive a chloride permit limit that they cannot achieved by more efficient means.

- 2. As chloride pollution continues to rise, is this a place where there could be a future increase in demand?**

As more communities receive wastewater chloride permit limits, the need for centralized softening of the drinking water will likely increase.

## Small Community Wastewater Treatment program

- 1. Please define "small communities".**

MPCA uses 5 or more homes within ½ mile of each other to define a small community.

- 2. Of the small communities who have used this program to develop a plan, how many have taken the information they've been given and been able to implement it? If tax capacity is limited to rebuild or reach compliance, do you still see their participation in the technical assistance? Or does the lack of funding for implementation deter participation?**

This is difficult to determine accurately since information is not readily available. Oftentimes the inertia is not sufficient for communities with few or no Imminent Threat to Public Health and Safety (ITPHS) systems for a solution. The lack of implementation funding does not appear to deter participation since interest in the construction loan/grant aspect of the program has also decreased in recent years.

- 3. Does this program have a connection to the MPCA's small community septic fixup program?**

Not directly. These are grants to low-income individual homeowners rather than the community and would be for homes that don't meet the small community definition above.

**4. Is it possible to capture the technical assistance component in WBIF or 1W1P instead?**

No, these programs do not provide technical assistance to the best of our knowledge. BWSR expects a local government to exhaust all grant funding from the MPCA prior to utilizing WBIF.

**5. Would the Voyageurs National Park Clean Water program fit within this program rather than as a standalone?**

No, the two programs are not mutually overlapping in terms of needs, assessment, and scope. The one exception was the Puck's Point project in Kabetogama Township. It received Small Communities grant and loan funds in addition to Legacy funds and several other funding sources to cover the \$4.5M cost. In general terms, the Voyageurs program can provide equivalent or beyond what the Small Communities grant program can offer.

**From:** Baumann, Suzanne (MPCA)

**Sent:** Tuesday, June 2, 2026 3:21 PM

**To:** Kader, Jen (She/Her/Hers) (MPCA)

**Cc:** Skuta, Glenn (MPCA); Blasing, Nicole (MPCA); Graziani, Marco (MPCA); Zanon, Emily (MPCA); Sahli, David (MPCA)

**Subject:** Fw: Follow up questions; Small Communities and WW/SW TMDL Implementation

Hi Jen:

John Barton had a couple of questions that I wasn't able to answer this morning:

1. Small Communities Grants Program; John asked whether any of the communities eligible for the Voyageur's National Park Grant program were taking advantage of the Small Communities Program.

I reached out to Dave Sahli who manages the grant program and he shared that he was only aware of one; the Puck's Point project in Kabetogama Township. It received Small Communities grant and loan funds in addition to Legacy funds and several other funding sources to cover the \$4.5M cost.

2. WW/SW TMDL Implementation Program; John asked about the reliability of achieving cover crop commitments and how the agreements are written to ensure the reductions occur.

Marco Graziani, our TMDL coordinator, shared that there are two critical aspects of achieving this reduction:

1. Contractual agreements between the permittee and each field/landowner. If you're curious, below is a redacted copy of one of Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative's (SMBSC) cover crop agreements for 2025. They have an agreement with each participating farmer/landowner specifying the acreage of cover crops for the season and the MPCA receives this documentation from the permittee, and
2. Contracting for more credits than required. In addition to the possibility that a landowner may not honor the contract, there is a lot of inherent variability with cover crop offsets. Growing conditions may not be favorable in any given year. Droughts, floods, weather events may disrupt the BMP on certain fields. SMBSC contracts for many more acres than needed to generate phosphorus reduction credits and therefore reduces the probability that the failure of any particular field or contract will cause the company to be short of the needed offsets. For 2025 SMBSC contracted for 71,672 acres of cover crops on 580 fields for a total of 10,582 lbs of TP credits. SMBSC also generates 1,475 lbs of TP credit from a cattle exclusion project site. The sum of the Coop's available credits for 2025 is 12,057 lbs of available credits which is more than sufficient to meet the permit's 6,500 lbs/yr offset requirement.



