

2019 Legislative Recommendations
Legislative Water Commission
Top Ten Recommendation
DRAFT, for discussion
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Top Three Recommendations Based on Survey Results:

A 2) Support increases to the Public Facilities Authority General Obligation Bonding process to address aging water infrastructure. Minnesota’s water-related infrastructure is aging and presents threats to our economy and to public health, particularly for small towns and cities. Place additional emphasis on upgrading wastewater, storm water and drinking water infrastructure. Support infrastructure needs that address risks to public health, such as lead service-line replacements. Provide local governments and water utilities with support and tools to assess and implement efficient alternatives to address aging water infrastructure. Support cost-effectiveness reviews of best-management practices at drinking water, wastewater and storm-water facilities. For example, consider implementing storm water-quality credit trading options based on work being conducted an LCCMR grant to the Shell Rock River Watershed District. Begin to address the worst of our leaking septic system problem areas. (Budget Recommendation and Support)

C 6) Water Retention--Keeping water on the land can improve water quality, soil health, groundwater recharge, and the health of rivers and lakes. However, we need to be efficient in how we incentivize best-management practices on the landscape. Increase incentives that support efficient best-management practices at the right locations. Activities should be encouraged by agency efforts through local one-watershed/ one-plan programs. Options could include efforts such as more efficient agricultural practices, watercourse BMP implementation, and cover crops. Support programs that provide a better understanding of the extend of tile drains and ditches as well as their hydrologic consequences. Encourage local implementation of clean water projects. Based on the Governor’s Town Hall feedback, our citizens want Clean Water Funds allocated for activities at regional levels rather than all at the state level. Citizens want measurable outcomes, accountability, and clear assessments of whether waters are improving. Encourage inter-jurisdictional water planning through the one-watershed/one-plan process. Fund a cost/benefit/return on investment analysis of conservation drainage-management practices to understand the benefits of remedial incentive programs. Promote and encourage pilot watershed-scale pollutant trading and banking programs as potential management practices to reduce nutrients and sediments in rivers and lakes based on pilot programs being funded by the LCCMR. Promote existing programs and incentives to leverage other funding programs to maximize land-owner involvement and enrollment in conservation practices. (Enhance Existing Programs)

B 3) Expand source-water protection programs to protect drinking water that include streams, and aquifers that supply drinking water for public and private water supplies. Identify vulnerable aquifers that are used as sources of private drinking water. Begin a program of real-time, water monitoring to detect potential threats to water supplies, develop early responses, and provide public reporting. Improve monitoring, public information and education, about contaminants in drinking water used for private wells. Protect vulnerable aquifers. Support the Clean Water Council’s recommendations to enhance clean water by increasing continuous vegetative cover on cropland with an initial focus on wellhead protection areas, through development of new agricultural production systems, markets, and supply chains. Provide incentives to protect groundwater used as sources of drinking water. (Enhance Existing Programs)

Recommendations In Support of Governor’s Town Hall Meeting Results or Agency Plans:

A 1) Reduce over-use of salt – it impairs our lakes, rivers and groundwater--Limit overuse of chloride deicing chemicals on public and commercial parking lots and sidewalks. Propose/support legislation to limit liability for deicing applicators and property owners, after providing training and certification. Begin by implementing a plan for the Capitol grounds.

C 1) Information, Education and Public Awareness: Continue to support agency efforts to collect information needed to manage and improve waters of the state. Continue to support the County Geologic Atlas Program. Increase emphasis on collecting information to understand groundwater and surface-water interactions. Improve understanding of our water balances (water bank accounts) needed for water planning. Incorporate this effort into existing programs, such as the County Atlas Program and the One Watershed/One Plan program. Use existing information about groundwater recharge, streamflow, and water use to identify priorities for sustainability implementation. Apply these analyses to assess priority areas for future groundwater management area programs. Increase efforts to construct and apply groundwater models, to assess regional groundwater availability and sustainability. Incorporate groundwater modeling into watershed planning in areas of groundwater concern. Increase public education based on these programs. The role of education is undervalued in protecting water resources. The Governor's Town Hall meetings recognized the need for additional water-resources training and education. Minnesotans understand the need to change behavior in order to reach sustainable water-resource goals.

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 lakes priority document for accelerated lake-management. Prepare an interagency plan to integrate lake-assessment results into regulatory programs to improve 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

B 9) Develop a Statewide Water Policy. --Statewide water-quality and quantity regulation and management is coordinated by state agencies. However, rigorous processes, involving multiple agencies often creates delays in decisions. Develop policy to guide adaptation to adjust to changes that likely will occur to climate, landscapes, biota, hydrology and infrastructure. Establish an interagency/legislative water-policy process that includes the Future State of Water. The policy should include specific and emerging issues such as a statewide guide for mineral development and plans to manage our water for uncertain future conditions that include constraints, goals, and expectations. Incorporate a better understand the importance that water plays in providing ecological services. Include a process to address the impacts of long-term variations in precipitation and temperature on water supply and on ecological services

Legislation that Addresses Specific Topical Legislative Needs

A 4) Increase funding to ensure the safety of publicly-supplied drinking water. Legislation to increase the MDH drinking-water service-connection fee. This needed increase will allow MDH to complete condition assessments and asset management plans for drinking-water supply systems

A 7) Legislation to allow wastewater districts to use existing revenue to address inflow and infiltration problems associated public and private wastewater infrastructure. Inflow and infiltration infrastructure repair needs affect groundwater quality and wastewater treatment demands. Legislation is needed to allow wastewater districts to use existing revenue for public and private property inflow and infiltration mitigation.

A6) Legislation to provide long-term, independent, peer review of wastewater standards. Memorialize, in statue, the current MPCA practice. This legislation would support MPCA efforts to provide additional scientific and public review of new and revised water-quality standards, and would ensure that the process continues.

B 8) In conjunction with the University of Minnesota, create and support programs focused on healthy soil and healthy water. Encourage the expansion of existing programs to improve soil health, aimed at increasing agricultural productivity and water retention.