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Report of the
1988 Minnesota
Environmental
Congress

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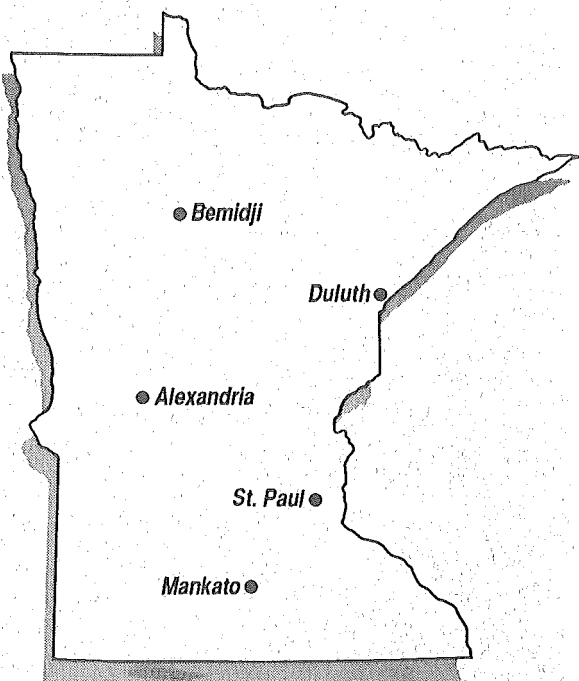
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Figure 1 1988 Environmental Congress Locations



**Local Co-Sponsors of the
1988 Environmental Congress were:**

- Alexandria Technical Institute**
- Bemidji State University**
- Mankato State University**
- University of Minnesota, Duluth**

Executive

Summary

In September and October, 1988, the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board hosted the second Minnesota Environmental Congress. Congress sessions were held in Alexandria, Bemidji, Duluth, Mankato, and Saint Paul. The goal of the board members was to hear from the citizens of Minnesota.

Characteristically, Minnesotans spoke their minds. Board members heard about ground water pollution, surface water pollution, solid waste concerns, the need for more recycling, the need for better public education on the environment, the need for better wildlife habitat, and ideas for financing environmental protection.

■ Important Environmental Issues for Minnesota (Chapter 2)

The issues identified at the different sessions were surprisingly similar for such a large and diverse state.

The need to protect the quality of Minnesota's ground water was an important issue at each Congress location. Specific concerns and needs included:

- *Finding and properly sealing abandoned wells;*
- *Testing of well water; and*
- *Better controls of toxins and pesticides to reduce the possibility of contamination.*

Another need identified at each Congress location was to protect Minnesota's surface waters. Congress participants noted that surface waters serve a number of important needs in Minnesota:

- *A source of drinking water;*

- *A wildlife and fish habitat;*
- *A recreational resource; and*
- *An important part of the tourist industry.*

A third concern was disposal of solid waste in Minnesota. The need for better education of the public and increased recycling were stressed by participants in each session. Most small groups also urged that the cost of disposal be included in the purchase price of products.

One opportunity discussed at all the sessions was that environmental education for children and adults can help address all environmental problems including:

- *Household hazardous waste;*
- *Recycling;*
- *Pesticide use and management;*
- *Proper abandonment of old water wells;*
- *Protection of wildlife habitat; and*
- *Soil conservation.*

Environmental education efforts should be aimed at children (including preschoolers) and adults according to many of the participants.

Protection of wildlife habitat was addressed at each location. According to Congress participants, wildlife is an important part of Minnesota and it can not survive if its habitat is destroyed. Of special concern was provision of adequate permanent funding for the Re-Invest in Minnesota program (RIM).

Better management of the environment and environmental protection programs are needed in a number of areas according to the 1988 Congress:

- *Coordination of state efforts;*
- *New approaches to avoid overuse of our recreation resources;*
- *Data for local water planning, and*

Management of the quantity of water Minnesotans use and protection of the needs of Northern Minnesota in allocation of Mississippi River basin water to uses in the Twin Cities area.

