

## Weekly LWC Update 11-23-16

*Interested reader: each week, I gather general information for Legislative Water Commission members to help keep them apprised about water issues in Minnesota. It contains a roundup of easily attainable MN water news, as well as articles from beyond MN that may inform member thinking. It also includes summaries of meetings I have attended and reports I have read, as well as info about upcoming events. During the Legislative Session, it also includes updates on water-related legislation. Any errors or omissions are inadvertent.*

Barb Huberty, Director, MN Legislative Water Commission  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., 65 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Phone: 651/284-6431  
Email: [barb.huberty@lcc.leg.mn](mailto:barb.huberty@lcc.leg.mn)

Web site: [www.lcc.leg.mn/lwc/](http://www.lcc.leg.mn/lwc/)

Due to the short Thanksgiving week, this edition includes news for last week and this week.

### MN NEWS

#### **WATER ACTIONS**

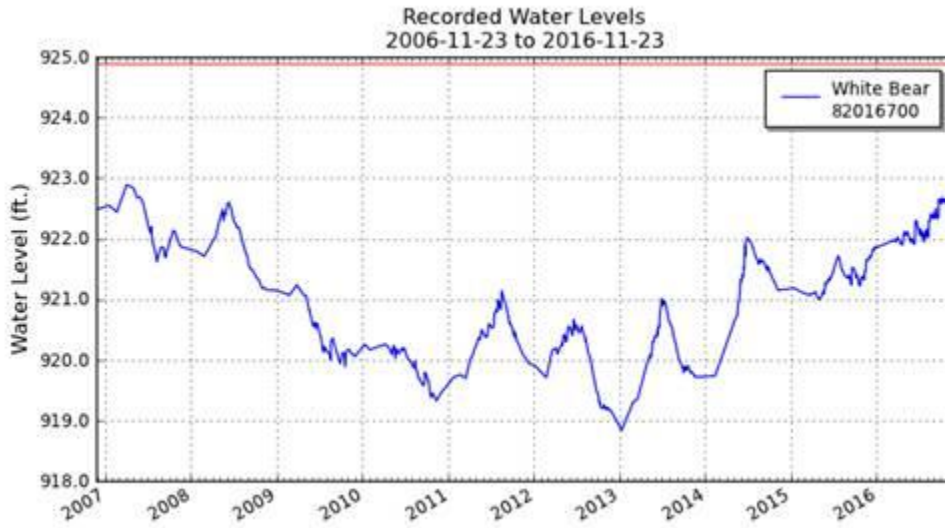
- MPCA: [Water/Ways exhibit opens in Sandstone this weekend](#)
- MPCA: [Get the scoop on watershed funding](#)
- Water Tech Online: [WEF announces 2016 MS4 Stormwater & Green Infrastructure Awards winners](#); congratulations to the Capitol Region Watershed District for their award
- Water Tech Online: [WEF announces Student Design Competition winners](#); congratulations to the U of MN team's first win for their "New Tool for the Retrieval of Harmful Algae Concentrations using Multi-Satellite Observations"
- Le Sueur News Herald: [Minnesota River Congress sets Nov. 17 vote on top action goals](#)
- Phys.org: [People power: Technology allows smartphone-based water testing](#)
- The Office of the MN Secretary of State released the [Notice of Vacancies in State Boards, Councils and Committees](#), which includes vacancies for: the Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Clean Water Council, the Great Lakes Commission, the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, and the MN Environmental Quality Board – all agencies with oversight of certain water-related activities. Applications are due this coming Monday, 11/28.
- Environmental Leader: [Why General Mills, The Nature Conservancy Say Soil Is Sexy. Did We Mention \\$50 Billion in Benefits?](#)
- Brainerd Dispatch: [Water quality certification program subject of BAELN event](#)
- Brainerd Dispatch: [Crow Wing SWCD leaders to attend district convention](#)
- Post Bulletin: [Root River watershed leaders have planning advice](#)

#### **WATER BUSINESSES**

- Minneapolis/St Paul Business Journal: [Minnesota Makers: Local invention used by government agents in Colombia](#)
- Industrial Water World: [US Water Expands National Territory, Acquires Water & Energy Systems Technology](#)

