

**Legislative Water Commission
2019 Legislative Session
Water Recap
June 4 2019**

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QUESTIONS? Contact Jim Stark jim.stark@lcc.leg.mn

There were nearly 3,000 bills introduced in the House and in the Senate. Many of those bills relate to water or to the environment.

Legacy Funds: About \$630 million was allocated to the four Legacy Funds

- **The Outdoor Heritage Fund** received \$127 M. The Outdoor Heritage Program includes habitat protection (\$50.1 million), prairies (\$38.3 million), wetlands (\$20.8 million), and forests (\$17 million). Four of the largest projects included grassland enhancement, shallow lake and wetland protection, accelerated wildlife management area programs, and restoration of the St Louis River Estuary.

- **The Clean Water Fund** received \$261 M. About half goes to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (\$138.4 million). Those funds are allocated as follows: \$32 million is for surface and drinking water protection and restoration grants; \$27 million for grants to watersheds with multiyear plans; \$24 million in administration grants for soil and water conservation districts; and \$17.3 million for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Clean Water funds also go to the MPCA (\$46.5 million); Agriculture (\$21.7 million); DNR (\$18.6 million); Public Facilities Authority (\$18.3 million); and Health (\$13 million). In addition, funds are allocated to the University of Minnesota for the County Geologic Atlas program and Forever Green Initiative.

LCCMR: The Environment and Natural Resources Budget bill included Trust Fund appropriations for 82 projects totaling \$62M. Many of these are water related projects. Those included water infrastructure loans to cities of \$5M, as well as funding for a study of enhanced and managed aquifer recharge.

Other Legislative Highlights:

- **MDH Water Connection Fee was adopted:** This fee protects drinking water through a small increase in connection to public water supplies that are owned by cities (LWC initiative).
- **Independent peer review of wastewater standards was adopted:** This incorporates the MPCA Commissioner's order into statute. It provides additional scientific and public review of new and revised water-quality standards, where EPA guidance is absent, and ensures that the process continues for future administrations (LWC initiative).
- **Water Education:** Provides grants to schools for water conservation programming, curriculum development, classroom instruction assistance, outreach, and community volunteer training. (LWC, Senator Wiger, Rep. Fischer)
- **A bill that updates the Clean Water Legacy Act and related provisions.** The Clean Water Legacy Act established a framework for assessing and improving the state's waters as required under the Clean Water Act. This bill improves coordination among watershed management organizations. (Rep. Fischer)
- **Nitrogen fertilizer rule:** The Legislature did not change rules to restrict how farmers can apply nitrogen fertilizer. The legislation did provide \$350,000 from the Environmental Trust Fund to improve nitrate reduction best-management practices in southeastern Minnesota.
- **Buffer Compensation:** The Administration had proposed a tax credit for farmers who comply with the buffer law that requires grass or other perennials to be planted next to waterways. The Legislature did not pass the tax credit for buffers, but did pass other property tax changes that could benefit farmers.
- **Sustainable crop research:** The University of Minnesota's Forever Green program is developing crops aimed at being both profitable for farmers and beneficial to Minnesota's environment. The University received \$4.3 million from the Legacy Amendment's Clean Water Fund.
- **The environmental impact study of karst areas was not funded**
- **The EQB received funds to plan for the assumption of the Clean Water Act's (Section 404) wetland permit process**
- **The salt applicator training and limited applicator liability was not funded**
- **The Pineland Sands environmental Impact Study was not funded**
- **The statewide action plan for soil health was not funded**

LWC, JRS, 6/4/19