■ **Financing Environmental Protection (Chapter 3)**

The Congress participants noted a number of funding problems:

- *Many environmental programs require long term funding that is difficult to guarantee.*
- *Federal funding for environmental protection will continue to decline as it has since 1980.*
- *The cheap and easy solutions to environmental problems have already occurred--what is left is expensive and difficult.*

According to the participants, increased funding is, however, possible:

- *Polls have shown that Minnesotans are willing to pay more taxes to protect the environment.*
- *Support for the Environmental Trust Fund seems to be substantial. (This was latter confirmed by the overwhelming approval of the constitutional amendment by the voters.)*
- *Minnesotans contribute voluntarily to a number of environmental protection activities including the DNR's Non-game Wildlife Fund, Ducks Unlimited, and the Nature Conservancy.*

One guiding principal that emerged from all the funding discussions was: **The people who use or pollute the resource should pay the costs of maintaining or cleaning the resource.**

Participants noted that this would not only raise revenue to address the problems but could also reduce activities that harm the environment by increasing the cost of those activities.

■ Ground Water Protection (Chapter 4)

The open discussions on Minnesota's water protection plans stressed a number of concerns:

- *How should groundwater be protected from contamination by pesticides?*
- *How can abandoned wells and poorly constructed wells be found and sealed or corrected?*
- *How will counties pay the costs of implementing the water protection plans now being developed?*
- *How can the use of products that pollute Minnesota's waters be reduced?*
- *How can the state weigh the needs of the metropolitan area against the needs of greater Minnesota?*

Participants at all five Congress locations agreed that protection of Minnesota's ground water resources was of primary importance now and for future generations.

Chapter I

Introduction

In September and October, 1988, the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board hosted the second Minnesota Environmental Congress. The goal of the board members was:

- *To hear what the citizens of Minnesota believe are the major environmental issues in Minnesota;*
- *To hear ideas for financing environmental protection in Minnesota; and*
- *To hear citizens' comments on The Minnesota Ground Water Protection Strategy.*

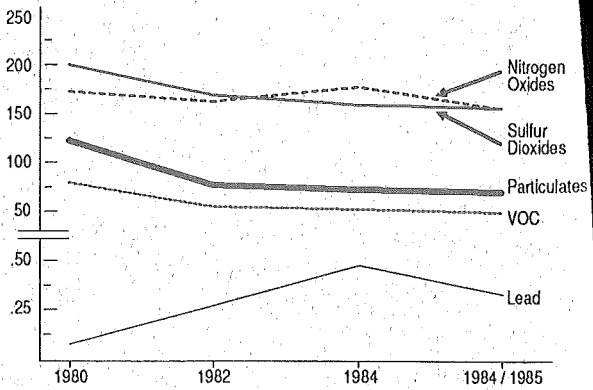
Characteristically, Minnesotans spoke their minds. Board members heard about ground water pollution, surface water pollution, solid waste concerns, the need for more recycling, the need for better public education on the environment, the need for better wildlife habitat, and ideas for financing environmental protection.

First held in December, 1986 in Saint Paul, the Environmental Congress has provided a valuable opportunity for citizens and state environmental officials to discuss mutual concerns. The 1986 Congress focused on six specific issues (water, hazardous materials/toxic substances, health and the environment, natural resources management, environmental risk, and environmental education). To cover all these issues, the 1986 Congress lasted two days.

There were two basic complaints about the 1986 Congress:

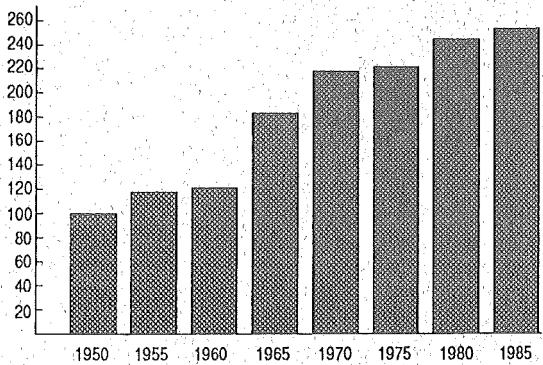
- *It was difficult for many citizens to attend because it was held in Saint Paul over two working days.*
- *The format did not allow discussions of other important environmental issues.*

Figure 2 Air Emissions Trends
Point Source Emissions In thousands of tons



Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Figure 3 Estimated Water Use in Minnesota
In billions of gallons



Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

In response to these complaints, the 1988 Environmental Congress consisted of afternoon through evening sessions in five Minnesota Cities--Alexandria, Bemidji, Duluth, Mankato, and Saint Paul. Local co-sponsors of the Congress were also sought to help with publicizing the Congress and providing meeting facilities and equipment.

