

Policy Committee Meeting Agenda

Clean Water Council

January 24, 2025

9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

[Webex Only](#)

2025: *Policy Committee: John Barten, Rich Biske (Chair), Gail Cederberg, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Peter Schwagerl, and Marcie Weinandt*

9:30 Regular Business

- Introductions
- Approve today's agenda
- Approve minutes of previous meeting(s)
- Chair update
- Staff update

9:45 Review Draft Response to Stakeholder Input

10:15 Report Out from Ad Hoc Outreach Group

10:30 BREAK

10:45 Update on Existing Policy Statements

- Chloride Ideas (Council member Jessica Wilson)
- Underground utilities (see below)

11:45 Public Comment

12:00 Adjourn

Follow up on Underground Utilities Policy Statement

- In November 2024, the software technology which we came to envision as the project developed passed beta integration testing with Gopher State One Call's (GSOC) 811 provider, One Call Concepts (OCC).
- We are anticipating the capability to see all buried infrastructure in a dig site first reaching initial operating capability in 1st Quarter 2025, with a slow roll out during the rest of 2025 as we work to bring on partner utility operators.
- The federal Pipeline and Hazardous Material Safety Administration (PHMSA) will be interviewing several leaders of the project during January 2025 for a potential national promotional piece.
- To date the project has pulled in nearly \$400,000 in funding from various federal, nonprofit and corporate partners who understand the significance of what is being developed and which will need to be maintained and built upon going forward, with current efforts focused on developing grant sources to cover immediate and long term funding needs.
- In July, Kelly Connolly assumed the position of Gopher State One Call Chief Operations Officer (and project Chair), with Barb Cederberg fully retiring recently.

Policy Committee Meeting Summary
Clean Water Council (Council)
October 25, 2024, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Committee Members present: John Barten, Rich Biske (Chair), Gail Cederberg, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Victoria Reinhardt (Vice Chair), Peter Schwagerl, Marcie Weinandt.

Members absent:

Others present: Annie Felix (BWSR), Frieda VanQualen (MDH), Glenn Skuta (MPCA), Judy Sventek (Met Council), Rita Weaver (BWSR), Justin Hanson (BWSR), Jessica Wilson, Tannie Eshenaur (MDH), Jeff Berg (MDA), Paul Gardner (CWC), Brianna Frisch (CWC), James Lehner (Conservation MN), Molly Jansen (Red River Watershed Management Board), Brad Jordahl Redlin (MDA)

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
 - Peter Schwagerl: The Minnesota Farmer's Union is hosting a green ammonia summit in Morris, MN based on research station work. Broadly speaking, it is a program to use sustainable power generation, like wind and solar, to power electrolysis that removes nitrogen out of the air to form sustainable ammonia. It would reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with nitrogen. It will be December 10th.
 - Marcie Weinandt: The Minnesota Watersheds Conference will be held December 4th to 6th.
- Approval of the October 25th meeting agenda and the September 27th meeting summary, motion by John Barten, seconded by Kelly Gribauval-Hite. Motion carries.
- Staff update
 - The story map edits and suggestions have been shared with the contractor. It is still being worked on, including the accessibility updates.
 - As requested, 2025 policy committee meetings will continue to meet online only.
 - Paul Gardner sent a letter to the plumbing board in support of phasing out timed water softeners based on the Council's approved chloride policy statement. The board has a docket for comments.
 - Marcie Weinandt: Thinking about the policies and how they work, we are sometimes ahead of future changes happening. I support the letter. It is another example of the committee supporting what is happening, alternatively nudging others into action.
 - John Barten: I agree.
 - Glenn Skuta: I have shared a link to a chloride success story in Marshall.
<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/news-and-stories/water-softener-rebates-reduce-chloride>
 - Tannie Eshenaur, Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): The MDH is a voting member of the Plumbing Board. They will be alerted to this potential change and letter coming from the Council.

Water Quality and Storage Grant Program, by Rita Weaver, Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) (Webex 00:21:00)

- BWSR had its third application period this summer. The first two years were part of a pilot program.
- For the pilot programs (FY22) they had \$1 million available. There were seven applications with \$3.8 million total requested. Three projects were chosen to be funded, with a total award of \$843,851.
- For the second year (FY23) they had a little over \$1 million (some was left over from the first year). There were six applications with a \$3.075 million total requested. Only two of the applications were in the priority area. This is the Minnesota River Basin area. Three applications were fully funded, approximately \$1.7 million (using partial FY24-25 funding).
- They were a little surprised there was not more coming forward in the priority areas. From feedback, they learned that their applicants needed funding to be able to create the project designs. So, they came up with two design programs. For FY25, they had \$3 million available. They had a FY25 Modeling and Conceptual Design, with up to \$500,000 available. This had nine applications with \$350,000 total requested. Five projects were chosen to be funded with a total award of \$213,250. Additionally, they had the FY25 construction and

final design, which was up to \$3 million available. There were fourteen applicants, with \$7.6 million total requested. Five projects were chosen to be funded with a total award of \$2,776,394. All projects are within the priority areas.