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Lake Biological Monitoring and Assessment (MNDNR) –  
Response to Questions from Clean Water Council Members May 2026

For more information: contact Jacquelyn Bacigalupi [jacquelyn.bacigalupi@state.mn.us](mailto:jacquelyn.bacigalupi@state.mn.us) 218-203-4315 or  
Jessica Massure [Jessica.massure@state.mn.us](mailto:Jessica.massure@state.mn.us) 218-203-4319 or consult our website:  
[https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/surfacewater\\_section/lake\\_ibi/index.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/surfacewater_section/lake_ibi/index.html)

**1) How are AIS considered in developing the stressor ID reports for waterbodies where AIS are negatively impacting fish populations?**

**Stressor identification (SID)** is used by DNR Lake Biological Monitoring and Assessment ([LBMA](#)) biologists to determine causes of biological impairment in lakes. Evaluations consider multiple interacting and cumulative stressors, including eutrophication, physical habitat alteration, altered interspecific competition, temperature and dissolved oxygen changes, and various contaminants.

**Aquatic invasive species (AIS)** can contribute to several of these stressors. Commonly assessed AIS include Common Carp, Zebra Mussels, Eurasian Watermilfoil, Curly-leaf Pondweed, Rusty Crayfish, and Spiny Water Flea. AIS are evaluated because they can significantly alter lake ecosystems and fish communities. SID reports typically include AIS survey information, prevention recommendations, and, when appropriate, targeted management strategies.

**Eutrophication:** AIS can worsen nutrient enrichment and poor water quality. Common Carp increase turbidity and release nutrients by disturbing sediments while feeding, especially in shallow lakes. Curly-leaf Pondweed can contribute to internal phosphorus loading when it dies back in midsummer, causing declines in water quality. Eutrophic conditions tend to favor tolerant fish species while reducing habitat quality for sensitive species requiring clear water and healthy vegetation. Generally, watershed sources of nutrients should be addressed before using in-lake strategies, but AIS can contribute to internal loading.

**Physical habitat alteration:** AIS can substantially change aquatic habitat structure. Eurasian Watermilfoil and CLP can displace native vegetation important for fish spawning, refuge, and feeding. Common Carp uproot vegetation and increase turbidity, reducing light penetration and plant growth. Rusty Crayfish reduce aquatic vegetation while also consuming fish eggs and juvenile fish. Zebra Mussels alter substrate structure and may increase water clarity, indirectly changing aquatic plant growth and invertebrate communities that support fish populations. This is an area of ongoing research by DNR and University of Minnesota researchers.

**Altered interspecific competition:** AIS can compete with native species and alter food webs. Examples of non-native fish that compete with native species for resources and lead to changes in forage base of lakes are Common Carp and Rainbow Smelt. Our data shows that impaired lakes have higher total fish biomass dominated by tolerant species such as Common Carp and Black Bullhead, while healthier lakes support more balanced food webs and valued sport fish populations such as Northern Pike and Muskellunge. Non-fish AIS also affect food-web dynamics: Zebra Mussels alter energy flow between benthic and pelagic habitats, while Spiny Water Flea reduce native zooplankton important to fish diets.

**Additional information** is available in the [report](#) Stressors to Biological Communities in Minnesota's Lakes on the Minnesota DNR Lake Biological Monitoring and Assessment website. Lake and watershed-specific stressor identification reports for impaired or vulnerable lakes are available through the Interagency Water Resources Library and linked from MPCA watershed pages and are summarized in a [geodatabase](#) layer.