## SURFACE WATER/STORMWATER

- DNR: [DNR updates Minnesota buffer map; implementation continues](#)
- Strib: [Scathing review blasts states, EPA for failing to protect Mississippi River](#); MPR: [Environmentalists: EPA plan to clean up Mississippi River not working](#); these articles refer to the Mississippi River Collaborative Report [Decades of Delay - EPA Leadership Still Lacking in Protecting America's Great River](#) (the MN Overview starts on p. 32)
- Strib: [White Bear Lake area bracing for lake-sparing impacts](#) (this article was picked up by several media outlets across the country) and [White Bear Lake's rising again, but locals still push for a fix](#)



- Strib: [City of White Bear Lake recommits to lake lawsuit fight](#)
- Brainerd Dispatch: [Funding supports Pine River dam improvements, work study position](#)
- DNR: [Stream survey shows South Branch Whitewater River recovering](#)
- KSTP: [New U of M Research Lab Works to Stop Aquatic Invasive Species](#)
- Lake Country News Chronicle: [One Watershed, One Plan draft ready for public review](#)
- The Journal: [Mill City Quarter Woonerf](#) includes stormwater management practices to protect the Mississippi River
- DNR: [Zebra mussels confirmed in Franklin Lake in Otter Tail County](#)
- MPCA: [Stormwater runoff management](#)
- EPA: [National Nonpoint Source Program —a catalyst for water quality improvements](#); 2 MN projects are highlighted in this release
- Brainerd Dispatch: [Crow Wing County Board: Headwaters board eyes property for conservation](#)

## WATER SUPPLY

- KNSI: [Water Main Break Closes Intersection](#)
- Mesabi Daily News: [Hibbing Water to be Retested for Lead Next Week](#)
- Bell Plaine Herald: [Cologne OKs PFA Loan for New Well, Water Treatment Plant](#)
- Pine and Lakes Echo Journal: [Backus: Preconstruction meeting held for water extension](#); legacy gasoline contamination led to a ban on drilling in a neighborhood now to be served by city water
- The Daily Journal: [Fergus Falls wins award for its water](#)
- Hometown Focus: [Mountain Iron receives Water Fluoridation Quality Award](#)

## WASTEWATER

- MPCA: [CWP, SSTS and BMP spell less pollution](#)

## AG & WATER

- MPR: [With harvest's end, buffer law work begins](#); Farm Forum: [Buffer law work begins after harvest ends](#); Inforum: [Is MN buffer law broad-stroke overreach or common-sense benefit?](#)
- Environmental Initiative: Partnership to Watch: [Ceres, WWF, and the AgWater Challenge](#)
- Midwest Energy News: [New bioenergy approach could mean cleaner water, plus a big payday for farmers](#)
- Strib: [Retiring Doug Peterson of Farmers Union, a veteran advocate for family farms, reflects on ag changes](#)
- Steele County Times: [Reorganization In Environmental Services Changes Feedlot Priorities](#)
- MASWCD: ["The Dirt" on Redwood SWCD-Creating a specialized team to meet conservation needs](#)

## EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES

- Hibbing Daily Tribune: [Three environmental groups file suit against Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#); Business North: [MPCA faces lawsuit over Minntac permit](#); Mesabi Daily News: [Minntac at center of environmental suit](#); MPR: [Environmentalists sue state over Minntac water permit](#); The Timberjays: [Lawsuit seeks to force response to Minntac pollution](#)
- Duluth News Tribune: [PCA issues draft Minntac water permit](#); MPR: [Regulators release draft environmental permit for Iron Range mine](#); Strib: [Minnesota pollution regulators propose for first time deadlines for Minntac tailings basin to meet goals](#); written comments on the draft permit will be accepted until 12/16 and should be submitted to: Erik Smith, MPCA, 520 Lafayette Rd. North, St. Paul, MN 55155 or [erik.smith@state.mn.us](mailto:erik.smith@state.mn.us); comments must include a statement of your interest in the draft permit, the specific action you wish the MPCA to take, and reasons supporting your position.
- MPR: [Environmentalists want mining company's lawsuit dismissed](#)