- In summary, from 2021-2024, they have had four projects of wetland restoration/storage added, three grade stabilization projects, three road retention projects, two storage basin projects, and one terrace project. They have spent \$5.5 million. All but one project has been in the priority area. They have added over 1,200 acre-feet of storage. The water quality benefits they have summarized include over 10,000 tons of suspended solids captured and over 12,000 pounds of phosphorus retained. These are exciting outcomes.
- For selection criteria, the project or practice must result in a reduction in peak flow rates and/or volumes. This is why they started with their pilot to collect this data. Applicants must show how the project improved flooding concerns, water quality issues, or addresses vulnerabilities to climate change. Depending in the type of fund they are applying for, if it is a final design and construction project, they require a feasibility study (planning must be done), and the project lifespan must be 25-years with a plan for maintenance. This is to help reveal the results of the work done. If they are applying to the modeling and conceptual design projects, they are looking for fund specific projects versus watershed-wide studies. They are also looking for project readiness. So, the project will score higher if the landowner is already on board.
- Current state of funding:
 - They had \$19 million appropriated to date with \$13 million remaining. They could have easily spent this but have been purposely not been releasing because they are holding out for a federal match.
 - The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) application was awarded, and they are very excited. They are matching \$21 million. They will also be matching it with other BWSR funds. Clean Water Funds can be used, so they are working on this 50-50 match. The work will now include a batch and build effort with saturated buffers, bioreactors, drainage water management, and reuse.
 - They are hoping they will receive FY26-27 state appropriations as well, but do not know yet.
 - Their average project cost is \$500,000. It is expensive to get these projects in and take a hefty amount of funding to get them done.

Questions:

- Tannie Eshenaur, MDH: Are they on public or private land? *Answer:* Both.
- John Barten: You project a twenty-five-year lifespan, but are the catastrophic rain events included? *Answer:* Most are designed for the hundred-year events. If there was something, we do have some funds for fixing.
- What has gone well and what can be improved? *Answer:* The pilot went well with lots of outreach. The pilot programs shared what was needed to help grow the program.
- How has the program related to One Watershed One Plan (1W1P) and storage goals. *Answer:* The 1W1Ps have storage goals. These will count towards those, but also fill gaps on the side.
- Is there a role for Clean Water Fund (CWF) policy or funding to address unmet needs or improvements? *Answer:* Funding always helps. This program runs well with the 1W1Ps. They complement each other.
- How has the program interacted with drainage authorities and drainage projects? *Answer:* They are now allowing the program to be used along with a drainage improvement but has specific conditions. They connected with the drainage work group before they added in allowing storage along with improvements.

Policy Items from August 19th Public Input (Webex 01:11:00)

- This is a continuation from the last meeting. There are six items remaining.
- Regarding the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program, a suggestion was made for re-allocating unspent funds from some counties to counties with larger backlogs. *Response from Jeff Berg, MDA:* Richard Gruenes at MDA could answer this question.
- Conservation Equipment Assistance (MDA), there are two views. One is that someone is getting equipment they could use to start a business. The other, is that this taxpayer equipment is to be used on as many acres as possible. Is there a summary of this program, so we know which demographics are collected. *Answer:* That just closed recently, so it is being looked at and compiled now. These grants start at \$500 and include retrofitting items. So, that custom work would stay with the farmer, so they could lend it out or rent it out to a neighbor as well. We can do some follow up on it and get back to you.
 - *Comment from Peter Schwagerl:* Full disclosure, we participate in this program. If the point is to get more acres on the land, retrofitting items can be the quickest way. That is the focus.

