



## Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy

65 State Office Building

St. Paul, MN 55155-1201

Phone: (651) 284-6431

Fax: (651) 297-3697 TDD (651) 296-9896

### 2020 Legislative Priorities

#### July 2019

The Legislature Water Commission was re-established as the Legislative Coordinating Commission's Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy (committee) by Legislative Leadership. Because water is important, complex, controversial, and costly, the development of water policy needs to be undertaken thoughtfully. The 12 member, bi-cameral and bi-partisan committee is developing funding and policy recommendations for the 2020 session. The committee's draft recommendations are based on discussions among committee members, stakeholders and state agency personnel. The committee also used input from more than 2500 citizens during the 2017 water town hall sessions. Discussion papers on each of these issues will be completed by September. We would appreciate your comments on these recommendations as well as an opportunity to brief you on any of the recommendations.

**The priority issues for 2020 are as follows:**

- **Ensure clean and sustainable drinking water**
- **Protect and enhance the quality of our streams, lakes and groundwater**
- **Ensure that water infrastructure is adequate**

**Following are 2020 legislative priority issues that are being reviewed and discussed over the summer. Others will be added:**

- Clean Water Act (Section) 404 wetland permit assumption: The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) would assume many of the permit responsibilities (section 404), which could save time and money. Staffing and costs need evaluation.
- Simplifying the Water Quality Standard Review Process be simplified? There are concerns regarding the amount of time it takes for the review and modification of water-quality standards for rivers. Could this process be simplified and shortened? Ideas and feedback are being considered in consultation with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.
- Legislation creating a Department of Water Resources. This bill would combine water responsibilities and also abolish some agencies. There may be some benefits. There may be unintended consequence. A One Water Agency has been studied in the past. What association's interagency effectiveness changes have been recommended or implemented?
- Legislation that would combine the LWC and CWC
- Status of General funds for the environment: The state's general funding for the environment has declined. Even with dedicated funds, conservation spending has decreased over the past twenty years. The paper explores the status of general and dedicated funds and offers recommendation
- Can we better measure and promote the effectiveness of dedicated funds for water to ensure citizen approval?
- How do our environmental and water programs compare to other states?
- How can there be better coordinate programs among the committee, CWC, LSOH and LCCMR?
- Have we identified and are we addressing Minnesota's most important water priorities?
- Can we prioritize conservation procurements for the greatest benefit?
- How do we balance the funds spent for water protection, preservation and restoration?
- Can we evaluate and incentivize the most effective water storage facilities

**Following are issues carried over from the 2019 legislative session that are being reconsidered for the 2020 session:**

- Are we effectively conducting water planning to meet future needs? In cooperation with the EQB, provide guidance for the preparation of a Statewide Water Policy for an uncertain future. Policy is needed to guide adaptation for changes that likely will occur to climate, landscapes, biota, hydrology and infrastructure.
- Water Infrastructure: Increase efforts to address our leaking water infrastructure. Inflow and infiltration infrastructure leaks affect drinking water, groundwater quality and wastewater treatment. Broken sewer lines affects our ability to successfully treat waste water and the problem continues to grow over time.
- Ensure that water infrastructure is adequate: Minnesota's water-related infrastructure is aging and presents threats to our economy and to public health. Increase PFA General Obligation Bond appropriations on a continuing basis.

- Water Retention: Keeping Water on the Land: Keeping water on the land reduces erosion, improves soil health and water quality, increases groundwater recharge and improves agricultural production. Support return-on-investment analyses of conservation drainage.
- Continue efforts to reduce the use of de-icing salt that impairs lakes, rivers and groundwater.
- Information and Management for Clean and Sustainable Drinking Water: Expand agency support for data collection and analysis. Improve understanding of “water bank accounts” in County Atlas and One Watershed/ One Plan programs.
- Expand Source Water Protection to all sources of drinking water, including rivers and private drinking water sources. Identify and protect our most-vulnerable aquifers used as sources of private drinking water.
- Healthy Soil and Healthy Water: Soil improvement is good for agriculture and for our water. Legislative support is needed for the UM Office of Soil Health which includes recognition and support for funding needs for long- term research as well as support for a state-wide soil-health action plan.
- Preserving and protecting our lakes. Fund a comprehensive program to provide policy and plans to protect our lakes.
- Continue to increase Water Education in Public schools:

### **WHAT’S NEEDED?**

The committee continues to review and develop detailed position papers each of these topics. Some topics will be developed for proposed legislation during the fall. The following path forward is requested.

- Feedback from environment and policy committees, and divisions, in the House and Senate
- Topical presentations to those committees and divisions as the session begins.