

Legislative Water Commission Update: 08/08/2018

ERRORS? OMISSIONS? Please notify: jim.stark@lcc.leg.mn

This bi-weekly update is a roundup of Minnesota water news, as well as articles from beyond Minnesota, that may inform members. It also includes summaries of meetings and reports as well as information about upcoming events. During the Legislative Session, updates on water-related legislation and committee activities are added. Any errors or omissions are inadvertent.

I look forward to continuing to work on water issues that are important to all of us.

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Subscribe to the weekly update & follow LWC meetings at: www.lcc.leg.mn/lwc/

- **Next meeting of the Legislative Water Commission: August 21 (10 am) at the State Office Building, Room 10.**
- **Please note the date change for the August 21 LWC meeting**
- **The Commission met on July 26. Minutes are available at: www.lcc.leg.mn/lwc/**

NEWS FROM THE LEGISLATIVE WATER COMMISSION (LWC):

The Legislative Water Commission (LWC) met on July 26. During the LWC meeting, members discussed water issues and proposed legislative recommendations for the 2019 session. Those issues include: a desired future state plan for water; wastewater infrastructure; drinking water; groundwater sustainability; lakes; and keeping water on the land. At this time, two stakeholder meeting have been held and the meetings have been well attended. The next stakeholder meeting will be on August 8 at 1:00 pm at the State Office Building, Room 10.

The LWC will hold stakeholder meetings to prepare for the 2019 legislative session. Meetings will be in the State Office Building at 1:00 pm. Contact Jim Stark for additional details (jim.stark@lcc.leg.mn)

- *Drinking Water/Infrastructure/ Groundwater Sustainability (July 18)*
- *Wastewater and storm water Infrastructure (July 25)*
- *Keeping Water on the Land (Retention) (August 8)*
- *Lake Sustainably (August 22)*
- *Desired Future State for Minnesota Waters (August 29)*

WATER IN THE NEWS:

LCCMR approves Four Million Dollars to a National Loon Center: Lakeland News by Anthony Scott July 30, 2018: Pertains to LCCMR recommended project 252-G

Board of Water and Soil Resources: The FY19 Clean Water Fund RFP now open: The FY19 CWF RFP opened on July 9th, and will close at on August 31st. Applications must be submitted via eLINK, BWSR's grant management system. Applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the application process early so that they can request help if they need it. Eligible applicants without a current eLINK user account must submit an account request no later than 7 days prior to the application deadline. [Read more](#)

AGENCY NEWS (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Water Front: [\(View it as a webpage.\)](#))

(Subscribe to Water Front via Email Alerts, available at www.pca.state.mn.us/waterfront)

- [Open for comment: Studies on Lake Superior-North, Mississippi River-Headwaters and Thief River watersheds](#)
- [Giant Lego watershed helps teach water science](#)
- [In the news and online: Lawsuits filed over mining leases, local partners focus on water quality](#)

From the Freshwater Society of Minnesota:

- [Torrential flows threaten area rivers](#), by Tim Krohn, Mankato Free Press.
- [Iowa farmers won water pollution court fight; water still polluted](#), by Mark Steil, MPR
- [Research and Policy Intern Brian Bohman is working with Carrie Jennings on issues of excess sedimentation in the LMRWD](#). Read about his work.
- [Why so much sand in the lower Minnesota River?](#) by Carrie Jennings, research and policy director, published by the University of Minnesota
- [Runoff and rain gardens: Seeing the city through the lens of a Master Water Steward](#)
- [Read about Long Lake's short- and long-term plans to improve water quality](#), with assistance from Freshwater Society.
- [Check out this water timeline](#), highlighting important water events since 1953.

GROUNDWATER

Potato grower stops expansion: There are over 200 agricultural wells in the Pinelands Sands Area that have permits to irrigate crops. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has given notice that it would require an environmental study to proceed with three new permits. ([Star Tribune](#))



INVASIVE SPECIES

MPR: The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources says starry stonewort, an invasive species, has been confirmed in Medicine Lake, in the west metro. It's the first new case of starry stonewort in the state this year. The aquatic invader is now confirmed in 12 Minnesota lakes. Starry stonewort is a grass-like algae that can form dense mats that make boating, fishing and swimming difficult. "This is a relatively new invasive species for Minnesota," said Keegan Lund, invasive species biologist with the DNR. Other Minnesota lakes with starry stonewort include Grand, Mud and Rice lakes in Stearns County; Cass, Moose, Turtle and Upper Red lakes in Beltrami County; Lake Minnewaska in Pope County; West Lake Sylvia in Wright County; and Lake Winnibigoshish in Cass and Itasca counties.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Minnesota Association of Small Cities: USDA Rural Development has more than \$4 billion loans available now to help rural communities build or upgrade water infrastructure. This is a substantial increase from last year. The American Water Works Association estimates that more than \$600 billion is needed over the next 20 years to upgrade our nation's water and wastewater systems. In Minnesota, the future needs increased \$800 million over just the past two years, and now projects to \$4.99 billion in needs over the next 20 years, based on the 2018 state Biennial Survey of Wastewater Collection and Treatment. For access to the USDA *RDApply* process, see: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rd-apply>