- Comment from Rich Biske: The Nature Conservancy funded a program like this, which may be the precursor to this program, and they saw the greatest impact on those custom operators. They created a business model and became advocates of soil health and cover crops. The equipment is then already on a farm, ready to go, instead of waiting for the equipment to come their way. It can lead to quicker change.
- Paul Gardner: I would be interested in learning more about what goes into this agreement in the program. It may give some comfort to the committee. *Response from Jeff Berg, MDA:* These are public funds, so there will be documentation on them. We can follow up on it.
- Identified as medium level.
- Forever Green Initiative (MDA), looking at the sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). There are lots of opportunities for going into the right direction if policy is done well but could also go in the wrong direction and have quite a few negative outcomes. Therefore, advocates are asking for support to ensure a water quality friendly policy for SAF. The Nature Conservancy, Friends of the Mississippi River, and Fresh Energy issued some principles for SAF, and may be looking to have it endorsed, or have a different twist on the support.
 - Jeff Berg, MDA: Minnesota made history on September 25th with the first SAF using winter camelina. There are other ways to provide SAF too, and we should not count those out. Be sure of the conversation you have and have the correct people in the room.
 - Peter Schwagerl: This is something we need to be watching closely. The potential to ramp up quickly is likely there and the downstream impacts will be felt quickly. As a policy committee, we need to pay attention to this item to know the impacts.
 - Rich Biske: We need to pay attention to what may risk or improve water quality.
 - Identified as medium level.
- Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) (MDA): It has been suggested when other dollars are available for assisting farmers that they be channeled through MAWQCP since they already have a relationship set up with farmers. There is a limit of \$5,000 grants for BMPs, but there has been a larger discussion about improving synchronization of various funding strings. This is essentially a conduit of more funding for soil health.
 - John Barten: How would this interact with the watershed-based implementation funding? *Response:* Certified farmers seem to be interested in accessing soil health funds through the MAWQCP.
 - Paul Gardner: Is this a thing that farmers are telling the MDA? *Answer from Annie Felix-Gerth (BWSR):* We do have soil health program with BWSR, but it is intended to get the program out to the SWCDs to help develop a program from the technical side. That is different than what the MDA is doing in terms of the soil health certifications. These programs work in concert, and provide farmers opportunities where they are at, if they would like to learn more, they can pursue it. *Answer from Brad Jordahl-Redlin (MDA):* The 1W1Ps usually include MAWQCP. This program is great for them to use because the plans comprehensively addresses entire farming operations in one fell swoop. For soil health, it is a vehicle for addressing a physical and managerial realities taking place on the landscape in the certification process. There is no competition because there are only advantages for soil health. If more funding was made available, it would just be passed on.
 - Rich Biske: Are we using our infrastructure in the most efficient and appropriate way, including limiting the points of contact and restrictions. It is something to think about.
 - Peter Schwagerl: I think there could be efficiency gains, which could be distribution of funds (working with current certifiers versus working with different contractors or programs). Reinvesting in the certifiers, keeping track of all the items, and making sure they feel like they can maintain staffing and tracking to be efficient for the farmers to be informed about the different programs.
 - There is an idea of shortening the certification from ten years to five years, because some feel it avoids the groundwater protection rule. The MDA could provide some direct feedback for it.
 - Identified as medium level.
- National Park Water Quality Protection Program: Should CWFs be earmarked for this project? There is a concern about private businesses benefiting from this as well.
 - Rich Biske: It would be informative for the group to think about how this project would be ranked statewide. Additionally, it would be good to locate an accounting summary of which projects that are funded with CWFs. Perhaps the commenters are trying to figure out who the beneficiaries may be. *Response from Glenn Skuta, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA):* I can let Public Facilities

Authority (PFA) and MPCA folks connected to this, to prepare an answer for how it would rank compared to other projects. We can see if they are comfortable responding to shed some light.

- Marcie Weinandt: It is a good idea to talk more about if we should earmark this moving forward. Or, if we even do earmarks. It is a much larger discussion than just one program.
- Gail Cederberg: The idea to earmark funds is important. Another issue is for funding a private entity. It is something we must look at more. There was not enough detail to understand what is really going on. I am all for protecting the water quality of the National Park, but how we do it is a question. I believe we need to get more details.
- John Barten: When we started funding the Voyageurs project, it was to significant bacteria contamination in waters adjacent to properties. That was appropriate, but what percent of the remaining projects are designed to correct existing problems versus expanding systems to expand development? Expanding development opportunities should not be a part of the CWFs. I have heard they are attempting to correct existing problems and expand, but the CWFs would only be used for the correcting portion. The other funding they are getting elsewhere is to go towards expanding, and this is making me uneasy. So, I think we need to get a little better answer.
- Identified at a high level.
- Private well initiative Irrigation Water Quality Protection Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater Nitrate in Groundwater (MDH and MDA): Several environmental groups want these programs to be supported by the responsible parties through fees (like a fertilizer fee). These activities previously relied on other funding sources. This is a big topic and may need more time dedicated to the discussion.
 - Rich Biske: It would be good to discuss this more. We can identify a select number of programs to review. It would be good to understand more. It may inform decisions about 2034, if the CWFs do not continue.
 - Jeff Berg (MDA): Fertilizer fees and pesticide fees are complex and controversial. It is good to give it more time for review.
 - Identified as medium level.