Congress Agenda

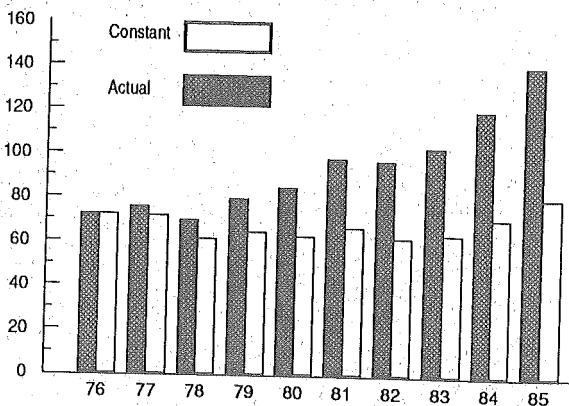
The 1988 Environmental Congress was organized to allow ample time for discussions between Board members and citizens. At each of the five locations, the three sessions allowed for discussions:

1. Identifying the important environmental issues in Minnesota;
2. How to finance environmental protection in Minnesota; and,
3. How to protect Minnesota's groundwater.

1. What are the Important Environmental Issues for Minnesota?

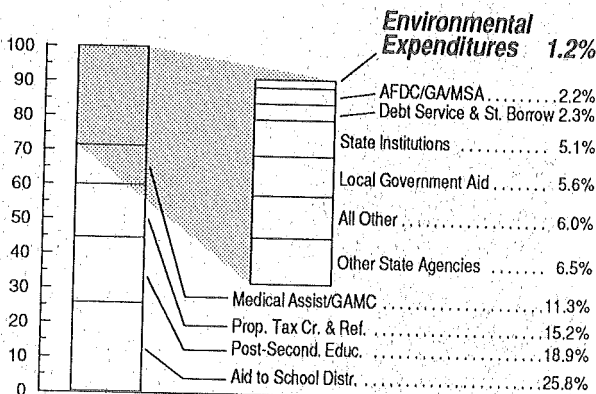
The Congress started with a short presentation by Jack Ditmore, chair of the EQB, titled "Where have we been, and where are we going? Trends in Minnesota's Environment." Trends in Minnesota's water quality, air quality and land use were discussed. Next, small group discussions, each led by an EQB member, allowed citizens to raise and discuss a number of important issues. These discussions are summarized in Chapter 2 of this report, "Important Environmental Issues for Minnesota."

Figure 4 Minnesota Environmental Budget
Actual and constant dollars in millions



Source: Research Department, MN House of Representatives

Figure 5 1987 - 89 General Fund Spending



Source: Department of Finance and State Planning Agency

2. Financing Environmental Protection Preservation, and Improvement

Gerald Willet, Commissioner of the Pollution Control Agency and former chair of the Minnesota Senate Finance Committee, started this session with a presentation on the history of Minnesota's environmental budget, the environmental budget related to the total state budget, and current and potential sources of the funds. After this presentation, hour long small group discussions with EQB members resulted in a number of interesting and useful ideas. These discussions are summarized in Chapter 3, "Financing Environmental Protection and Preservation."

Table 1 Pollutants Causing Nonsupport of Designated Uses in Minnesota Rivers

Pollutant Indicators	River Miles
Fecal Coliform	2,196
Dissolved Oxygen	1,032
Unionized Ammonia	287
pH	354
Nutrients	1,567
BOD	967
Physical Parameters (TTS/Turbidity)	1,870

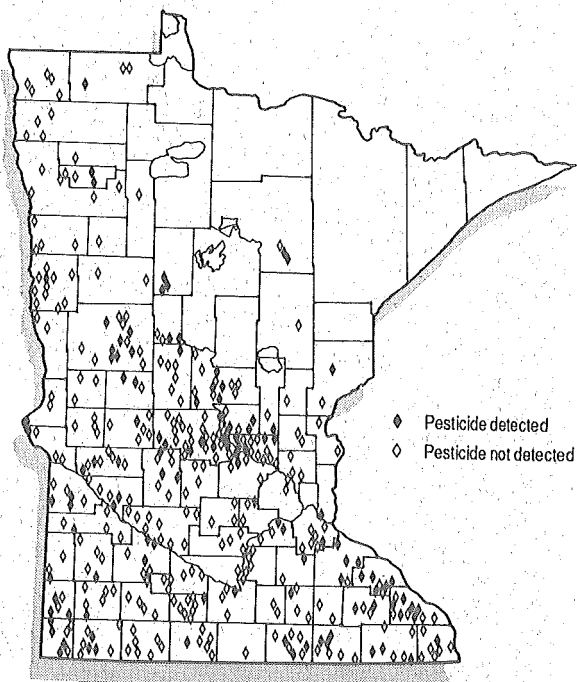
Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Table 2 Sources of Nonsupport of Designated River Uses

