

**Legislative Water Commission- 2019 Legislative Recommendations**  
**Protecting and Preserving Minnesota's Lakes**  
**Issue Summary and Draft Recommendations**  
**October, 2018**  
**LWC\_2019\_Recs\_RankedandRevised\_PostOctLWC\_Lakes**

**What's needed: Specific Legislation**  
**Legislative Support for A new Interagency Lake Program**

**B 1) Fund a comprehensive agency program to provide policy and plans to protect our lakes. Increase data collection and analysis of lakes. Incorporate water-budget information about lakes. Establish an interagency working group to coordinate data collection and analysis that includes continuous monitoring. Support systematic lake assessments by re-assessing existing data programs in to collect information that is needed. Establish a status of statewide lake-priority document for accelerated lake-management. Prepare an interagency plan to integrate lake-assessment results into regulatory programs to protect all lakes and to preserve and protect our most significant and valuable lakes Coordinate, prioritize, and encourage funding, within established programs (LCCMR, LSOHC), that increase environmental and conservation easements in watersheds that contain our most important lakes. Provide legislation focused on stopping the progression of invasive species across lakes. Provide additional agency support to understand stressors and best-management practices to preserve and to enhance deep lakes. Provide assessments of lakes focused on the potential effects of climate change and management practices that can mitigate those impacts**

**Issue Background Summary:** Minnesota is a water-rich state with a great deal of water stored in aquifers, lakes and streams. However, our activities are negatively affecting our lakes and lake ecosystems. Our lakes provide environmental, economic, and public health benefits and our lakes are among our most treasured of our natural resources. Healthy lakes enhance our quality of life. They support complex and important food-web interactions and provide habitat for fish and wildlife. Lakes contribute to a healthy economy. They are important for tourism and provide recreational opportunities for our state's residents. Our lakes are short-lived features on our landscape and all our lakes are aging. The natural aging of many of our lakes is being accelerated because of our actions on the land and in the water. We need to protect and restore our lakes. Because of the vast numbers of lakes in the state and because of the many threats that they face, we may need to make decisions about which lakes we protect and preserve.

There are things that can be done to protect, preserve and improve the condition of our lakes. On a statewide basis, we can improve lakes by implementing best-management practices (BMPs) where our lakes are most affected by urban development, agriculture or forestry. Across the state, we should enhance the "one watershed/one plan" process to evaluate, locate, promote, incentivize and regulate activities that will improve our streams, lakes and wetlands. The DNR, with others, have initiated a "sentinel lakes program" in portions of the state. This program identifies lakes for study and monitoring that serve as indicators of general lake health in the different ecoregions of the state. This program should be maintained and enhanced by implementing a sentinel lake program in many of the 80 major watersheds in the state (this would not be appropriate for all watersheds because some have few lakes). This program would provide needed information regarding the status of our lakes and would enable existing, locally-led, statewide programs to focus BMP's in areas that can best benefit our lakes, streams, wetlands and groundwater, all tailored for specific watersheds and ecoregions. For lakes affected by water-level changes induced by groundwater pumping, the DNR has a program to assess and address a process for groundwater allocation change (groundwater-management area program). This program is well documented and provides an effective management option. The program should be continued at an accelerated pace.

However, a more proactive and aggressive approach is needed to protect, preserve and improve our most precious and important lakes. The sentinel-lakes program approach could be applied to identify groups and classes of lakes, across the state's ecoregions that are most important to the state's residents. After identification and prioritization, these lakes could be placed in a protected status. Much like that state's protected water's program, protected lakes could be established through a process of inventory, designation, and incentives, all subject to possible regulation. Lakes could be identified and made subjected to a series of public review periods, revisions and a final hearing. The result would be groups of lakes that need to be protected through special resource programs. More importantly, state programs such as the Clean Water Fund, the Outdoor Heritage Fund and the Legislative and Citizen's Commission on Minnesota Resources could be encouraged to consider prioritizing funding programs to provide conservation easements in the watersheds where these lakes exist. Support Legislation to limit liability for de-icing applicators and property owners, given adequate training (*Survey description: Limit over use of deicers in commercial areas-limit liability. Prepare* legislation and incentives focused on stopping the progression of invasive species between lakes. Incorporate robust water- budget information about lakes for water planning. Improve our understanding of classes of lakes, groundwater and surface interactions, water balances, and water sustainability using vigorous assessments of lakes into the one watershed/one plan program. Use existing information (groundwater recharge, streamflow, and water use) to identify priorities for sustaining lake ecosystems, based on objective criteria. Use this analysis to assess priority areas for future lake-management programs (*Survey description: Incorporate lake water-budget information into water management*) Prioritize our lakes for protection and preservation: Establish a status of lake priority consensus document: Establish an interagency prioritization for lakes that considers criteria for lakes to be maintained, improved, protected and preserved. Establish policy to promote those goals. (*Survey description: Prioritize our lakes for protection and preservation*) (MS) Provide additional agency support to understand stressors and best management practices to preserve and to enhance shallow lakes. Assess and identify lakes can be preserved. Assess the costs and benefits of ensuring, protecting and enhancing the quality of lakes across the state. Quantify the economic value of lake-ecosystem services provided by lakes and wetlands Support a strategy to prioritize our lakes for protection: Prepare an interagency strategy to integrate lake-assessment results into regulatory programs to protect all lakes and to preserve and protect our most significant and valuable lakes. (*Survey description: Prepare a strategy to integrate lake-assessments into regulatory programs*) Use conservation easements to protect our most- important lakes: Coordinate, prioritize, and encourage funding, within established programs (LCCMR, LSOHC), that increase environmental and conservation easements in watersheds that contain our most important lakes—those that need preservation and protection. (*Survey description: Increase use of conservation easements to protect most important lakes*) Fcus on lake protection and preservation: Provide program support to assess, preserve and protect lakes. (*Survey description Prioritize programs to identify lakes to be maintained, improved, and protected*) (SS)

- Develop a program to assess leaking septic systems that impair lakes and support legislation to provide support to fix inadequate septic systems. (*Survey description: Assess leaking septic systems and incentives to fix inadequate septic systems*) (MS)
- Importance of our state as the land of 10,000 Strong-quality lakes: Dedicate a portion of Clean Water funds for lake- sustainably efforts. Establish a Clean lake sustainability Committee within the Clean Water Council. (LS)
- Deep Lakes: Provide additional agency support to understand stressors and best management practices to preserve and protect deep lakes. Assess and identify lakes that can be preserved as deep lake habitat (Little Support)