No Public Comments

Adjournment (Webex 02:20:35)

Response to Public Input on

Clean Water Council FY26-27 Clean Water Fund Recommendations

DRAFT 13 January 2025

The Clean Water Council is required to submit a biennial report to the Legislature and the Governor on January 15th of the odd-numbered year. The report includes recommendations on how to use the Clean Water Fund derived from dedicated sales tax authorized by the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment.

The Council requested public input on its recommendations after hearing proposals from seven state agencies and the University of Minnesota in mid-2024. More than 100 entities submitted comments. The following is a set of responses to this input.

Major topics

Chloride

Comment: Support chloride application liability protection for snow removal businesses with Smart Salting certification.

Response: Advocates for reduced chloride use to protect water quality have helped introduce legislation for several years. The Council is on record supporting this policy.

Water Re-use

Comment: Support funding needed for water re-use, especially capital improvement funds, statewide policy and guidelines, and incentivizing better irrigation.

Response: The Council and the Clean Water Fund supported one-time funding for investigating re-use options through the Minnesota Department of Health, and a [report is available](#) that includes eight recommendations. Recommendations included development of policies and guidelines, but there has been no follow-up. The Clean Water Fund does support residential water efficiency including rebates for more effective irrigation controllers. Minn. Stat. §114D.50 permits the use of the Clean Water Fund for activities that prevent the degradation of groundwater, so re-use should be permissible for future funding, but some agency leadership is required. Capital improvement funds would need to come from the state's capital investment bill.

The Council would also be interested in specific policy suggestions.

Tile Drainage

Comment: Minimize/eliminate hydrologic changes in the Minnesota River watershed by regulating tile drainage in agriculture. Best management practices (BMPs) are not keeping up with growth in total suspended solids due to land use changes, more drainage, and more precipitation.

Response: The Policy Committee spent substantial time on drainage in 2023-2024. The result was a policy statement supporting more multi-purpose drainage management (MDM). The Clean Water Fund has supported MDM that includes water quality elements to ditch drainage projects that are allowed under the state drainage law. The Policy Committee also considered additional policy on tile drainage, but deferred it to the future due to the time required to look at the issue thoroughly.

Buffer Implementation

Comment: Suggest reducing Buffer Implementation support at BWSR from \$4 million to \$2 million for FY26-27. Use \$2 million from General Fund Riparian Aid funding and fines from administrative penalty order (APO) authority.

Response: The Clean Water Fund provided considerable funding when the buffer law was enacted, including mapping and technical assistance, and the Legislature appropriated funds for soil and water conservation districts to help carry out the work. This work has been successful, but the CWF still supports \$4 million every two years to help SWCDs and BWSR maintain a high level of compliance. The CWF is not used for enforcement but to help landowners make sure they stay compliant. There are more than 500,000 parcels subject to the buffer law, so usually through honest mistakes some landowners may dig up the buffer. Working with the landowner usually is cheaper than going through an unpredictable APO process. Enforcement authority is usually reserved for rare cases for the most recalcitrant landowners. The Council would like to ask BWSR how many parcels are addressed by both CWFs and the enforcement funding.

Irrigation Water Quality Protection

Comment: Increase fees, where feasible, on irrigators rather than relying on the CWF for activities that previously relied on other funding sources.

Response: The DNR charges [groundwater fees](#) according to rates in statute for use of groundwater, but the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) runs the Irrigation Water Quality Protection Program. An additional fee would have to be authorized—perhaps in statute—to support this activity instead of the CWF. The CWF supports a University of Minnesota Extension staffer who leads training for agricultural irrigators. This effort allowed the state to land a major federal grant that helps pay for precision irrigation controllers that reduce the waste of groundwater. The MDA will report on this progress soon.

Conservation Equipment Assistance

Comment: Are farmers getting equipment for free and then renting out for profit and should this be permitted?

Response: The Council's Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) has discussed this issue without a firm conclusion. The argument in favor is that we should want a producer to use the equipment on as many acres as possible no matter who owns it for maximum water quality benefits.

