

**2019 Legislative Recommendations- Legislative Water Commission  
November 2018**

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The Legislature Water Commission (Commission) was re-established by the Legislature in 2014 because Minnesota's water issues were wide-ranging and highly varied. Because water is important, complex, controversial, and costly, the development of water policy needed to be undertaken thoughtfully. The 12 member, bi-cameral and bipartisan commission brings value to the Legislature. The Commission's recommendations reflect funding and policy priorities. The Commission 2019 draft recommendations are based on discussions among Commission members, stakeholders and state agency personnel. The Commission also used input from more than 2500 citizens during the Governor's 2017 town hall sessions.

**The draft priority issues for 2019 are as follows:**

- **Ensuring clean and sustainable drinking water**
- **Protecting and enhancing the quality of our streams, lakes and groundwater**
- **Ensure that water infrastructure is adequate**
- **Providing for the long-term viability of the Commission**

**Recommendations, by Issue are summarized below. (They are in priority order by issue)**

**Issue # 1): Ensuring clean and sustainable drinking water:**

**Priority 1): 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. Make better use of the information we are collecting. Coordinate water planning. Increase public education (Resources: General funding for DNR, BWSR, MGS, and SWCD (4M/ yr.)) (C1, #8)

**Priory 2): Protect Drinking Water--** 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 of private drinking water. Support the Clean Water Council's recommendations by adopting policy and market-driven approaches to increase continuous vegetative cover on cropland with an initial focus on wellhead protection areas and vulnerable aquifers. (Resources required: Support new staff positions at MDH and MDA (B3, 310))

**Issue 2: Protecting and enhancing the quality of our streams, lakes and groundwater**

**Priority 1): Water Retention: Keeping Water on the Land:** 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. Support consensus statements from the Drainage Working Group. Support legislation that simplifies and combines water planning. Promote pilot watershed-scale pollutant trading and banking programs. Implement and fund an efficient credit- exchange mechanism. Support programs to provide a better understanding of the extent of tile drains and ditches and their hydrologic consequences. (Resources required: Support staff position at BWSR, MDH, MDH and DNR (C6 #7)

**Priority 2): Prepare Statewide 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. Provide legislative direction and funding for an interagency/legislative planning process and report to the Legislature. (Resources required: Minor funding support for the Environmental Quality Board, environmental agencies and the Legislative Water Commission over the next year (B9 #12))

**Priority 3: Reduce use of de-icing salt that impairs lakes, rivers and groundwater.** We can reduce salt used for parking lots and sidewalks without affecting public safety. Support legislation to limit liability for applicators after providing training and certification. Support CWC policy to expand applicator training statewide. (Resources required; Legislation, Estimate of \$500K for training and coordination for the MPCA (A6 #5))

### **Issue 3) Ensure that water infrastructure is adequate**

**Priority 1): Minnesota’s water-related infrastructure is aging and presents threats to our economy and to public health.** Increase PFA General Obligation Bond appropriations on a continuing basis. Support and accelerate PFA’s cost-effectiveness reviews. Support funding to increase MPCA and MDH efforts to encourage alternative best-management practices. Support increased agency resources to conduct asset-management reviews and implement efficient infrastructure alternatives. Provide support for market-based water-quality trading options (storm water and waste water) among willing municipalities. Accelerate programs that address the worst of our leaking septic system problem areas. Resources Required: Staff increase at MDH and MPCA (estimates needed) (A2 #3))

**Priority 2): Increase funding to ensure the safety of publicly-supplied drinking water.** Legislation is needed to increase the MDH drinking-water service-connection fees. This will allow MDH to complete condition assessments and asset management plans to ensure safety for drinking-water supply systems. (Resources Required: Legislation and Fee increase (MDH) (A4 #11))

**Priority 3): Fix leaking wastewater lines.** Inflow and infiltration infrastructure leaks affect groundwater quality and wastewater treatment demands. Broken sewer lines affects our ability to successfully treat waste water and the problem continues to grow over time. Legislation is needed to allow sanitary districts the use of existing revenue for public and private property inflow and infiltration mitigation in the same way as cities are allowed to address these problems. (Resources Required: Legislation (A7, #1) #4))

**Priority 4) Independent peer review of wastewater standards. Memorialize in statute, the current MPCA practice. Incorporate the exiting MPCA Commissioner’s order into statute.** This supports MPCA efforts to provide additional scientific and public review of new and revised water-quality standards, where EPA guidance is absent, and would ensure that the process continues on under future administrations. (Action: Legislation (A6 #4))

### **Issue 4) Provide for the long-term viability of the Commission**

**Priority 1):** Water is vital to all Minnesotans. The issues surrounding water 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 must be undertaken thoughtfully. Continuation of the Commission is needed to coordinate statewide policy and plans for the future. The 12 member, bi-cameral and bipartisan commission brings value to the Legislature by providing a venue for members to equitably receive and discuss detailed technical information, creating a public forum for regular, in-depth interactions between legislators that can then inform legislative work on this subject, and developing water expertise within a larger cadre of Legislators so they can become leaders on water policy (Action: Legislation #6)