Sources	River Miles
Municipal	755
CSO's (Combined Sewer Overflows)	28
Nonpoint Sources or Unknown	2,107

Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Figure 6 Occurrence of Pesticides in Public Wells



Source: Minnesota Department of Health

3. Protecting Minnesota's Ground Water

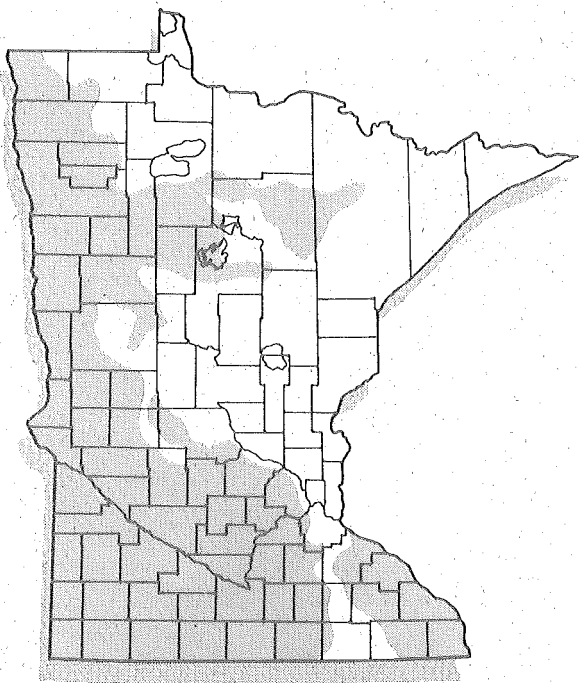
The evening session started with presentations on the protection of Minnesota's ground water. First, Martha Brand, chair of the EQB Water Resources Committee, or Robert Dunn, chair of the EQB Planning Committee, summarized the recently developed water protection plans for Minnesota--the "Minnesota Ground Water Protection Strategy," the "Strategy for the Wise Use of Pesticides and Nutrients," and the "EQB Water Priorities for the 1990-91 biennium."

Next, members of the EQB Ground Water Advisory Committee and local officials involved in local water planning efforts provided different perspectives on ground water protection plans.

Instead of small groups, the evening discussion format was similar to an audience participation TV talk show. A moderator sought comments and questions from the audience to which Board responded. In three of the locations, a local reporter or editor served as the moderator.

These discussions are summarized in Chapter 4, "Water Protection Plans."

Figure 7 Major Land Resource Areas of Minnesota with Average Erosion Exceeding Five Tons Per Year



Source: USDA 1982 National Resources Inventory

Priority Issues Ballots/Congress Evaluations

To provide another chance for citizens to express their views, a "Priority Issues Ballot" was provided to all the Congress participants. These ballots listed the current priority issues of the Environmental Quality Board and asked the participants to list their top priority environmental issues. Participants were urged to fill out the ballots by many of the speakers. The results of this balloting are included in Chapter 2 of this report.

Also, each participant was given a form to evaluate the usefulness and organization of the 1988 Environmental Congress. The results of these evaluations is included are Appendix B of this report.

Table 3 1988 EQB Priority Issues

Environmental

- *Ground Water Protection*
- *Pesticides Management*
- *Solid Waste Management*
- *Surface Water Management*
- *Soil Conservation*
- *Nuclear Waste Management*
- *Indoor Air Pollution*
- *Air Toxics*
- *Hazardous Materials*
- *Biological Diversity*

Process

- *Funding*
 - *Environmental Education*
 - *Coordination/Planning*
 - *Risk Assessment/Management*
 - *Research/Monitoring*
-

Table 4 Small Group Discussions with EQB Members
What are the important environmental issues for Minnesota?