MDA reports that grants are reimbursements for up to 50% of the purchase cost of equipment to expand soil health management. While not funded by the Clean Water Fund, the Soil Health Financial Assistance Pilot Program (SHFAP) funded by the Legislature resulted in one-time investment averaging \$18/acre for one-year of use. MDA notes that average USDA payment for planting cover crops for a year is \$50/acre for three years.

Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs)

Comment: The state should support a higher price to secure easements for land within high risk DWSMAs to support drinking water supplies.

Response: The Council agrees that the state should offer a market rate for land in the highest-risk DWSMA. An obstacle is that few landowners have not been that willing to part with this highly productive land at any price for an easement.

Agricultural Best Management Practices Loan Program

Comment: Support re-allocation of loan funds to counties that have a big waiting list from counties with extra funds.

Response: The AgBMP Loan program indicates the following: “The AgBMP Loan Program does have an annual review panel that makes a proposal to our commissioner when there is funding available to reallocate at that time from counties showing they do not plan on using their proposed budgets for the year.

“MDA staff also reaches out to counties several times a year to see if any county is unable to use their funds due to projects falling through during the year. If funds are found available throughout the year, then those funds in the past have been reallocated by the MDA commissioner to counties with identified projects that are on a funding waiting list as the top priority.” MDA reports the current backlog at roughly \$70 million.

Flood Control Funding

Comment: Make CWFs available for flood control since they impact water quality. Drainage management can reduce total suspended solids and phosphorus at a lower cost than cover crops.

Response: Projects that support flood control as well as wastewater treatment, climate resilience, carbon sequestration, and habitat have water quality benefits. However, the primary reason for funding needs to be water quality to be constitutional under the Legacy Amendment.

MN Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program

Comment: Support policy change: 1) Certified farms inside DWSMA are not exempted from Level 3 & 4 Groundwater Protection Rule (GPR) mitigation requirements; 2) reduce certification period for farms inside DWSMAs with elevated nitrate levels from 10 years to 5 years.

Response: MAWQCP requires nitrogen application to be at or below what is required by the GPR, whether the farm is in a DWSMA or not. Certified farms must meet many other standards besides those on nitrogen so certification is harder to get than being compliant with the GPR.

Comment: Support investment in more monitoring for outcomes on this program.

Response: Council members have also expressed interest in supporting additional edge-of-field monitoring for the program. As with many water quality programs, the state uses modeling to estimate likely pollutant reductions from best management practices. Finding a balance between cost and efficacy is a task the Council would like to explore more.

Monitoring for Pesticides in Surface Water and Groundwater

Comment: Increase fees, where feasible, rather than relying on CWF for activities that previously relied on other funding sources. In this case it would be an increase in pesticide fees.

Response: The Council is generally in favor of user fees to help address water quality issues caused by the user. An increase in pesticide fees would require legislation.

Nitrate in Groundwater

Comment: Increase fees, where feasible, rather than relying on CWF for activities that previously relied on other funding sources. In this case it would be an increase in fertilizer fees.

Response: In its most recent recommendations, the Council is in favor of user fees to help address groundwater quality issues caused by the user. An increase in pesticide fees would require legislation. A modest fertilizer fee increase was proposed (initially \$0.99 per ton and then \$0.40 per ton) in the Legislature in 2024 but failed. It would have funded a limited amount of mitigation like water treatment and new wells in southeastern Minnesota.

Culvert Replacement Cost Share

Comment: Please recognize conflict between connectivity and flood control.

Response: The Council believes this is concern that increasing flows through culverts during high water would conflict with flood control objectives. DNR's program geomorphic design on culverts supported by this program is focused on a limited number of streams where erosion control, floodplain connectivity, and habitat are the top priority. Streams and rivers that have impoundment strategies would not be a focus.

Comment: Please increase funding for this program.

Response: Budget constraints in FY26-27 required the Council to avoid increases to most programs.

Mussel Restoration

Comment: Please increase funding for this program.

Response: Budget constraints in FY26-27 required the Council to avoid increases to most programs.

Nonpoint Source Implementation & Technical Assistance

Comment: Red River projects supported by the Clean Water Fund are experiencing permit delays from the DNR. Encourage state agencies to standardize and streamline their process.

Response: Seeking DNR response.

Private Well Initiative

Comment: Please report progress on this effort.

Response: MDH is producing a dashboard to show project status in southeastern Minnesota. Showing progress toward protecting roughly 400,000 acres in Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs) is a high priority.