**2) You mentioned that you needed to cut a couple of slides for time which covered who is using the data and how it is getting used. Can you share more about this?**

Many partners and lake practitioners use data collected by the DNR LBMA Program to inform lake management, watershed plans, and protection and implementation projects to combat threats to lakes. The following is a list of some examples where Fish IBI and/or coldwater reports completed by our program have been used or have been requested for future use:

**WRAPS and 1W1P:** As Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) and One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) reports are completed by partners, the LBMA Program provides input on FIBI assessment results, stressors identified, exceptional lakes, and coldwater lakes. Most of the plans include eutrophication and shoreline habitat restoration goals that reference the biological assessments results. Several include lakes identified as exceptional or as supporting coldwater fishes as priorities for protection.

**Forest protection and land acquisition:** We collect coldwater fish and oxythermal habitat survey data to identify coldwater lakes and characterize their resilience to a changing climate and eutrophication. Partners use our data to identify cisco refuge lakes. We complete Fish IBI surveys to identify Lakes of Biological Significance (LOBS). Partners including Northern Waters Land Trust and Minnesota Land Trust have used datasets that include our data as criteria to protect land with conservation easements and fee title acquisitions, with a goal to permanently protect 75% of the land within cisco refuge and LOBS watersheds.

**Coldwater standards:** MPCA and LBMA scientists collaborated to develop and evaluate new (draft) water quality standards to protect Trout, Lake Whitefish, and Cisco and their habitat. Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe implemented the standards as one component within their Water Quality Standards Act to protect coldwater resources and prevent degradation on lakes within their Reservation boundary.

**Shoreline restoration and protection:** Stressor identification reports have been used by watershed districts and local units of government to promote natural shorelines and inform the need for shoreline restorations. For example, in SIDs that identified shoreline habitat alterations as a primary stressor, groups have used the SID information on project and/or grant proposals including in the Lower St. Croix Watershed where we are partnering with the Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix and Comfort Lake - Forest Lake Watershed Districts to collect FIBI and shoreline habitat survey data to aid in their efforts to promote shoreline restoration on Big Carnelian, Square, Big Marine, and Forest Lakes. The SID results were used to support the Lake Jane Shoreline Buffer Project Proposal for funding from the 3M PFAS Settlement Grant Program. The data has also been used in shoreline contractor workshops to help connect habitat to biological health.

**Outreach:** The LBMA website is frequently visited and generates regular public interactions. The LBMA Program regularly contributes content and data to social media posts, The Minnesota Conservation Volunteer, news articles, and seminars for general and professional audiences. The LBMA Program has published over 1000 reports (including individual lake survey reports available on DNR [LakeFinder](#)) and Watershed Stressor Identification and Watershed reports on [MWRL](#) and [MPCA](#) website. Geographic layers with Fish IBI [scores](#), aquatic life [assessments](#), and [stressors](#) are available online at the MN Geospatial Commons.

**3) You also mentioned that there is more opportunity to use this for nearly and barely impaired waterbodies. What would that look like?**

When prioritizing lakes for protection, decision-makers can consider two complementary approaches based on goals and resources. The first targets lakes nearest to their respective impairment threshold (nearly/barely group of lakes), with higher levels of human disturbance and minimal surrounding protected land, as these systems have the most immediate potential to benefit from proactive protection. The second focuses on lakes farthest from impairment and with fewer stressor impacts, representing the most pristine systems that warrant preservation to prevent future degradation (Exceptional Use lakes). Focusing on keeping nearly impaired lakes off the impaired waters list or restoring barely impaired lakes would be more cost effective and likely have more achievable outcomes than lakes that are severely impaired. SID reports identify the stressors impacting nearly/barely impaired lakes so they could guide project proposals. Exceptional Use lakes under the Tiered Aquatic Life Use framework have particularly strong implications within this second category, as they represent some of the most biologically diverse and ecologically intact systems in the state. A hybrid approach that includes both categories can help ensure balanced protection efforts, spreading risk and maximizing long-term ecological and societal benefits across the landscape.

Research Scientists within the LMBA program are currently working on developing a "lake protection priorities" data layer that takes into account proximity to threshold, risk factors, and protective factors when prioritizing projects. It would be paired with the Stressors to Impaired or Vulnerable Lakes dataset and be structured similarly to the "stream protection priorities" dataset. For example, nearly impaired lakes with high risk and low protection would be classified as "stressed" whereas high scoring lakes with low risk and high protection would be classified as "stronghold" lakes and lakes in between would be classified as "secure".

