

Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy Legislative Priorities for 2020

Meeting Goal: Prioritize and comment on draft Legislative Water Policy Issues

- There are seven water **issue categories** being considered (shown below)
- There are several draft topics (**issues**) within each issue category (on pages that follow)
- There is a draft explanatory paper for each issue, posted at an ftp site

The issue papers include a letter and number that relates to the specific category and issue as listed below. **Please refer to the issues as: Issue 1A, for example.**

Meeting Process:

- Individually, select one Issue Category from Issue Categories 1-3, and one Issue Category from Categories 4-7, that best show your interests:
Issue Categories:
 1. Water Regulation and Permitting
 2. Water Resources Funding
 3. Water Planning

 4. Effective Best Management Practices
 5. Water Policy and Management
 6. Water Infrastructure
 7. Water Governance

- **During the first hour:** We will split into groups by Issue Categories 1-3. Select a recorder and a spokesperson. As a group, review the issues within each issue category. You may decide there are issues of more importance than those listed. The most important issues should relate to the need for legislation or an issue that informs a bill that has been introduced. Rank the issues and record consensus comments on the more important issues, or all of the issues, as time allows.

- **During the second hour:** We will repeat that process for issue categories 4-7.

- **During the last half-hour:** We will report out by groups and ask for your input on issues that were missing.

Following, are the issue categories and underlying issues. There are several issues within each category. Specific issue documents can be assessed at the following ftp site:

[2020 Legislative Priorities](#)

Issue Category 1. Water Regulation and Permitting

Issue: Simplify water-quality standard review and revision process: There are concerns regarding the time required for changes to water-quality standards. Can this process be made more efficient? If so, what would be needed by the agencies? (Issue Source: member of the committee) **Issue 1A**

Issue: Simplify the irrigation water appropriation process: Concerns have been expressed regarding the process and time required for irrigation-withdrawal permits. Are there ways that this process could be more efficient? If so, what would be required by the agencies? (Issue Source: member of the committee) **Issue 1B**

Issue: State Assumption of federal wetland permit responsibilities: The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) is proposing to assume federal wetland-permit responsibilities (section 404). This could save time and money and simplify the permitting process. There are planning, staff, costs and statutory implications that need to be considered and evaluated by the legislature in advance of additional agency planning. (Issue Source: member of the committee) **Issue 1C**

Issue Category 2: Water Resources Funding

Addressing Funding for the Environment (Outcomes): The state's general funding for the environment is declining. Even with dedicated funds, conservation spending has decreased in the last twenty years. Prepare and plan for ensuring that general and dedicated funding will meet the state's future needs for ensuring our water needs. (Issue Source: Topic raised by Conservation Minnesota report) **Issue 2A**

The need to measure the effectiveness of the dedicated funds programs for water (Environmental Spending). How does funding compare to other states? Can we tune the approach that balances funds spent for water protection, preservation and restoration? (Issue Source: Topic raised in report by Conservation Minnesota report) **Issue 2B**

Protect and enhance the quality of our streams, lakes, and groundwater by promoting healthy soil and healthy water. Soil improvement is good for agriculture and for our water. Legislative support is needed for the UM Office of Soil Health which includes recognition and support for funding needs for long- term research as well as support for a state-wide soil-health action plan. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 2C**

Issue Category 3: Water Planning

Understanding Minnesota’s most important water priorities: Are we effectively conducting water planning to meet future needs? Can the state place greater emphasis, through the EQB process to better coordinate water policy planning that crosses agency lines? (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 3A**

Legislation that recognizes the need to plan for an uncertain future: Water Policy for an uncertain future. Policy is needed to guide adaptation for changes that likely will occur to climate, landscapes, biota, hydrology and infrastructure. Incorporate that into the water planning process. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 3B**

Preserving and protecting our lakes. Fund a comprehensive agency program to provide policy and plans to protect our lakes. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 3C**

Ensure clean and sustainable groundwater drinking water for the future. Increase information and management for clean and sustainable drinking water: Expand agency support for data collection and analysis. Improve understanding of “water bank accounts” in County Atlas and One Watershed/ One Plan programs. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 3D**

Increase the use of the generic environmental impact statement process: Portions of Minnesota face regional water issues and demands. Examples include water demands placed on current or proposed mineral extraction in northeast Minnesota and demands placed on sensitive aquifers in southeast Minnesota. Generic environmental impact statements may be the most appropriate way to conduct water planning in these areas. Prepare plans to address these needs. (Issue Source: Issue raised within an agency) **Issue 3E**