National Park Water Quality Protection Program

Comment: Support request at \$4 million.

Response: Budget constraints in FY26-27 required the Council to avoid increases to most programs.

Comment: The Clean Water Fund is not the right source for this program. The Council should also not earmark this project.

Response: Many Council members have expressed concerns about the program either not being the right funding source or that it will encourage more private development in a fragile area. The Council will continue to discuss in 2025 as a high priority.

River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment

Comment: Monitor all lakes and streams, and fine polluters.

Response: The CWF allows for comprehensive monitoring with an intensive watershed monitoring (IWM) effort occurring every ten years for each HUC-8 watershed. Since 85 percent of Minnesota's impairments are from nonpoint sources (the main focus of the Council), it is difficult to assess responsibility for many impairments. Agriculture is also mostly exempt from the Clean Water Act.

Forever Green Initiative

Comment: Support at \$6 million in FY26-27.

Response: The Council increased its recommendation to \$6 million for FY26-27. This program and its interaction with Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is a high priority.

Water Storage (could also include any water storage like wetland easements)

Comment: The Red River Basin is not getting CWFs for water storage and funding is going to less organized parts of Minnesota.

Response: The Red River Basin is ahead of the Minnesota River basin on planning, use of geospatial data, and basin-wide collaboration due to the response to flooding in the 1990s. However, the DNR water storage line item in FY24-25 was only for two projects on state owned land in southwestern Minnesota. DNR is not asking for funding in FY26-27. Water storage funding on a larger scale is being done via other funding sources than the Clean Water Fund.

Measurement of Success

Comment: There is a lack of transparent tracking and communication of progress towards water quality goals with the broader public. It is unclear the influence the Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) may have over Clean Water Fund recommendations each biennium.

Response: The Council acknowledges that the outcome data for water quality is often too complicated. There is a biennial Performance Report assembled by agencies to look at key indicators, but generalizations are hard for the average person to glean from the data. As a response, the Council just assembled a [story map](#) to show the overall strategy for the Clean Water Fund. Fact sheets on surface waters, drinking water, and groundwater will be ready soon. The Council and Council staff have regularly communicated with agencies on their outreach to make sure their content showing projects outcomes show a clear connection to the Clean Water Fund when applicable. The state also has data stored in different places in different ways that needs some storytelling. In 2025, the Council will be discussing the best ways for describing outcomes in an accessible way.

The Interagency Coordination Team (ICT) is a group of seven agencies that use the Clean Water Fund. They meet to sift through agency requests before submitting a final set of proposals for Council review. The Council spends roughly six months hearing from agencies and asking pointed questions in public on project details and outcomes. During the most recent proposal cycle, Council member asked for a

significant amount of data that was shared publicly and received more than 100 public comments. Recommendations made by the Council often vary from what some agencies want.

The Council is currently engaged in debate on its deliberation process and its relationship to the ICT. These discussions will be public at Council meetings in 2025.

Contaminants of Emerging Concern

Comment: What are you doing on microplastics in water?

Response: The FY19-20 CWF appropriation (at legislative direction) included support for a study of microplastics and their presence in MN surface water, groundwater, and drinking water. Results are expected in 2025.

Technical Assistance

Comment: Crop retailers suggest a new targeted financial incentive program that would incentivize crop advisors to promote conservation instead of promoting more fertilizer.

Response: Budget constraints in FY26-27 kept the Council from supporting new programs.

Watershed Based Implementation Funding

Comment: Many users of WBIF commented about the need to support and prioritize the program to maintain progress on work at the watershed level.

Response: The Council recommended an \$11 million increase in WBIF to \$90 million in FY26-27. This would provide steady funding to watersheds with an approved watershed plan while accommodating the increased number of watersheds with a plan. The Council had extensive debate on the rate of growth for this program since it will continue to increase in response to more approved plans through the end of the Legacy Amendment.

Comment: “Simply ramping up voluntary cost-share BMP adoption funding is not likely to produce the needed results.”

Response: Watershed Based Implementation Funding (WBIF) encompasses many different activities that often don’t involve direct assistance to landowners. These activities can range from stream restoration to carp management to stormwater management on public property. Activities funded by WBIF also generally conform to priorities in a watershed’s comprehensive plan, which are based on the expected pollutant reductions calculated in the MPCA’s Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS). Some watersheds require more assistance to landowners than others. The Council will continue to engage BWSR on expectations for WBIF through 2034.

One Watershed One Plan (1W1P)

Comment: Don’t spend funding on 1W1P funding in the metro. It is redundant and wasteful since metro watersheds have a separate plan requirement that is older than 1W1P.