Overall, integrating fish IBI and coldwater data with lake vulnerability, stressor, and protection metrics provides a scientifically grounded framework for directing conservation investments where they can achieve the greatest ecological benefit with limited resources. By combining proactive protection of high-quality lakes with targeted intervention for vulnerable systems nearing impairment, managers can balance short-term restoration needs with long-term preservation goals. The development of a statewide lake protection priorities framework will help ensure that limited resources are allocated strategically across Minnesota lakes.

### **How does the DNR partner with LGUs for gages?**

The DNR partners with LGUs through income contracts that support two main types of monitoring:

- Flood warning gages, which record and transmit water elevation and require fewer field visits, making them relatively low-cost.
- Load monitoring collaborations, which operate similarly to Watershed Pollutant Load Monitoring sites and include full discharge monitoring.

Current partners include the Upper Sioux Nation at Firefly Creek, the Vermillion JPO, the Buffalo River Watershed District, the City of Hutchinson, the City of Rochester, the City of Waterville, and Steele County. These partnerships allow LGUs to access hydrologic data that supports flood preparedness, watershed planning, and local decision-making.

### **Are there opportunities to reduce reliance on the CWF through local partnerships?**

There are opportunities to explore expanded local contributions, though the potential varies by monitoring type. Flood warning gages are the most feasible area for additional LGU support because they are less expensive to operate. Watershed-level entities, such as the Vermillion JPO and Buffalo WD, have shown interest in supporting additional monitoring sites, suggesting that similar collaborations could be considered in other watersheds.

These opportunities could help diversify support for parts of the network, though they would likely supplement rather than replace CWF funding for higher-cost discharge monitoring.

### **When there are multiple purposes or users of the data, are there untapped funding sources or partnership opportunities?**

Some possibilities exist where the data serves multiple local or regional needs. These include:

- Targeted LGU contributions where gage data directly supports infrastructure planning, stormwater management, or emergency response
- Watershed-scale collaborations where multiple jurisdictions share costs

These options may help support specific gages or functions, depending on local capacity and interest.

## Fish Contamination Assessment Program

1. How does fish habitat and stressors to this habitat (including AIS impacts on water quality) influence fish contamination, and how is that considered and reported on with contamination findings? For instance, a 2024 study found increased mercury levels in walleye in lakes infested with zebra mussels. Is there an avenue for increased coordination with LSOHC here?

Fish mercury, more specifically methylmercury, concentrations are influenced by multiple factors: atmospheric mercury depositions, lake characteristics and water quality, biogeochemical processes, changes due to climate change, fish trophic levels, and many others.

Fish Contaminant Monitoring Program (FCMP) scientists published an improved mercury analysis (Radomski et al. 2024). The analyses account for and report on some of the factors that affect mercury methylation and biomagnification to improve estimates of mercury in fish for Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) Fish Consumption Guidance and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) water quality assessments and other work related to mercury.

Ecological disturbance—like invasions of zebra mussels—is one factor that can lead to increased mercury concentrations in fish. Lepak et al. (2025) describes the processes by which invasive mussels have altered biogeochemical processes, prey populations, and fish dietary strategies leading to variations in fish mercury exposure in the Great Lakes. Blinick et al. (2024) documented evidence of increase in fish tissue mercury concentration in some Minnesota lakes. The FCMP study also accounted for zebra mussel presence (Radomski et al. 2024). The zebra mussel effect is context specific and fish mercury concentrations are still responsive to major drivers like atmospheric mercury concentration. Increases in fish concentrations of mercury because of zebra mussels are not universal and other factors like lake trophic status, littoral-zone size, and watershed location alter the actual impacts (Radomski et al. 2024). Walleye mercury concentrations in Minnesota's largest lakes in general have not increased.