Issue Category 4: Effective Best Management Practices

Evaluate and prioritize water storage facilities. There is need to assess and quantify the cumulative impacts of water storage and flood retention structures. A program is needed to assess and quantify cumulative environmental benefits of water storage and flood-retention structures in selected watershed districts in the state. The assessment would quantify the costs and benefits of additional structures that would improve flood mitigation and meet water-quality goals in selected watersheds in various landscape positions. (Issue Source: General topic of discussion raised by committee members) **Issue 4A**

Expand Source Water Protection to all sources of drinking water, including rivers and private drinking water sources. Identify and protect our most-vulnerable aquifers used as sources for public and private drinking water. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019 based on agency input) **Issue 4B**

Increase research for Smart Technology for Agriculture: Promote and fund additional research and applicant methodology to encourage the use of smart technology to reduce water consumption, application rates of fertilizer and pesticides without reducing crop yields (Issue Source: Topic raised by a commission member) **Issue 4C**

Issue Category 5: Water Policy and Management

Increase Efforts to keep water on the Land - Water Retention: Keeping water on the land reduces erosion, improves soil health and water quality, increase groundwater recharge and improves agricultural production. Support return-on-investment analyses of conservation drainage. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 5A**

Prioritizing conservation practices for the greatest benefit (Issue Source: General topic of discussion raised by committee members) **Issue 5B**

Increased Legislative direction on Water Education in Public schools. Water education in our K-12 public schools inadequate. Prepare a plan to provide increased direction for water education. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 5C**

Protect our lakes and lakes and groundwater: Reduce use of de-icing salt that impairs lakes, rivers and groundwater. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 5D**

Increase efforts to encourage wastewater and storm-water treatment options. The state faces the need to support innovative water-treatment processes for small cities. Small cities struggle with costs associated with maintaining and upgrading water supply and wastewater-treatment facilities. Alternatives are needed. We need to explore ways to encourage and to provide funding for new technology as well as alternative approaches and opportunities for water supply and wastewater treatment. This could include innovative technology, regional partnerships, improved asset management, coordinated administrative and operational activities, shared wastewater operators, and when appropriate, decentralization of utility services. **Issue 5E**

Issue Category 6: Water Infrastructure

Address inflow and infiltration leaks on private property: Inflow and infiltration (I/I) affect drinking water, groundwater quality, and wastewater treatment. Broken sewer lines affect our ability to successfully treat wastewater and the problem continues to grow over time. Provide public support to address I/I for public and private wastewater infrastructure. Amend Minnesota Statutes to give sanitary sewer or wastewater districts the same authority, as cities, to use revenues to fund private property I/I programs (Issue Source: carried over from 2019) **Issue 6A**

Increase support for innovative water and wastewater treatment technology: Identify efficiencies for regional wastewater administration, operation and maintenance. Small towns and cities struggle with costs associated with maintaining and upgrading water supply and wastewater-treatment facilities. Alternatives are needed. Encourage and provide funding for new technology, alternative approaches and opportunities for water supply and wastewater treatment. Identify and encourage alternative technologies, regional partnerships, improved asset management, coordinated administrative and operational activities, shared wastewater operation, and when appropriate, decentralization of utility services. (Issue Source: Priority carried over from 2019) **Issue 6B**

Increase support to improve Minnesota's water infrastructure: Minnesota's water-related infrastructure is aging and presents threats to our economy and to public health. Increase general Obligation Bond appropriations on a continuing basis. (Issue Source: Priority, carried over from 2019) **Issue 6C**

Issue Category 7: Water Governance

Create a Department of Water Resources. A bill has been introduced that would combine agency water responsibilities and abolish some agencies. There may be benefits to reorganization, as well as, unintended consequences. A One Water Agency has been proposed and studied in the past. These reviews have included recommendations for efficiency. What is the appropriate path forward? (Issue Source: Introduced bill-2019) **Issue 7A**

Change the structure and function of the Clean Water Council: Legislation has been introduced that would create a new legislative and citizen's commission, combining the Clean Water Council and the Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy. This would involve significant structural and organizational changes. There could be benefits and possible unintended consequences. What needs to be considered as this moves forward? (Issue Source: Introduced bill-2019) **Issue 7B**

Evaluating Efficient Water Management in Minnesota: How efficient is Minnesota's water management structure compared to water management in other states? (Issue Source: General topic of discussion raised by UM and Agency governance review reports) **Issue 7C**

Suggest ways to allow for greater coordination to leverage programs, such as the CWC, LSOHC, LCCMR, and the Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy. Can there be coordination to a greater degree? (Issue Source: General topic of discussion raised by committee members) **Issue 7D**