Response: The comment came from a metro county that includes a HUC-8 watershed that is participating in 1W1P as well as areas under the jurisdiction of watershed districts. Therefore, the Council can understand the overlapping planning efforts. We urge commenter to work with BWSR on incorporating existing plans into 1W1P without requiring too much redundant work.

Clean Water Fund Programs that Received Letters of Support

The Council thanks the commenters for their input on the following programs and their support is noted. In most cases, the commenters requested continued support.

- Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning
- Conservation Drainage and Management
- Conservation Equipment Assistance
- Critical Shoreland Protection Easements
- Enhanced County Inspections/ SSTs Corrective Actions
- Expand Weather Station Network
- Future of Drinking Water Initiative
- Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies
- Metropolitan Area Water Supply Sustainability Support
- Nonpoint source implementation
- Pesticide Testing in Private Wells
- Point Source Implementation Grant Program
- Private Well Initiative
- Projects and Practices
- RIM Easements
- Source Water Protection
- Stormwater Research and Technology Transfer Program
- Technical Assistance
- Wastewater/Stormwater TMDL Implementation
- Watershed Legacy Partners Program
- Working Lands Floodplain Easements

Clean Water Council

Ad Hoc Outreach Group

Meeting Summary

January 15, 2025

Meeting Online

Attending: Jessica Wilson, Marcie Weinandt, Ole Olmanson, Jen Kader (Met Council), Holly Hatlewick, Britt Gangeness (MPCA-We Are Water), Jana Wilson (MPCA-We Are Water), and Paul Gardner (CWC)

The group re-iterated its desire at its August meeting that we should engage the public that doesn't follow the Council's activities, instead of just those whose job it is to follow the Council.

Jessica Wilson and Marcie Weinandt agreed to co-chair this group. After some discussion, the group supported the idea of fitting this group into the policy committee. It would be more efficient than having a separate meeting date and time since that would add more administrative work. Marcie is vice-chair of the policy committee and will ask that Jessica be added as a policy committee member.

At our next meeting, we should lay out principles, values, and measurable goals. A participation plan similar to what Jessica showed from the City of Edina will be reviewed as well. We should define our purpose, stick to it, and not be the place where the full Council refers things when it doesn't know what to do with something. This is not a communications committee. We need to build a common vocabulary on public outreach.

The group made a few comments about the draft response to public input on the FY26-27 Council recommendations. When complete, the response should be signed by Chair Barton and express gratitude for chiming in.

Britt and Jana presented about the public participation elements of We Are Water (WAW). MPCA applied for Clean Water Funds in the Water Partners Legacy grant program to support some of this work.

Britt gave an overview of WAW. They did a retrospective survey of past participants and found the program builds civic capacity in communities that last. It helped people understand values that led to outcomes. In Pipestone, the library and SWCD worked together for the first time and will do things together in the future.

Potential Additional Policy Ideas

1. Encourage and support development of snow and ice management plans by local governmental entities.
2. Use Low Salt Design principles to establish performance standards for managing ice hazards for
 - a. Linear sites,
 - b. Building sites,
 - c. Parking lots,
 - d. Review of ADA standards and accessibility with consideration of how these operate in winter.
3. Have the MPCA convene and lead a stakeholder process to review and develop recommendations to incorporate smart salting, low salt design, and industry best practices as it relates to winter maintenance into Minnesota's B3 guidelines.
4. Establish a research and develop program to establish an alternative product that advances sustainable winter maintenance practices and promotes healthy water resources without compromising safety.
5. Encourage and support building public awareness around chloride through annual recognition of Winter Salt Week.
6. Have the Metropolitan Council study and report on
 - a. Feasibility of a centralized reverse osmosis chloride removal retrofit at the Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant, and
 - b. Study and report on Metropolitan Council policy as it relates to receiving surface water contaminated with chloride from deicers, and
 - c. Feasibility study of remediation of chloride in surface water and using the Metropolitan Council sanitary sewer network at strategic locations, times, flow rates, and concentrations for chloride transport and centralized treatment at the Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plan.
7. Encourage and support the adoption of the model snow and ice management contract by state agencies that hire winter maintenance service providers.