RIVERS, STREAMS AND FLOODS

High Water: Safety officials warn paddlers, boaters and swimmers to pay attention to river levels. High water levels mean fast moving water with a lot of debris. [Check your local conditions](#)

SURFACE WATER/STORMWATER

National Flood Forecast Center, North Central Region: Due to recent rainfall, there are areas where the potential for flooding is occurring or is possible. For details, visit: www.weather.gov/ncrfc

BREAKING: 2nd Circ. Won't Sink EPA Cooling Water Rule : The Second Circuit on Monday upheld the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's rule requiring power plants and manufacturers to minimize damage to aquatic life caused by pulling in water from lakes, rejecting challenges from power industry and environmental groups.

DNR: Maps and tables are available on stream flow conditions throughout Minnesota. Current stream flows are compared with historical flow data and watersheds are ranked in the following categories (flood, high, normal, low, protected flow). Weekly stream flow maps and tables are generated from April to October. [Weekly Stream Flow Reports](#) | Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

WATER AND AGRICULTURE

Board of Water and Soil Resources: With its ability to take root in disturbed, sandy soil, partridge pea makes a good cover crop for erosion control. It's often called "sleeping plant" because its leaflets collapse into each other when touched. [Read more.](#)

Board of Water and Soil Resources: Field day touts versatile winter camellia: This cover crop endures drought, keeps nitrates out of groundwater, helps pollinators, and produces both a cooking oil and a biodiesel. [Read the story here.](#)

Board of Water and Soil Resources. As the Drainage Management Team reaches its 10-year mark, take a look at the group that explores ways to apply science to agricultural drainage. Its members hail from agencies ranging from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the University of Minnesota. [Read the story here.](#)

Agricultural wetland banking aids landowners: The Ag Bank provides opportunities for farmers to drain degraded wetlands in a way that is both legal and environmentally sustainable. It also provides options for landowners interested in restoring a wetland on their property. [Read the story here.](#)

Lakes: One of the largest, deepest, and cleanest of Douglas County's 400-some lakes is in danger of degrading. A Clean Water Fund grant supports efforts to collect samples throughout the summer from a county drainage ditch to help determine the best course of action. [Read the story here.](#)

WATER SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABLE WATER RESOURCES: This link contains national news regarding Sustainable Water Resources: <https://sites.google.com/site/sustainablewaterresources/> :Government Web Site, <https://acwi.gov/>

GREAT LAKES

Senate FY19 Appropriations Bill Permits Increased Spending; The Senate Appropriations Committee approved its version of the FY19 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill at its full committee markup . Its total allocation is \$35.85 billion. Of the EPA's \$8 billion, \$300 million of funding is for the **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)**, an amount ten times the amount requested in the administration's budget. The Appropriation's allocation means that federal funds have the potential to be consistent with the GLRI's Action Plan which "calls for land use, recreation and economic activities that are managed to ensure that nearshore aquatic, wetland and upland habitats will sustain the health and function of natural communities."

WATER QUALITY

Contaminants in Drinking Water: The Washington D.C.-based Environmental Working Group looked at data from 2010 through 2015, and found that the drinking water supplies in at least 15 Minnesota communities test positive for trichloroethylene, or TCE, **though none exceed the federal limit of 5 parts per billion**. TCE is linked to cancer and birth defects, among other things, and the Environmental Working Group argues that exposure to even small quantities can be harmful. The findings are part of a national assessment that looked at 321 public water systems in 36 states. (Source: MPR)

Estimating annual chloride use in Minnesota: Salt is used every day in many applications. People add salt to food, apply salt to pavement and roads after snowfall, and use salt in their water softeners. While salt is inexpensive to purchase, it can have a high environmental cost, as elevated chloride levels are toxic to many plant and aquatic species. Contact *Alycia Overbo and Sara Heger, University of Minnesota, Water Resources*

UPCOMING EVENTS

The University of Minnesota is hosting a selection of talks about the latest research on starry stonewort, zebra mussels, spiny water flea, invasive carp, and more. **Register**