Another environmental or habitat change affecting mercury in fish is the amount of dissolved organic matter in the lake, or how stained the water is to a “tea-like” or brown color. The browning of northern lakes is occurring due to climate change, acidification, and forestry practices, potentially increasing fish mercury concentrations in northern lakes.

The FCMP does not host a webpage explaining biogeochemical processes for methylmercury.

- MDH's 2026 Fish Consumption Guideline updates included use of the new mercury analyses.
- DNR's LakeFinder webpages report both information on AIS presence and MDH fish consumption guidelines.
- MPCA's Surface Water Data webpage provides information about water quality assessments, including general water quality and fish tissue impairments. Information about mercury as a water and air pollutant is reported by the MPCA.

## **Fish Contamination Assessment Program**

**1. How does fish habitat and stressors to this habitat (including AIS impacts on water quality) influence fish contamination, and how is that considered and reported on with contamination findings? For instance, a 2024 study found increased mercury levels in walleye in lakes infested with zebra mussels. Is there an avenue for increased coordination with LSOHC here?**

Coordination with Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) and others is always welcome. The goals of the FCMP are predominantly to collect, analyze, and report fish contaminant levels. Currently, the scope of the program does not include remediation. However, the data from this program is being used by professionals working on lake and river habitat protection and restoration.

## Fish Contamination Assessment Program

2. You mentioned that fish consumption advisories are shared through Lake Finder. When the Beach Portal website goes live this summer, will fish consumption advisories also be posted there?

The MDH Fish Consumption Guidance program works closely with DNR's LakeFinder to make updated fish consumption guidance available on the website as it is a popular website for anglers to check before fishing. Fish Consumption Guidance program guidelines are not fit to the purpose and goals of the Minnesota Beach Portal. Beach advisories, which are removed as bacterial levels fall to an acceptable standard, are updated on a much shorter time scale than fish consumption advisories, which are updated as part of the yearly contaminants monitoring surveillance. The purpose of the beach portal is to tell the public if there are any (temporary) advisories at a beach—<https://mnbeaches.org/resources/>. The portal can link to MDH's Fish Consumption Guidance information through their Resources links.



**Date: May 29, 2026**

**RE: Clean Water Council Question**

**Project: Red River Basin River Watch and River of Dreams**

**Council Member Question:** There is a lot local support for this program from communities in the Red River Basin, including cost share to cover things like transportation costs. It provides a lot of water quality data to state of Minnesota. Can the presenter share more about who uses the monitoring data collected and how it is used?

**Proposer Response:** The monitoring data collected through the Red River Basin River Watch program is used by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), local watershed districts, and other water resource partners to support water management and planning across Red River Basin. Since 1995, River Watch has submitted more than 15,000 water quality measurements from 361 monitoring sites throughout the Red River Basin into Minnesota's Environmental Quality Information System (EQiS).

The MPCA uses this information in the following ways. First, the data contributes to statewide water quality assessments that determine whether rivers and streams meet Minnesota's water quality standards. These assessments help identify impaired waters and guide future restoration priorities. The monitoring results are also used in Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS), Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies, and local "One Watershed, One Plan" efforts that establish pollution reduction goals and long-term watershed management strategies.

In addition, the data supports long-term environmental trend analysis by helping agencies evaluate changes in water quality over time, detect pollution concerns, and measure the effectiveness of conservation and restoration practices already being implemented in the basin. Because the information is housed within the state EQiS system, it is also publicly accessible and available to local governments, watershed districts, researchers, educators, and community partners for planning and educational purposes.

Beyond the scientific value, River Watch provides a unique combination of environmental education and meaningful citizen science. Students are collecting real-world data that directly contributes to Minnesota's understanding and protection of its water resources while building the next generation of environmental stewards and water professionals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Finney".

John Finney  
RRWMB President

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert L. Sip".

Robert L. Sip,  
RRWMB Executive Director

## River Watch – Minnesota River

**Question:** What is the amount and scope of your request? Is it \$75k/year for 2 years for a MN River Valley scope? Or is it \$75k/year for 2 years for a MN River Valley AND \$75k/year for 2 years for Cannon River Valley? Please clarify.

