

Policy Committee Meeting Agenda

Clean Water Council

September 25, 2026

9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

[WebEx Only](#)

Policy Committee: John Barten, Rich Biske (Chair), Gail Cederberg, Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Chris Meyer (Vice Chair), Peter Schwagerl, and Jessica Wilson

9:30 Regular Business

- Introductions
- Approve today's agenda and July's meeting minutes
- Chair update
- Staff update

9:45 Public Comment

Members of the public who would like to provide comment about something not on the agenda are welcome to do so at this time.

10:00 (INFORMATION ITEM) Preview of special session at Water Resources Conference

The draft chloride deicer policy statement will be the focus of a special session at the Water Resources Conference next month. We will briefly touch on what the session will entail, and set the stage for a discussion of session outcomes at our October Policy Committee meeting.

10:30 (DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEM) Policy priorities content for biennial recommendations report

Following Committee direction, policy content for the biennial recommendations report has been drafted, including a preview of the topics that will be taken up next. This content will also be included alongside the preliminary budget recommendations in a letter to the Governor. Feedback from the committee is encouraged.

12:00 Adjourn

Policy Committee Meeting Summary
Clean Water Council (Council)
July 24, 2026, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Committee members present: John Barten, Rich Biske (Chair), Kelly Gribauval-Hite, Chris Meyer (Vice Chair), and Peter Schwagerl

Members absent: Gail Cederberg and Jessica Wilson

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
- Approve today's agenda and previous meeting minutes
- Motion to approve the July 24th meeting agenda and the May 29th meeting summary by John Barten, seconded by Chris Meyer. Motion carries unanimously.
- Chair update
 - No new updates
- Staff update
 - Regarding the Minnesota Plumbing Board meeting, there were a few requests for action submitted by folks in the room. These were requests that the board do not adopt any of chapter 15 (chapter in the universal plumbing code that refers to water reuse), so it would be a continuation of the current setup. Some board members suggested that there were elements that would be helpful to have in the state of Minnesota. They will likely do a line-by-line review. The state agencies are providing feedback as well. This process will take some time and is still evolving. Rich Biske and Jen Kader may draft a letter to inform the board of the Council's chloride water softener policy, though this is separate from this current reuse discussion.

No Public Comment (*Webex 00:20:00*)

Chloride Deicers Policy Statement (*Webex 00:20:15*)

Washington County public health and public works staff provided feedback on the draft policy statement. The committee appreciates the feedback. This is the last opportunity to review that feedback before the August meeting where the policy will be brought forward for review.

Items to mention from the comments:

- A granular salt fee generated many comments. There are liability concerns especially with proper education of application, budget concerns (increased tax without protection from liability), impact to infrastructure (along with true costs of accidents).
- There was positive feedback for chloride research.
- Concern for low salt design applications not having enough research. They would like to see more validation and testing from these cold-climate design concepts. Also, the effectiveness of the designs to impact salt use.
- They would rather see encouragement than a mandate. Once the tools and design options are found to be more effective, further discussion in this area could be addressed.
- They raised some questions about the state contracts for Smart Salting, and what that would look like. Additionally, if the training could include calibrating their trucks to see what the salt application would look like). They would like more clarification on it.
- Regarding an occupational licensure program for winter maintenance professionals, they would like to see further developed before it can be established. So, there is a clear core framework. Curriculum needs to be updated, so it can be included as a strategy.

Discussion/Questions:

