



## LCC Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy

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### **2020 Legislative Recommendations: Legislative and Citizens Commission on Minnesota Waters (HF 2902)**

Issue: Will the proposed changes improve water governance in Minnesota?

Water is vital to all Minnesotans. The issues are wide-ranging and highly varied across Minnesota's many landscapes and interest groups. Because water is important, complex, controversial, and costly, the development of water policy needs to be undertaken thoughtfully. The question is whether the governance of water program could benefit from change?

HF 2902 was introduced in the 2019 session. The Authors are Representatives Hansen, Lillie and Wagenius. This is a far-reaching bill. The subcommittee my want to discuss this bill, in detail, during an upcoming meeting. Following is an overview and some thoughts about the bill:

The bill would create the Legislative-Citizen's Commission on Minnesota Waters, within the legislature. It would be similar, in many ways to the LCCMR:

The bill proposes to do the following:

- Establishes a new commission within the legislature
- Eliminates the Clean Water Council
- Eliminates Legislative Water Commission (Now the LCC Subcommittee on Water Policy)
- Combines the duties and appointments of those two groups

The Clean Water Council consists of 28 citizen members. The Council's primary responsibilities are recommendations to the Governor about spending plans and priorities from the Clean Water Fund. Voting members are all citizens. Other members, including those from the House and Senate, are non-voting members.

The Legislative Water Commission (now the LCC Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy) consists of 12 members from the House and Senate. The Subcommittee is structured to be bi-partisan and bi-cameral in nature. The Subcommittee reviews water-policy reports and recommendations from the agencies in order to better understand water issues and policy, conducts public hearings, and makes recommendations to formulate legislation. The Subcommittee also coordinates with the Clean Water Council, the LCCMR, and the Outdoor Heritage programs.

The bill would combine these two groups. The new Commission would be made up of 17 of members as follows:

- The chair of the House committee on the environment and natural resources
- The chair of the Senate committee on the environment and natural resources

- Four Senators appointed by the Senate
- Four Representative appointed from the House
- Five citizen members appointed by the Governor
- One citizen member appointed by the Senate
- One citizen member appointed by the House

Potential benefits:

- Provide greater coordination and vetting of policy development
- Should strengthen relationships and communication among the clean water program, the legislature, and the administration
- Could improve policy and legislative planning during interim periods
- Would increase legislative involvement in clean water planning and budgeting
- Would increase coordination among environmental committees in the legislature and clean water programs
- Could provide more transparency within the clean water budget process
- Could provide greater legislative understanding of long term and coordinated goals of clean water programs, including the one-watershed process
- May provide greater understanding of the integrated nature of agency water planning efforts and with local agencies—how it all fits together

Some areas of caution and possible unintended consequences:

- Could dilute the continuous process of water monitoring, assessments, protection and remediation if long-standing programs are interrupted for special and short-term projects
- Will likely reduce the significant input from current stakeholder groups represented on the Clean Water Council
- May restrict the long-term needs for water planning when the legislative makeup changes
- May decrease the broad subject-matter expertise provided by citizen members
- Could disrupt continuous monitoring that is essential to assess outcomes
- May create potential for politically driven science priorities and preferential treatment for preferred geographies or issues
- May require additional staffing to coordinate possible additional funding initiatives
- May reduce coordinated agency planning process for clean water programs

**WHAT'S NEEDED?**

The Subcommittee may want to consider a detailed discussion of this bill over the interim. If the bill moves forward, the following existing functions should be preserved:

- Significant and long, term support for agency clean water programs
- Continued coordination among the administration, stakeholders, the legislature agencies and citizen experts.