FRESHWATER

Water Availability Atlas – Talking Points (March 2025)

Summary of concerns

- Minnesota is a water rich state, but the amount and quality of water available is very location specific.
- We know this because of 30+ years of investment in geologic and hydrogeologic mapping (County Atlases).
- Minnesota has incentivized large water users to locate here, but specific information about groundwater and surface water availability is not compiled in a way that can be evaluated comprehensively during the planning process.
- Both businesses and local units of government have an incentive to site large water use facilities in a location with sustainable water supply.
- Projects move quickly and quietly, in part because of proprietary information and the competitive nature of business development.
- Water-use conflicts, or lack of a sufficient water supply in a region, could introduce well interference issues and legal challenges, which could halt economic development.
- Local governments may not have the staff capacity or time to fully investigate the long-term impacts of proposed water-use scenarios.
- Regions beyond the metropolitan area do not have shared, regional planning groups to consider the cumulative impacts of large water users.

Solution

- Work with the Minnesota Geospatial Information Office to develop a simple online mapping tool that shows water availability across the state.
    - Maps like this already exist at a global scale, like the Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas. However, Minnesota has better localized data sets that can be used to create a more detailed map for Minnesota-specific projects.
    - Minnesota has the data to make a customized map reflecting the diversity of water abundance and scarcity in our state.
- Use this mapping tool to help cities, agencies and businesses make timely, informed decisions about locating water-intensive industries.
- Encourage cities to proactively identify sites with sustainable water supply in their comprehensive plans.