- Chris Meyer: I had a class on sustainable transportation, and something that came up was about taking away parking spots before mass transportation is established. You really need the options you want to see to be prepared before shifting, otherwise you are punishing people for something they need (parking spots). The order to do it, the order is important. These comments sound like that approach, if we can incorporate that. We are asking for less salt application, so we need to make sure we are working towards assisting in this area. Sometimes a longer approach is needed too.
- Bonnie Keeler: This is valuable feedback. I think this is a key insight in the scholarship of policy implementation. You cannot adopt new rules or regulations without a supportive policy ecosystem. It can be tricky to figure out. You cannot just intervene in one place, without recognizing the impact on other areas. It is good to receive this feedback and incorporate it into our policies. Finding these pinch points might be critical in implementing these policy statements. It will take careful work to think through these items.
- John Barten: I agree with many of the comments. However, for the comments that are talking about putting the cart before the horse, I think our policy statements are broad in scope. So, it is a recommendation that the state ought to do it. The policy statement does not need to address how it is done. It does not need to be onerous to anyone. We are simply saying to reduce salt use, a fee could be included. Decisions on cost and impacts are not necessarily decisions from the Council. It is a starting point for the state, if they elect to do it. My perspective is that a licensure program should exist so the people applying salt should know what they are doing. How the state does that is not in the policy. Many concerns could be addressed in the process of establishing the recommendations. I do not think huge changes to the policy are warranted currently.
- Rich Biske: Reflecting on previous statements, we leave them deliberately vague from the limitations of our group. I do not know if we need more details for this policy statement.
- John Barten: We previously had a lead pipe policy; to recommend they be removed from drinking water. The policy did not recommend how it was done. The MDH moved forward with it, and there is a program occurring. How our policies move forward is up to the implementing agencies. Many of the comments here are about how the comments are implemented instead of commenting on a bad policy.
- Rich Biske: Public safety is a great concern here. We want to acknowledge that we do want to uphold that and bring the public along with us for better understanding.
- Chris Meyer: I think we can include it in the statement. That we understand it is a tradeoff of public safety and water quality. We can share that we want to acknowledge that we need to transition to a future that uses other road safety advances. I think if we acknowledge them, we need to help them to transition.
- Jen Kader: The language mentions there is no viable good alternative to road salt. There will be continued salt use, but more salt does not mean more safe. Remove the excess use, while still protecting public safety. The goal is source control, to limit the use of salt. There are not good alternatives right now.
- Rich Biske: I think we can word this carefully. I do not see a rewrite. Are there places we should be adjusting?
- Jen Kader: Reading through, there are areas we can answer from questions raised, to clarify in the policy statement. Additionally, reviewing it for consistency; strengthening it for the upcoming water resource conference.
- Chris Meyer: Regarding item 6, we could change it to state funding instead of public funding. For clarity.
- Jen Kader, Rich Biske, and Chris Meyer will work on these changes to update the policy.

Public Input Implications for Policy Priorities and Needs (*Webex 01:10:00*)

A fair amount of public input referenced the need for policy support to reach clean water goals. This is an opportunity for discussion regarding policy-related topics for future consideration.

Discussion:

- John Barten: From our public input, I heard the need to add requirements for WBIF standardized reporting. We have discussed it a few times with the full Council. It was mentioned a few times. It may be something to address.
 - Chris Meyer: I agree with John. It is surprising that we do not have that already.

