

April 29, 2025

Senator John Marty
Chair, Senate Finance
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3235
95 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Eric Pratt
Ranking Minority Member, Senate Finance
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 2217
95 University Avenue West St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Marty, Senator Pratt and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

I am submitting this written testimony to ask you to maintain funding for the Minnesota Geological Survey (MGS) at the University of Minnesota. MGS funding is entirely eliminated in the current version of the Senate Higher Education Committee omnibus bill. We recognize that spending needs to be curtailed, and we are willing to do our part, but zeroing out our state appropriation funding is disproportionate to most other proposed cuts, and will severely impact our ability to carry on our mission to provide essential water and mineral resource information across the state.

The MGS has been funded through an appropriation from the state since 1961; the current level of funding, 1.6m per biennium, has remained at that level since 2013, and provides 63 percent of our base funding, which in turn is 46 percent of our annual income. The remaining operating budget is directed towards the County Geologic Atlas (CGA) Program and comes from state and federally funded programs including the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, Clean Water Land and Legacy Fund, and various USGS national cooperative geologic mapping programs. These funds do not allow for base funding expenses critical for the CGA Program to run, including equipment costs, overhead, laboratory supplies, computers and peripherals. A funding cut to the base budget of the MGS will significantly compromise our ability to provide foundational support for state and local programs that use CGA maps and databases.

In addition to base-funding expenses, the state appropriation is used to support work outside of the CGA program that directly impacts ongoing programs within state agencies and local units of government, such as MPCA Remediation, DNR Ecological and Water Resources and Land and Minerals Divisions, MDH Well Management, Water Policy and Drinking Water Sections of the Environmental Health Division, MDA Pesticide and Fertilizer Division, County SWCDs and regional environmental health programs. MGS information is also widely used in the private sector that deals with water and mineral resources.

What is at stake?

- Ongoing, unbiased geologic mapping and database compilation to assist with Minnesota water quality and quantity assessment:
 - Extent of nitrate, PFAS or other contaminants by aquifer – which aquifers are impacted, and which ones are not?
 - Potential impact of high-capacity pumping on groundwater quantity, including data centers – which aquifers are impacted, and which ones are not?

- Ongoing, unbiased geologic mapping and database compilation to assist with Minnesota aggregate and critical mineral assessment
 - What is the extent of Minnesota's aggregate and critical mineral endowment?

Why the University of Minnesota?

By design, the Minnesota Geological Survey (MGS) was established by the state at the University of Minnesota, so it could provide an unbiased assessment of Minnesota's rocks, minerals and water resources. MGS is a non-regulatory unit that provides the "playing field" under our feet that all state programs use for all aspects of land water and mineral resources management. No other state entity does this. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Tipping, PhD
Director, Minnesota Geological Survey
University of Minnesota
College of Science and Engineering
Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences
tippi001@umn.edu
612-626-2150