**Response:** The full request is for \$300k for the biennium. Please consider it in the following order as a two part request if the full \$300k is not possible to fund.

- \$150k total, \$75k for each fiscal year to maintain and slightly expand the River Watch Program in the Minnesota Valley
- \$150k total, \$75k for each fiscal year to launch and fully implement a program in the Cannon River Valley

**Proposal: Natural Shorelines for Clean Water**

Q: If the easements would be prioritized for small watershed:lake ratios with high water quality for protection, is there interest in targeting lakes with similar ratios that are nearly or barely impaired for restoration work and the Lake Steward element?

A: Yes. We envision a prioritization framework that would identify priority lakes and apply a scoring rubric for parcels (summarized below). Priority lakes would be identified where shoreline protection or restoration would be most effective (i.e. lakes with a small watershed:lake size ratio) and those vulnerable “nearly, barely lakes” (e.g., those closest to the impairment threshold). Additionally, whether a lake has an active Lake Steward program would elevate a lake’s priority as a conservation easement would have greater investment returns with increased contribution to shifting social norms.

For any prioritized lakes, parcels under consideration would be scored following a rubric that would consider various factors. Such factors include the size of a parcel, the slope of the parcel, whether any sensitive shorelands are nearby, and how much the parcel is at risk for conversation to a more disturbed (e.g. agriculture or impervious surface) land use type.

The DNR will refine this prioritization framework by inclusion of feedback from various agencies and groups represented in the Natural Shoreline Partnership. Additionally, we would welcome input from the Clean Water Council.

<b>Prioritizing Lakes</b>	<b>Description (scoring contributions TBD)</b>
<b><i>Watershed to Lake Size Ratio</i></b>	The smaller the W:L ratio, the more likely it will be meaningful for a shoreland conservation easement to benefit water quality
<b><i>Lakes of Phosphorus Sensitivity Significance</i></b>	Focus on lakes at near impairment thresholds (“nearly, barely”)
<b><i>Lake Steward Participation</i></b>	Lakes with some form of participation in the Lake Steward program have the potential to create added value to an easement by shifting social norms
<b><i>Other CW Priorities</i></b>	Lakes with shorelines identified in Stressor ID reports or identified as priority lakes in 1W1P
<b>Prioritizing Parcels</b>	
<b><i>Hydrologic connectivity (aka slope)</i></b>	Parcels with steeper slopes pose great risk for contributing nutrients and thus would be prioritized for protection or restoration efforts
<b><i>Parcel Size</i></b>	The larger the area, the more likely it will be meaningful for protecting water quality or reducing future development pollution runoff
<b><i>Sensitive Shoreland</i></b>	Lakeshore areas that provide unique or critical ecological features are more valuable (e.g. listed as sensitive shoreline or a MBS site)
<b><i>Risk of conversion to disturbed land cover</i></b>	Land cover type predicted to convert to urban or cultivated crops.

## FY28-29 Clean Water Fund Joint Soil Health Proposal

**To:** Clean Water Council

**From:** Maggie Karschnia, Clean Water Coordinator, BWSR  
Tom Gile, Resource Conservation Section Manager, BWSR  
Skip Langer, District Manager, Olmsted County SWCD

**Date:** 05/26/2026

**RE:** **Addendum to the BWSR's Enhancing Cover Crops for Adoption Program Proposal**

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On behalf of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and Olmsted County, we are pleased to submit the attached addendum to BWSR's Enhancing Cover Crops for Adoption Program proposal in direct response to the Council's recent request to combine the program with Olmsted County's Southeast Groundwater Protection and Soil Health Initiative proposal. We appreciate the Council's leadership in recognizing the natural alignment between our two programs and inviting us to merge our efforts into a unified, strategic initiative.