- Bonnie Keeler: How does the Clean Water Fund Performance Report address it? Someone aggregates the data and reports it. Can you share how this is different with the reporting?
- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: It is a question of scale, for the estimated reductions. It depends on what is being looked at in the Performance Report.
- Jen Kader: The different measures in the report, they have a variety of different items they are looking at. One of the challenges the folks putting the report together struggle with are what is coming from the CWFs versus other things in looking at the condition changes (measured condition change). Estimated model and output or reflected in a model. It is something to work on.
- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: When we talked about the KPIs, that was a question that kept coming up, CWFs only or a mix of leveraged funds as well. It is hard and complicated. These decisions are hard.
- Steve Christenson: This is something the Budget and Outcomes Committee (BOC) will want as well.
 - Bonnie Keeler: This should not be for WBIF funding only, it should be for other programs as well. Perhaps, request the proposer's detail more about how their programs report to the WBIF, or for the performance report. It seems like it should apply to multiple programs, not just WBIF. It follows the idea of what we are reporting on it, versus relying on the outcomes.
 - Rich Biske: Sometimes outcomes and outputs are used interchangeably in the discussions we have. It is important we distinguish between them. Having some directions on it would be good. We can tighten our descriptions. It would be good for CWFs.
- John Barten: Thinking about multiple benefits (like fish habitat and wildlife), we must be careful because CWFs need to go to water quality (not improved wildlife habitat). We need to be careful in this area, and careful. It is one of the notes I had after our public comments.
- Glenn Skuta, MPCA: Generally speaking, the performance report is not by program reporting (some exceptions), but rather bigger in scale. We have so much data, and the ICT has been looking at how we can match up the data to reveal more specific findings. It is still not at a program level yet. They are working to tease out CWFs, versus in aggregate. They are trying to tie the programs to the outcomes. It is early onset right now. We will follow up when we have more.
 - Jen Kader: When we were finalizing the rubric and proposal form, there was discussion on what extent the form should be for future proposals versus a report for past work. It is attempting to do a little of both with our current form. This multiple levels of evaluation is an ongoing conversation. It is something to pick up for the BOC as well.
 - Rich Biske: We need to keep going with the efforts to continue to tie outcomes to outputs.
- John Barten: Over the last few months in the budget cycle, we seem to be inconsistent in funding for programs versus projects. Specifically, in the funding for the Voyageurs National Park and River Watch programs. Do we need a policy statement regarding preference for funding programs and not projects? Would it clarify things for the Council?
 - Steve Christenson: I like that the Voyageurs folks are providing proposals to the Council, versus going straight to the Legislature. So that is better and we see the proposals. They would argue it is a program that is ongoing year after year.
 - Rich Biske: There is another level of vetting when the funds go through the state agencies.
 - Jen Kader: What is the Council's roll in supporting outdoor education and having a longer discussion about it.
 - Bonnie Keeler: Getting clarity on it would help with recommending funds.
 - Rich Biske: Perhaps some guidelines for how the work ties back to other programs.
- Rich Biske: Systems change is another topic. For example, Forever Green, and how are the Council going to support the systems change? Additionally, are we adequately using the planning and research that the CWFs have produced over the years (e.g., stormwater research, de-icing policy)? It is worth reviewing these items. Finally, the buffer monitoring enforcement program, may be at the end of the need for CWFs. It sounds like they may have additional funding coming through. Perhaps, we can have

some programs enter a transition phase to other supportive funding elsewhere. Sometimes that provides an alternative (funding source or fee). This is solution oriented, so it frees up CWFs.

Policy Priorities for this Budget Cycle (Webex 01:58:00)

Policy statements often complement budget recommendations or have stated priorities for consideration in setting those recommendations. As the August Clean Water Council meeting will be the first opportunity to review the draft budget, this Policy Committee meeting serves as a good opportunity to review one more time for budget-related needs identified in our current policy platform. *See document in meeting packet.*

Discussion:

- **Altered Hydrology:**
 - John Barten: Have we heard back from drainage endorsement (in terms of the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program)? We recognize multipurpose drainage management, it improves the tile outlets. Will the increase in volume, will it increase the hydrologic flow in that stream, and then cause downstream issues? We need to have some assurances that it is not happening. We should be cognizant of these items. I would like to have some more discussion and information.
- **Advanced Drinking Water Protection: Disclose Water Quality at Property Transfer**
 - John Barten: We need people to know about any water quality issues before the sale of property. People assume the water is good to drink if there are previous owners. We need to wait for the time that is right at the Legislature.
 - Chris Meyer: I have attempted to get a local zoning change in Winona County. There are pieces of information that would be helpful. In our county, I asked staff how we should get this work done, and they said it was not necessary because almost all lenders request this work gets done. Tannie Eshenaur (MDH) started this work to see how true this work was. There are requirements for some. Additionally, people's attitudes about private well water is important, for the approach to education, understanding why people do not want to have their well tested. It is a public health issue.
 - Rich Biske: This is one of those topics, the county title transfer, is for a true policy. Is the private well program more to support testing and build education around it.
 - Frieda von Qualen, MDH: At the health department, we have two policies moving forward for well water testing at property transfer. Today, they are sending on the well testing at rental properties. We do not know how far this will go this year. Additionally, there is clear bipartisan support for the well testing at property transfer, and especially rental property transfer. We are happy to provide updates on these updates related to these policies, and how the Council would want to support them or adjust them in the future.
 - Jen Kader: It is a good reminder that these policy priorities are being sent through the Governor's process as well. Chris Meyer and Rich Biske, it would be good to draft a letter regarding this policy to the Governor's Office, with the full platform as it stands.
 - Rich Biske: The data coming from the UMN on private well testing, can really assist in this area as well.
- To summarize, the programs that have existing policy statements and recommend funding to support them: private well, drainage water management, contaminants of emerging concerns, fish tissue, chloride, and a handful of others. Jen Kader will verify as well.
- It is good to remind ourselves of these programs.

