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Position Statement on Legislative Water Commission Summary of Wastewater Issues, Solutions and Priorities from UMN to LWC, December 19, 2017

Wastewater treatment across Minnesota serves all communities using a range of treatment options from the latest technology to the most basic types of systems. These systems are operated and managed with equally varied levels of community ability to support their wastewater treatment processes, from larger systems requiring significant engineering expertise to smaller systems managed by part time operations staff filling multiple roles within a community. At the same time, requirements of wastewater systems are becoming more complex from both a community need to manage increasingly complex streams to enhanced awareness of regional impacts of inadequate treatment. As such communities need to be supported through a variety of services to assist in optimizing performance of current infrastructure as well as capital reinvestment.

The following comments pertain to the highest ranking issues generated from the October and November meetings as summarized in the Legislative Water Commission Summary of Wastewater Issues, Solutions and Priorities.

**Issue:** Funding (Rank 6)

**Solution:** Continue/Increase PFA loan/grant funding (at least \$121M/biennium)

**Desired Actions:** It is recommended to include support for low cost technical assistance services to assess the opportunity to optimize performance of wastewater infrastructure before the decision to invest capital in new infrastructure is made. There are numerous examples where technical assistance provided to wastewater facilities to optimize nutrient removal coupled with upstream business assistance to reduce effluent loading has resulted in both cost savings for business through improved production performance and enabled municipalities to make substantial improvements to their discharge streams.

**Opposed Actions:** The University supports the continued use of Environmental Trust Fund for projects that have broad applicability and benefit across the state for both businesses and communities.

Specifically, we are concerned about legislative efforts within LCCMR to restrict up to 50 percent of ENRTF resources for wastewater treatment infrastructure in cities under 5,000 for the following reasons:

- the potential inflexibility of restricting Trust Fund resources to one purpose;
- the precedent of setting out a specific funding priority in this way; and
- what this means for addressing future environmental challenges – both known and unknown