Mankato

- *Environmental Ethics*
- *Solid and Hazardous Waste Management*
- *Usable Data*
- *Water Quality - Well Testing and Abandoned*
- *Wildlife Habitat*

Alexandria

- *Overuse of Recreational Resources*
- *Environmental Education*
- *Water Resource Management and Protection*
- *Ground Water Contamination*
- *Fertilization*
- *Loss of Habitat*

Duluth

- *Education*
- *Well Testing - Water Quality*
- *Noise Pollution*
- *Stewardship*
- *Forest Management*
- *Waste Disposal*
- *Protection of Sensitive Areas*

Bernidji

- *Environmental ethic/education*
- *Recycling and Waste Reduction Markets*
- *Water Rights/Lake Levels*
- *Ground Water Protection/Abandoned Wells*
- *Loss of Wetlands*
- *Improved Wildlife Habitat*
- *Hazardous Waste Management*

St. Paul

- *Protection of Small Wetlands*
- *Loss of Habitat*
- *Toxic in Water*
- *Pesticide Use*
- *Coordinate /Cooperate*
- *Environmental Education*
- *Recycling*
- *Global Warming*

Note: Issues are not in order of importance

Chapter 2

Important Environmental Issues for Minnesota

One goal of the Environmental Quality Board was to hear what the citizens of Minnesota believe are the major environmental issues. Minnesota's citizens are the experts regarding their own communities. They live with the problems daily. They can see the problems evolve over time. They can suggest solutions which are most likely to be supported and implemented locally.

Citizens had two ways of presenting their advice and comments:

- *Through the small group sessions lead by the EQB members; and*
- *Through the "Priority Issues Ballot" provided to all participants.*

The issues identified at the different sessions were surprisingly similar for such a large and diverse state. The need to protect ground and surface water quality, continuing concerns with hazardous and solid waste management, better and increased environmental education, protection of wildlife habitat, and better overall management were mentioned at all five locations. Table 4 lists the major issues discussed at each Congress locations. Table 5 summarizes the results from the priority issues ballots at each location and includes a composite listing for all sessions.

Table 5 Results of 1988 Priority Issues Balloting

Environmental Issues

St. Paul	Bemidji	Alexandria
Ground Water Protection & Abandoned Wells	Ground Water Protection & Abandoned Wells	Ground Water Protection & Abandoned Wells
Solid Waste Management & Recycling	Surface Water Mgmt	Surface Water Mgmt
Soil Conservation & Land Stewardship	Solid Waste Mgmt & Recycling	Soil Conservation & Land Stewardship
Pesticide Management	Pesticide Mgmt	Solid Waste Mgmt & Recycling
Hazardous Materials	Hazardous Materials	Pesticide Mgmt
Wetland Protection	Soil Conservation & Land Stewardship	Hazardous Materials
Nuclear Waste	Indoor Air	Air Toxics
Biological Diversity	Air Toxics	Indoor Air
Surface Water Management	Biological Diversity	Biological Diversity
Global Warming	Forest Land	Nuclear Waste

Process Issues

St. Paul	Bemidji	Alexandria
Environmental Education	Environmental Education	Environmental Education
Funding	Funding	Coordination & Planning
Research & Monitor	Coordination & Planning	Funding
Coordination & Planning	Research & Monitor	Risk Assessment
	Risk Assessment	Research & Monitor

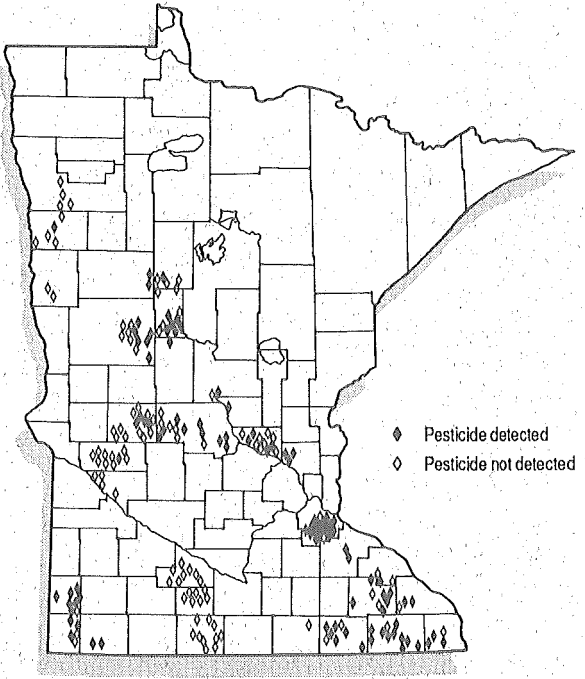
Note: Issues are listed in priority order