## OPINIONS

- Waseca County News: [Improving Waseca County's water quality begins with you](#)

## BEYOND MINNESOTA

### REGIONAL

- MPR: [Southeastern U.S. grappling with drought](#); AL.com: [Birmingham Water Works declares 'extreme drought emergency,' surcharges go up to 400 percent](#)
- MyAJC: [Revived 'compact' could be court's answer to Georgia-Florida water war](#)
- Winona Daily News: [Algal blooms lead to 'impaired designation' for Lake Erie](#)
- The Wall Street Journal: [Florida Sinkhole Heightens Concerns About Fertilizer Industry](#)
- Wisconsin State Journal: [Scott Walker calls for manure digester proposals to address water quality issues](#)
- Wisconsin State Farmer: [GLC brokers Fox River water quality trade](#); the first modern water quality trade has been made between a crop farmer and a waste-water treatment facility
- Great Lakes Connection: [One Water: A New Way to Think about Water Systems](#)

### NATIONAL

- Science: [Water strategies for the next administration](#)

- Fitch: [More US Infrastructure Failures Likely as Asset Ages Rise](#)
- EPA: [Contaminant Candidate List 4-CCL 4](#); 97 unregulated chemical and 12 microbial contaminants found in drinking water systems are candidates for federal regulation; 3 pesticides that were on the draft list were removed because they are not widely found in drinking water; the EPA is required to update the list every 5 years and choose at least 5 contaminants for deeper analysis
- Science: [Could power plant waste help cut water pollution?](#)

## REPORTS

### STATE OF MN WATER

- DNR: Stream Flow Report – discontinued until spring
- National Drought Mitigation Center: [11/22 Drought Monitor](#)
- DNR: [October Hydrologic Conditions Report](#); despite no drought and high stream flows, some low lake and aquifer levels still present (see the last 2 pages)

### MPCA WASTEWATER LISTENING SESSIONS (verbatim from MPCA)



#### Listening sessions: MPCA needs to communicate more, make it easier to comply

More communication, more technology and more user-friendly permits – these were some of the main themes the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) heard from wastewater professionals during listening sessions in October. MPCA staff held sessions for municipal wastewater discharge permit holders in Marshall, Detroit Lakes, Duluth, Brainerd, Rochester, and St. Paul.

#### What we heard

About 100 people total attended the sessions and the comments fall into these major themes:

**MPCA needs to communicate more.** For example, permit holders are looking for more information about:

- How water quality standards are developed, how people can get involved in that process, how they protect resources and uses, etc.
- The MPCA’s switch to a new database and impact to the format of hard copy permits. One permit holder said, “The look of the new permit was a shock.”
- Status of permit applications, reviews, and reissuance.

- Water quality trading.
- Regulatory certainty program.
- Chloride water quality standard and impact to cities.

On a related note to communication, permit holders said **the agency needs to be more approachable.** “That’s like arguing with the state trooper standing outside your car window,” said one permit holder.

**MPCA needs to use more current and reliable technology:**

- Allow online permit applications. At least provide a permit holder’s last application that can simply be updated.
- Provide an online tracking system of the permit application process.
- Fix problems with eDMRs.

**Cities want more time to review and discuss draft permits,** among city personnel and elected officials as well as with MPCA staff.

- Cities want more time even if that means going beyond the 150-day goal to issue permits. Start dialogue with city much earlier in reissuance process. “If 150 days is a target, I’d like to take 180 days and do it right the first time,” said one community representative.
- Keep in mind cities’ budgeting requirements when setting limits that require major changes in operation and/or facilities.

**Make it easier to comply.** “Think about the operators. These are the people pushing the buttons, turning the valves and opening the gates. Compliance starts with them,” said one permit holder.

- Make permits more user-friendly.
- Permits should have a check-list to help operators keep track of due dates and monitoring requirements.

**Point sources feel they are doing the bulk of lake and stream cleanup work.** “When is agriculture going to have to do its share? Let’s go to where the problem is,” said one community representative.

- MPCA needs to do more to highlight the positive impact on water quality from wastewater treatment facilities.