Adjournment Webex (02:20:31)

Policy Recommendations

The Clean Water Council recognizes that CWF dollars alone will not meet the expectations of Minnesotans for clean water. To that end, in 2014 the Council created a Policy Committee to identify potential policies that could accelerate progress towards clean water goals. The Council has, since then, established and revised a standing policy platform for inclusion in these recommendation reports. The FY28-29 topics are listed below, with an * indicating new or updated policies since FY26-27:

- Advanced drinking water protection
- Chloride reduction (de-icer)*
- Chloride reduction (water softeners)
- Large volume water users*
- Multi-purpose drainage management
- Minnesota underground utilities mapping project
- PFAS
- Pharmaceutical product stewardship

Each of these are summarized below. For a full description of the policy statement, including problem descriptions and further-expanded recommendations, please visit the Council website.

Advanced drinking water protection

The state of Minnesota should ensure that private well users have safe, sufficient, and equitable access to drinking water. Priority contaminants are nitrate, bacteria, arsenic, manganese, lead, and pesticides. The Clean Water Fund combined with other funding sources (including fees), and appropriate policy should be used to support the following:

1. Completion of a private well inventory, starting in southeastern Minnesota, as well as timely updates to the Minnesota Well Index
2. Information to well users to reduce their risk, including well testing
3. Local and state capacity to manage testing, mapping, and education
4. Stable, reliable funding of cost-effective strategies for private well users to mitigate wells that do not meet Minnesota health-based guidance for five contaminants, with a particular focus on low-income households
5. Publication of aggregate and anonymized well data
6. Land use compatible with private well protection (e.g., forage, continuous living cover, working lands easements, etc.), including the prioritization of areas draining to vulnerable private wells

7. Adequate technical and financial assistance for fertilizer and pesticide management, irrigation education, and manure storage and use
8. Development and adoption of local government ordinances that require well testing and a disclosure of the testing at the time a property is transferred
9. Financial support for regulation of feedlots and the land application of manure
10. Evaluation of current programs for efficacy in meeting drinking water source protection goals
11. Consider designating acreage that drains to the most vulnerable private wells for protective practices like Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMAs).

Chloride reduction (de-icer)

The Clean Water Council recommends that the State of Minnesota implement the following actions to reduce chloride pollution from winter de-icing chemicals (salts) in Minnesota's surface water and groundwater. While all recommendations are important and interconnected, the Clean Water Council identified those with an * as especially critical near-term actions for the legislature to consider.

Incentives & Financial Sustainability

1. Implement a granular salt fee. *
2. Sustain and enhance funding for the MPCA's Chloride Reduction Program including the Smart Salting training and certification program. *Included here for the grant and technical assistance elements of the program.*

Research & Remediation

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

Standards & Requirements

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

9. Expand requirements for proper storage of de-icing chemicals.

Data & Accountability

10. Expand and strengthen chloride monitoring statewide

Risk & Liability

11. Provide liability protection for certified applicators using best practices.

Awareness & Behavior Change

12. Establish a statewide community-based social marketing campaign.

(2.) Sustain and enhance funding for the MPCA's Chloride Reduction Program including the Smart Salting training and certification program. *Included again here for the training program contribution to behavior change.*

Chloride reduction (water softeners)

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

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

Large volume water users

In response to a recent increase in interest from prospective large-volume water users and demonstration of clear need for a coordinated response, the Clean Water Council recommends that the State of Minnesota implement the following actions to protect groundwater across jurisdictional boundaries and for future generations:

1. Enhance regional groundwater models.
2. Increase intention around siting and design of new facilities with respect to water supply.
3. Incorporate large-volume water users as considerations in existing state, regional, and local water plans.