Mankato	Duluth	88 Congress
Ground Water Protection & Abandoned Wells	Ground Water Protection & Abandoned Wells	Ground Water Protection & Abandoned Wells
Solid Waste Mgmt & Recycling	Solid Waste Mgmt & Recycling	Solid Waste Mgmt & Recycling
Surface Water Mgmt	Noise Pollution	Surface Water Mgmt
Soil Conservation & Land Stewardship	Biological Diversity	Soil Conservation & Land Stewardship
Pesticide Mgmt	Hazardous Materials	Pesticide Mgmt
Hazardous Materials	Indoor Air	Hazardous Materials
Air Toxics	Soil Conservation & Land Stewardship	Air Toxics
Wetland Protection	Pesticide Mgmt	Biological Diversity
Biological Diversity	Surface Water Mgmt	Nuclear Waste
Nuclear Waste	Nuclear Waste	Indoor Air

Mankato	Duluth	88 Congress
Funding	Environmental Education	Environmental Education
Environmental Education	Funding	Funding
Research & Monitor	Coordination & Planning	Research & Monitor
Coordination & Planning	Research & Monitor	Coordination & Planning
Enforcement	Risk Assessment	Risk Assessment

Figure 8

Occurrence of Pesticides in Private Wells



Source: Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota Department of Health

Protecting Ground Water Quality

Not surprisingly, protecting the quality of Minnesota's water was an important issue in each small group session. The priority issues balloting also ranked ground water protection first at each Congress location. Specific concerns and needs included:

- *Better and more available testing for well water;*
- *Better methods of locating abandoned wells;*
- *Better ways of encouraging proper abandonment of water wells to reduce potential ground water pollution; and*
- *Better controls of pesticides and toxins to reduce the possibility of ground water contamination.*

Protecting ground water quality was the primary topic of the evening sessions and is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Protecting Surface Water

Protecting Minnesota's surface water was also high on the lists developed in the small group sessions and ranked third in the overall priority issues balloting. Congress participants stressed the importance of Minnesota's surface waters to the state:

- *As a source of drinking water;*
- *As wildlife and fish habitat;*
- *As a recreational resource; and*
- *As an important part of our tourist industry.*

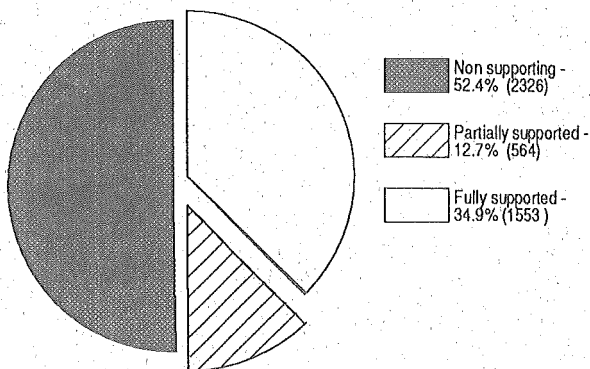
Two concerns were similar to those for ground water:

- *Non-source pollution from pesticides and fertilizers; and*
- *Toxic wastes from land fills and other sources polluting our surface water.*

Two other concerns were specific to Minnesota's surface water:

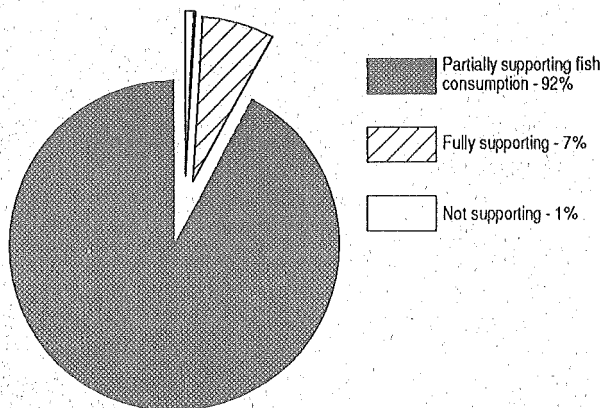
- *Conflicts between water needs in the Twin*

Figure 9 Rivers Supporting Fishable and Swimmable Uses
1982 to 1987 River Assessment Data



Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Figure 10 Fish Consumption Analysis of Large Lakes
1,185,364 acres assessed



Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

*Cities and the needs of Northern Minnesota;
and*

- *The potential for overuse of some water bodies for recreation.*

Participants in Bemidji were concerned about the loss of Minnesota's wetlands since they are a filter for both Minnesota's surface and ground water and an important wildlife habitat.