**What we’re doing**

MPCA staff are meeting to discuss the comments heard and set priorities for the next steps to take. Actions already taken include:

- Changing some of the confusing questions on eDMRs, such as “Yes, there is no discharge.”
- Working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to align cropping cycles for reporting purposes.
- Planning more frequent On Point newsletters.
- Planning a question and answer session at the annual wastewater conference (see below).

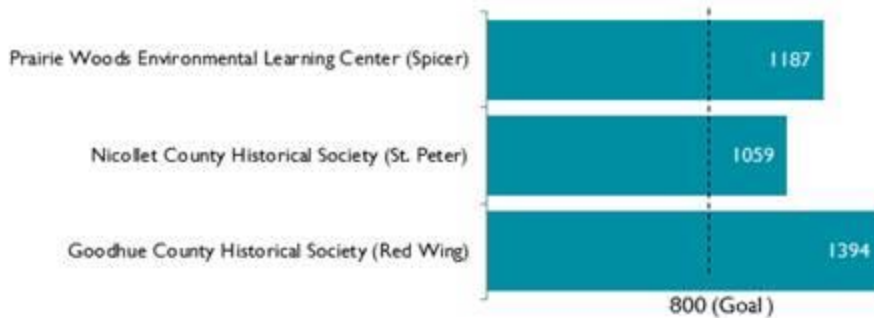
**What’s next**

- The MPCA is finishing compiling all the notes from the listening sessions and will email them to participants who provided addresses.
- The agency is considering a seventh listening session on the Iron Range.
- The MPCA will continue to communicate about changes made as a result of the sessions via On Point.

**SMITHSONIAN WATER/WAYS**

Staff from the MN Humanities Center have reported that the Smithsonian Water/Ways and MN We Are Water exhibits are half way through their MN tour. Exhibit attendance has exceeded expectations and comments have been overwhelmingly positive. The numbers displayed below exclude the number of people participating in the engagement activities, which will be reported at a future date. One thing attendees want others to know about the exhibit is: the importance of taking care of our water by both protecting and conserving it.

## Exhibit visitors



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Nov 19-Jan 1: **Smithsonian Water/Ways Exhibit** at the [Audubon Center of the Northwoods](#) in Sandstone
- Dec 1-3: **MN Association of Watershed Districts Annual Meeting & Trade Show**; Arrowwood Conference Center, Alexandria; Drainage workshop on 12/1; conference agenda, costs, and registration [here](#)
- Dec 4-6: **MN Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Meeting & Trade Show**; \$145 to \$220 (depending on days participating); Double Tree Hotel – Bloomington; details [here](#)
- Dec 5-6: **Association of MN Counties Annual Conference**; Hyatt Regency Minneapolis; \$375 before 11/4 & \$400 after; schedule [here](#); registration [here](#)
- Jan 17-19: 34th Annual **Red River Basin Land & Water International Summit Conference** “Passport to Progress: Thinking Beyond Our Boundaries”; \$225, Ramada Plaza Hotel in Fargo; more info [here](#)
- Jan 23-24: **MN Water Well Association’s 95th Annual Trade Show and Convention**; Minneapolis Marriott NW; more info to come [here](#)
- Jan 31-Feb 2: **MN Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Annual Conference and Trade Show**; 1 Day fee-\$170 member/\$200 Nonmember or 2 Day fee-\$330 member/\$390 nonmember; Verizon Wireless Center in Mankato; schedule [here](#); register [here](#)
- Feb 7: **Nutrient Management Conference**, St. Cloud; details to be announced
- Feb 16: U of MN Extension’s **Nitrogen: Minnesota's Grand Challenge and Compelling Opportunity**; Verizon Wireless Center (1 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato); details to come [here](#)
- Mar 7-9: 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual **MN Rural Water Association Water & Wastewater Technical Conference**; St Cloud; details to come [here](#)
- Apr 17: **MN Water Technology Export Roundtable: The Water Energy Nexus**, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. @ Aeration Industries (4100 Peavey Road, Chaska) \$30 (includes lunch)
- May 9: Minnesota Day at the **National Climate Adaptation Forum**; registration can be found [here](#)