Multi-purpose drainage management

The state of Minnesota should:

1. Identify more opportunities for multi-purpose drainage management and water storage that improve water quality and complement Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS) and One Watershed One Plan (1W1P)
2. Request data to quantify the effectiveness of Multi- Purpose Drainage Management relative to nutrient transport and hydrologic changes compared to traditional drainage systems, and an estimate of the hydrologic impact of drainage projects on down- stream rivers and streams
3. Support opportunities for training of drainage engineers, drainage authorities, and other relevant professionals on the benefits of MDM and resources available, to encourage line-item estimates for conservation practices, and to encourage cost-benefit analysis of water storage and its resulting impact on drainage system and maintenance costs
4. Develop a drainage endorsement for the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) with the input of the Drainage Work Group and other stakeholders.

Minnesota underground utilities mapping project

To create an accurate inventory of Minnesota's underground utility infrastructure, the Council recommends that the state of Minnesota develop an accurate map of all underground utilities installed in the state and require Minnesota's public and private sectors to support sharing of necessary data in a secure and confidential manner.

The underground utility infrastructure mapping project supports the Council's efforts to reduce the risk to drinkable, fishable, and swimmable water.

PFAS

The Council recommends that the CWF be a partial source of funding to implement Minnesota's comprehensive PFAS Blueprint. Of the ten key issue areas prioritized in the Blueprint, there are three in which the CWF would fulfill both the Clean Water Legacy Act and the Blueprint:

1. Quantifying PFAS risk to human health
2. Limiting PFAS exposure from drinking water
3. Reducing PFAS exposure from fish and game consumption.

Pharmaceutical product stewardship

The Council recommends that the state establish the following to reduce the discharge of pharmaceuticals into the waters of Minnesota:

1. Fund research on the pathways of pharmaceuticals into surface water and groundwater, identify priority pharmaceuticals that pose the greatest risk to human health and aquatic life, identify and support practicable solutions to reduce their entry into Minnesota waters, and recoup reasonable costs through an industry-funded safe medication return program.
2. Adopt a “Safe Medication Return Program.” This legislation should provide flexibility by:
 - a. Utilizing the current collection infrastructure
 - b. Requiring manufacturers to support public education and outreach activities; and to cover all administrative and support costs including, but not limited to: collection, compensation to authorized collectors, transportation, secure receptacles, and environmentally sound disposal of covered pharmaceuticals
 - c. Allowing residents to take unused medications to drop-off locations or use a mailing envelope, both for free
 - d. Providing drop-off locations that are “equitable and reasonably convenient.”
3. Require the words or symbols for “do not flush” be printed on all prescription pharmaceutical labels and remove any existing instructions to flush unused portions.

Looking ahead

The Policy Committee has identified the topics it plans to take up next. While this can change as context changes and new issues or opportunities emerge, the current list of topics on the horizon include:

- **Mitigation support for private well users:** Private well users are responsible for all aspects of protecting their drinking water quality, but often lack the resources to be able to do so, especially when costly repairs or deeper wells are needed.
- **Shoreline protection and restoration:** Natural shorelines are diminishing at an astonishing rate, with implications for ecosystems and water quality. Shoreline loss can come from landowner alterations, impacts from water recreation activities, and other sources. Accelerating both protection and restoration efforts is needed.

- **De-risking agricultural transition:** Farmers are stewards of the land and partners in the work to protect water. However, even when a change that would benefit water quality is desired, making the shift can put businesses and livelihoods at risk. Finding ways to further reduce risk that relies on more than just incentives can help more farmers enhance conservation efforts on their fields and in their operations for the long haul.
- **Identifying other funding sources to transition some CWF-supported efforts to:** There are a handful of programs supported in part through existing fees that have not been increased for several years. Increasing those fees through legislative action can allow for Clean Water Funds to shift to other purposes.

As with other Council activities, members value and appreciate input from interested parties. It is important that the people who may be impacted by these statements are engaged in their creation. More voices will strengthen the outcome of Committee efforts. If these topics are of interest, please join the Council as it develops new policy statements in the coming years.