Background information

1. **Snow and ice management plans.** MS4 communities with chloride TMDLs already have to develop snow and ice management plans. This policy would encourage other local governmental units to take this proactive planning step.
2. **Low Salt Design Performance Standards.** Infrastructure for Minnesota should be designed with winter maintenance in mind. Incorporating simple design principles early in the process can reduce or eliminate winter maintenance problems that often contribute to salt overuse. Maintenance professionals point to designs that overlook the reality of winter operations (lack of snow storage space, unchecked meltwater sprawl, north facing building

entrances, high maintenance stairways, parking lots filled with island obstacles, etc). Maintenance professionals have opened our eyes to improving design. Connie Fortin with Bolton and Menck (formerly with Fortin Consulting) is the thought leader in this sector and after working with maintenance professionals for decades has been writing the book, so to speak, on low salt design. Designers look to industry standards and performance standards for guidelines and all performance standards center around rain, flooding, and drainage, but not snow and ice. Performance standards need to be adopted to require us to think about the other aspects of winter that we disregard.

3. **Align chloride reduction goals with Minnesota's B3 Guidelines.** The Minnesota B3 Guidelines (Buildings, Benchmarks, and Beyond) do not explicitly address chloride management within their framework. However, chloride management is a significant environmental concern in Minnesota, particularly regarding the impact of deicing salts on water quality. While the B3 Guidelines focus on sustainable building practices, integrating chloride management strategies into site and water management plans can enhance the environmental performance of projects, aligning with the broader sustainability goals of the B3 program. An analysis should be done to see where opportunities for improving winter design can be incorporated. This should include opportunities as well as tradeoffs (for example, heated pavement requires energy) and how these can be managed.
4. **Research and development program.** Modeled after the Forever Green Initiative, establish a research and development program focused on advancing sustainable winter maintenance practices and promoting water resources health without compromising safety. Chloride based deicers, acetate based deicers, and carbohydrate products have their tradeoffs (cost, safety, effectiveness). We need innovation in this sector for a cost-effective alternative that can perform and is less harmful to the environment.
5. **Winter Salt Week.** Winter Salt Week provides a focused effort on public awareness about the chloride problem and potential solutions. Coordinated outreach and engagement among stakeholders helps to move the issue forward. Winter Salt Week 2024 is January 27-31.
6. **Centralized chloride remediation.** While source control is and should remain a top priority, it is prudent to advance a solution to remediate surface water that is or is imminently impaired by chloride. Despite progress in increasing knowledge (training, public awareness campaigns), technology advancements (improved plow blades, anti-icing, weather forecasting), and establishing policy (salt storage ordinances, snow and ice management plans), chloride trends are increasing. A complete understanding of the engineering feasibility, waste management challenges, risks, energy demand, ecosystem impacts, and policy barriers could establish a roadmap for remediating damage already caused.
 - a. We've recognized the value of centralized water softening for reducing chloride pollution – can centralized remediation scale similarly? With the infrastructure network and technology available now, it would be relatively straightforward to isolate the chloride load for each community that the Metro Plant serves, which could incentivize further source control.

- b. A remediation solution would not disincentivize source control. Source control will always be less expensive for a community than remediation. The reality is that the timescale for the source control approach is a generational one. Consider in-lake nutrient management versus watershed nutrient load mitigation for eutrophic lakes – there are examples where an alum treatment makes sense, even though the watershed load isn't fully resolved. Doing so can reduce the lifespan of an alum treatment but the tradeoff is a healthier waterbody in the near term. Would we be willing to make a similar trade to keep a lake below the chronic chloride standard?
 - c. The Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission and City of Plymouth studied options for delisting Parker's Lake. The study analyzed two primary alternatives to reduce chloride in Parkers Lake: 1) pumping lake bottom water directly to the sanitary sewer, and 2) pumping lake bottom water, treating it, and returning treated water to the lake. Two different treatment systems were evaluated for this alternative – a small scale reverse osmosis system (RO) and an ion exchange system (IX). Ultimately, the decentralized treatment systems were cost prohibitive. More information on the study is available at [Parkers Lake Chloride Dilution Extraction Tech Memo final.pdf](#)
7. **Adopt model snow and ice management contract.** An advisory committee of service providers, property managers, and other interested representatives were convened to develop a model contract for snow and ice management services. The main focus of this work was to offer a model contract that embraces best practices to minimize environmental impacts from sand, salts and other chemicals, while also maintaining safety and addressing liability risk allocation.

The model winter maintenance contract is on the MPCA's statewide chloride resources webpage, <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/statewide-chloride-resources>

General comments

- The preamble and policy statements are focused on winter maintenance and source control. Broaden it to incorporate research, planning, design performance standards, and remediation for a more comprehensive approach to addressing the problem.