This addendum joins the two proposals and represents a commitment between BWSR and Olmsted County to integrate and scale our respective models. By combining the infrastructure of the statewide BWSR Soil Health Delivery Program with the localized success of the Olmsted Ground Water Protection/Soil Health initiative, we are establishing a comprehensive framework to accelerate conservation practices where they are needed most in an effort to demonstrate broader use and scalability of performance based soil health standards.

This integrated approach will be deployed as a targeted, regional pilot program across the Southeast Minnesota counties including those referenced in the [EPA Nitrate Petition](#). This regional scale allows us to confront pressing groundwater and nitrate challenges collectively, leveraging BWSR's administrative and programmatic oversight alongside the innovative and trusted, on-the-ground expertise and local relationships maintained by Olmsted County and neighboring district staff.

More than a simple coordination of work, this addendum to join the two programs reflects our shared dedication state/local partnership for successful conservation. We are fully committed to working hand-in-hand to ensure this pilot delivers measurable water quality improvements, protects sensitive aquifers, and builds a scalable implementation model that can support soil health and groundwater protection strategies statewide.

We thank the Clean Water Council for prompting this collaboration and for your continued investment in Minnesota's water resources. We look forward to working together with the Council to advance these vital protections in Southeast Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Tom Gile  
Resource Conservation Section Manager  
Board of Water & Soil Resources

Skip Langer  
District Manager  
Olmsted County SWCD

Attachment: ADDENDUM to FY28-29 Clean Water Fund Proposal: Enhancing Cover Crops for Adoption Program

# ADDENDUM

## FY28-29 Clean Water Fund Proposal: Enhancing Cover Crops for Adoption Program

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### Proposal to add Southeastern Minnesota Pilot Program

#### OVERVIEW

The Enhancing Cover Crops for Adoption Program will include a targeted southeastern Minnesota pilot program for performance-based cover crops. The pilot is designed to complement and leverage existing USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) financial assistance programs and will be implemented through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), with partnership opportunities for Tribal governments.

The southeastern Minnesota performance-based cover crop pilot introduces several innovative components that differ from existing Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and traditional conservation program models:

- **Performance-Based Incentives:**  
The program is results-oriented, meaning producers receive payment only after meeting established performance standards, such as achieving a specified minimum cover crop height or other measurable outcomes tied to soil and water quality benefits.
- **Enhanced Financial Incentives:**  
The pilot will provide add-on incentives for practices that maximize groundwater protection and soil health outcomes while allowing producers flexibility to select approaches that best fit their operations. For example, additional payments may be available for “planting green,” where commodity crops are planted directly into standing cover crops rather than terminating cover prior to planting.
- **Streamlined Web-Based Participation:**  
The pilot incorporates an online application, reporting, and certification process that allows producers to participate efficiently from any location while reducing administrative barriers.

#### ADMINISTRATION

Program administration and reporting will occur through the BWSR eLink system. In addition, the pilot will explore expansion of Olmsted County’s innovative online sign-up and tracking platform to participating SWCDs across the pilot area. This system will improve the ability to track producer enrollment, document additional acreage implemented, and verify that performance standards are met in a timely manner so producers can continue farming operations without unnecessary delays.

## ROLES

- **BWSR:** Administer grants to the respective partnering SWCDs and develop a program structure modeled off of the Olmsted County structure in partnership with SWCD.
- **Olmsted County:** Work with BWSR to expand the innovative sign-up and verification tool for use in the pilot program.

## NON-CWF FUNDING

Clean Water Funding will also be used to leverage additional investments supporting the targeted pilot. During the 2026 legislative session, the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) awarded funding to support Olmsted County and southeastern Minnesota EPA petition response efforts. The resulting \$2.8 million LCCMR project will complement this Clean Water Fund proposal by supporting the performance-based pilot while also promoting alternative nitrogen-smart crops and grains, perennial cover through haying and grazing systems, and improvements to existing pasture conditions.