Registration is now open for the 2018 Minnesota Climate Adaptation Conference, which will be held on November 14, 2018 at the Continuing Education and Conference Center on the St. Paul Campus The goal of the conference is to inspire and encourage greater implementation of climate adaptation practices in communities throughout Minnesota. This year's focus will be "Climate Adaptation: Past, Present, Future, and Together." More details on the program will be posted on the conference website as speakers are confirmed. <https://www.wrc.umn.edu/news-events/climateadaptationconference>

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association: The quarterly meeting will be held on August 14 [linked here](#) in La Crosse. The Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program Coordinating Committee quarterly meeting will meet on August 15: [linked here](#). Location: UMESC (Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center). For additional information, please see <http://umrba.org/meetings.htm>, or call the UMRBA office at 651-224-2880.

SWCD 80th Anniversary Event: Minnesota's first Soil and Water Conservation District will celebrate 80 years of assisting landowners at an event near Lewiston, Minnesota on August 14. The Winona County Soil and Water Conservation District was established in 1938 under the name Burns-Homer-Pleasant Soil Conservation District. The celebration will begin with an afternoon conservation bus tour. A following program featuring comments from conservation professionals and elected officials will follow. The event will conclude with a 6 p.m. dinner. Contact the **contacting Winona County SWCD staff by calling 507-523-2171 ext. 3.**

UNDERSTANDING GROUNDWATER in the WATERSHED CONTEXT: August 28th (Pine River) and November 14th (Sauk River); This informational event is tailored for local government staff and officials in each watershed whose jobs involve planning for or implementing local water and land use practices or policies. Each event will provide 1) a basic, scientific understanding of groundwater and its interaction with surface water and 2) various perspectives on why, who, and how to protect this essential, shared, resource. Pre-registration is required: Sharon.pfeifer@state.mn.us

Minnesota Ground Water Association Fall Conference (November 15, 2018); the conference is accepting abstracts for oral presentations. The preferred topic is regional groundwater planning. Email your abstract and biography to president@mgwa.org by September 1, 2018.

The International Association of Great Lakes Research and Michigan Technological University have announced the 2018 State of Lake Superior (SOLS) Conference will be held October 9-12 in Houghton, Michigan. Hosted on the MTU campus, SOLS will be a multi-day conference and include invited sessions and abstracts, plenary sessions, field trips, and associated meetings. Stay tuned for more details and the Call for Sessions in coming weeks at iaglr.org/sol/sols18.

2018 Aquatic Invasive Species Research and Management Showcase: [Join the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center on campus on Wednesday, September 12](#) for a selection of talks about the latest MAISRC research on starry stonewort, zebra mussels, spiny water flea, invasive carp, and much more. The list of breakout sessions and full presentation descriptions will be announced soon.

The biennial 2018 Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference (UMISC) will be a Joint Conference with the North American Invasive Species Management Association, **October 15-18, 2018** at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester, MN. Abstract Submission Is Open. Deadline to Submit an Abstract for Presentation: Wednesday, April 11, 2018. They are expecting about 700 people to attend. See <https://www.umisc.net/> or contact Doug Jensen, conference co-chair.

Minnesota Water Resources Conference: October 16–17, 2018, Saint Paul River Centre: The Minnesota Water Resources Conference presents innovative, practical, and applied water resource engineering solutions, management techniques, and current research about Minnesota's water resources. For More information contact: Nichole Salinas, College of Continuing and Professional Studies, University of Minnesota, [612-301-2448](tel:612-301-2448), ccapsconf3@umn.edu

NOAA Science Seminar series: Climate Science Special Report: Webinar Access: This information is still being finalized. *Subscribe to the [OneNOAA seminar list](#) to receive up-to-date information.*

This Week in Washington: (Northeast- Midwest Institute)



Farm Bill: A conference committee is expected to negotiate a compromise between the two versions of the Farm Bill. This committee will face "a number of difficult decisions" including work requirements for the Supplemental Assistance Program and changes to the conservation title, according to *Politico*. The House's version of the Farm Bill would increase the Conservation Reserve Program's limit to 29 million acres, set the gross income cap to \$900,000 for farmers in order to obtain subsidies, and require able-bodied individuals between the ages of 18 and 59 to work in order to receive SNAP benefits. None of these provisions are consistent with the Senate's bill that only increased the CRP's limit to 25 million acres, decreased the gross income cap to \$700,000, and did not change SNAP's work requirements. The House version would also eliminate the Conservation Stewardship Program and fold it into the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, while the Senate version would keep both programs intact.