

Clean Water Fund recommendations



The Clean Water Fund supports the state agencies and local partners that protect, enhance and restore water quality in lakes, rivers and streams and protect groundwater from degradation.



River and lake monitoring/assessment

CHALLENGE: Minnesota's rivers and lakes are exposed to pollution from a variety of sources. Monitoring water quality and aquatic life helps state agencies and local partners target future efforts to reduce existing and prevent new pollution.

RECOMMENDATION: \$18.9 million to continue systematic monitoring of Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and streams to detect long-term changes in water quality, plan restoration projects, and monitor the effectiveness of past efforts.

IMPORTANCE: Water quality monitoring is the foundation of clean water projects. This recommendation continues a successful program while adding capacity to monitor for emerging contaminants such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS).



Groundwater assessment

CHALLENGE: Most Minnesotans rely on groundwater for their drinking water, making it a critical state resource.

RECOMMENDATION: \$2 million to maintain Minnesota's groundwater monitoring network.

IMPORTANCE: Monitoring changes in groundwater serves as an early-warning system to protect human health. The data also allows for effective planning and monitoring of water quality improvement projects.



Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS)

CHALLENGE: Identify the most efficient and effective strategies to mitigate sources of pollution and protect high-quality waters in each of Minnesota's 80 major watersheds.

RECOMMENDATION: \$14.5 million to continue to develop and update strategies for local partners to efficiently achieve water quality goals.

IMPORTANCE: This comprehensive approach at the watershed level is demonstrating results across the state with improved water quality and greater efficiencies over time.



Wastewater / stormwater TMDL implementation

CHALLENGE: When water quality standards are not met, the MPCA develops a plan to restore water quality. This plan is called a total maximum daily load (TMDL). When stormwater or wastewater is contributing to the pollution problem, the TMDL needs to be turned into permit requirements.

RECOMMENDATION: \$3.2 million for staff capacity, tools, and technical assistance to local government for TMDL implementation.

IMPORTANCE: Supporting permittees with technical assistance and tools to guide their work helps them to meet their permit requirements and achieves pollution reductions in the most cost-effective way possible.



Enhanced statewide septic system program support

CHALLENGE: Failing septic systems can contaminate groundwater and nearby surface waters, leading to human health risks, algal blooms, and other problems. Upgrading and replacing systems is also costly, especially for the approximately 26,000 failing systems belonging to households with low-income.

RECOMMENDATION: \$7,082,000 to support septic system inspection, permitting, and improvement grants in 86 of 87 Minnesota counties.

IMPORTANCE: Nearly 30% of Minnesotans rely on septic systems to treat their household wastewater, 15 to 20% of those systems are not in compliance with operating requirements. This program will help local governments and families make necessary upgrades to protect water quality.



Chloride reduction

CHALLENGE: Chloride (salt) levels in Minnesota's surface and groundwater are climbing, which can harm aquatic life. Chloride does not break down over time, and is extremely expensive and impractical to remove. The primary sources are de-icing salt and water softening systems.

RECOMMENDATION: \$1.3 million to help local governments lessen chloride contamination of lakes and rivers by improving de-icing methods and reducing water softener salt discharges to wastewater treatment plants.

IMPORTANCE: More than 200 communities in Minnesota have elevated chloride levels in their wastewater discharge. Clean Water funding provides critical support to communities to reduce these discharges.



Clean Water Council

CHALLENGE: The Clean Water Council helps Minnesota make strategic investments in achieving clean water that are informed by stakeholders from across the state. The Council needs funding to continue this work.

RECOMMENDATION: \$922,000 to enable the Council to make funding recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature. The Council also tracks program implementation and sets a strategic plan.

IMPORTANCE: The Clean Water Council includes representatives of nonprofits, local government, hunting and fishing groups, agriculture, the Legislature, and others. The Council and its Policy Committee and Budget and Outcomes Committee hold monthly public meetings.



Voyageurs National Park water quality protection program

CHALLENGE: Thousands of septic systems upstream of Voyageurs National Park are failing, allowing undertreated wastewater to reach lakes, rivers, and groundwater. Nearly two-thirds of systems in this area are not fully functioning.

RECOMMENDATION: \$1.5 million for grants to protect the waters of Voyageurs National Park by replacing septic systems that are causing contamination.

IMPORTANCE: Protecting water quality at Voyageurs National Park will ensure it remains a national destination for generations to come.

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