## PROGRAM BUILDING

The performance-based pilot model is currently in the early stages of implementation through Olmsted County. This proposal represents the first step toward evaluating broader application of performance-based conservation delivery through state programming. If successful, BWSR may consider expanding performance-based practice standards to address additional natural resource concerns and potentially incorporate the model into statewide soil health delivery efforts.

## Clean Water Fund Availability - November 2025 Forecast

Minnesota Management and Budget

2/27/2026

(\$ thousands)

	February 2026			
	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
Unobligated Carry Forward from Prior Year	360	7,544	7,797	7,941
Obligated Carryforward from Prior Year	102,182	-	-	-
Sales Tax Receipt Forecast	150,875	155,933	158,817	161,734
Investment Income & Other Revenue	7,716	5,864	5,770	5,770
Other Revenue	2	2	2	2
<i>Total Resources</i>	<i>261,135</i>	<i>169,343</i>	<i>172,386</i>	<i>175,447</i>
<i>Total Uses</i>	<i>246,807</i>	<i>159,301</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>-</i>
Budgetary Balance	14,328	10,042	172,386	175,447
Required 5% Reserve	(7,544)	(7,797)	(7,941)	(8,087)
<b>Amount Available to Appropriate</b>	<b>6,784</b>	<b>2,245</b>	<b>164,445</b>	<b>167,360</b>
<b>Biennial Total</b>		<b>9,030</b>		<b>331,805</b>

Annual/biennial amounts in the table are not cumulative; any amount unspent will be available to appropriate the following year

### November 2025 to February 2026 Forecast Changes

	FY26/27	FY28/29
February Forecast Biennium Available	9,030	331,805
November Forecast Biennium Available	7,111	329,282
<b>Change</b>	<b>1,919</b>	<b>2,523</b>

	November Forecast				February Forecast				Change			
	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29
Reserve Carryforward		7,512	7,749	7,874		7,544	7,797	7,941	-	32	48	67
Prior Period Adjustment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sales Use Taxes	150,231	154,976	157,481	160,545	150,875	155,933	158,817	161,734	644	957	1,336	1,189
Interest Earnings	7,355	5,859	5,765	5,765	7,716	5,864	5,770	5,770	361	5	5	5
All Other Revenue	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	-	-
All Uses	246,807	159,301	-	-	246,807	159,301	-	-	-	-	-	-
5% Reserve	(7,512)	(7,749)	(7,874)	(8,027)	(7,544)	(7,797)	(7,941)	(8,087)	(32)	(48)	(67)	(59)
<b>Total Change Per Fiscal Year</b>									<b>972</b>	<b>946</b>	<b>1,322</b>	<b>1,201</b>
<b>Total Availability Change</b>												<b>4,442</b>

# Setting budget target for FY28-29

June 2, 2026

Jen Kader and Dana Vanderbosch met with Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) staff on Tuesday, June 2, 2026 to discuss the current status of sales tax revenues against the forecast for FY26.

At present, the actual sales tax revenues in every quarter of the year have performed slightly better than the forecast. Actual income on investments is expected to also perform slightly better. This lends support to the possibility that the February forecast should at least be met.

Additionally, the Council made the recommendation to not spend the ~\$9M that was available as a supplemental in order to have additional flexibility to meet priorities in FY28-29. The legislature did not include any spending from the Clean Water Fund in this legislative cycle, so we now know that money is still available. *Note:* in previous communication regarding the supplemental amount, it had been shared that any additional FY26-27 spending would reduce the amount available in the FY28-29. However, in this discussion with MMB, it was clarified that the ~\$9M will be *additional* to the \$331M in the forecast for the biennium.

There is also just over \$2M of unspent funds that are being returned by the Board of Water and Soil Resources, further increasing the available amount expected. This will be included in updated information shared in the November forecast.

With that in mind, the following table is offered to support discussion at the June 5, 2026 BOC meeting:

<b>Source</b>	<b>Amount (in thousands)</b>
February Forecast for Clean Water Funds	\$331,805
FY26-27 Supplemental amount	\$9,030
Returned amount from BWSR	\$2,077
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$342,912</b>