Solid Waste Management

Based on the response from Congress participants, solid waste management is an important issue throughout Minnesota. It was a high priority in most of the small groups and was the second highest priority in the priority issues balloting. Closely related to solid waste management is the need to for increasing recycling in Minnesota.

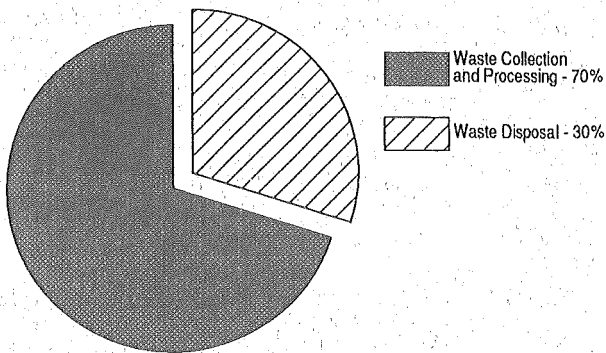
At four of the locations, specific concerns about local solid waste proposals or problems were discussed:

- *In St. Paul and Mankato, proposals to burn solid waste raised a number of environmental questions.*
- *In Bemidji, there was concern about a local land fill and a number of questions about the proposals for a hazardous waste disposal site.*
- *In Duluth participants suggested better public education regarding household wastes (especially hazardous wastes) and recycling.*

The benefits of separating materials prior to incineration and the benefits of source separation (separating glass, plastic, paper, etc. at home) were stressed in Bemidji, Duluth, Mankato, and St. Paul.

At all the locations, the need for Minnesota state government to take the lead in recycling, using recycled materials, and reducing the use of problem materials such as styrofoam coffee cups was stressed.

Figure 11 Minnesota's Solid Waste Costs



Source: Governor's Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment

According to many participants, one possible solution would be to include the cost of disposal in the purchase price of products. This was discussed more fully in the financing small group sessions and is included in more detail in Chapter 2.

Environmental Education

Increased and better environmental education for children and adults was suggested as one strategy to address all of the environmental problems. The recurring theme was that if people know the consequences of their actions, they are likely to change their behavior to reduce their burden on the environment. Every small group at every session discussed the need for better and more environmental education.

Specific issues that could be addressed through environmental education included:

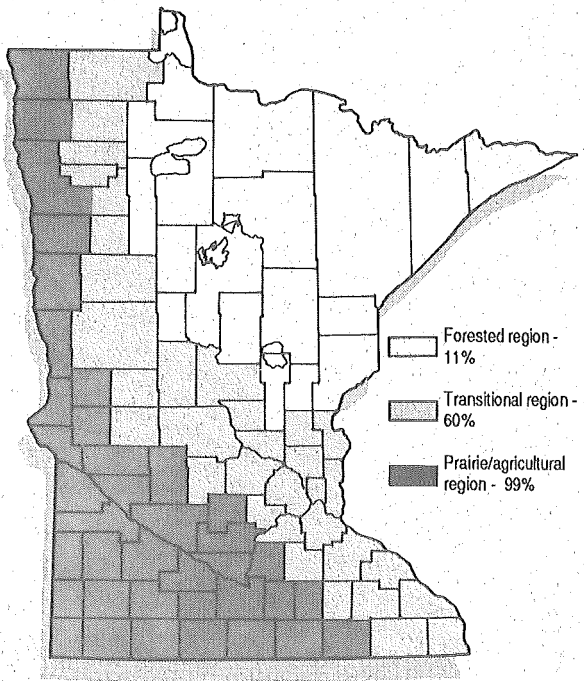
- *Household hazardous waste;*
- *Recycling;*
- *Pesticide use and management;*
- *Proper abandonment of old water wells;*
- *Protection of wildlife habitat;*
- *Soil conservation; and*
- *Small forest plot management.*

According to the participants, environmental education is not just important in school. It is important for adults and preschool children as well. Environmental education efforts can include publicity campaigns; information programs at parks, nature centers, and schools; programs sponsored by non-government organizations; programs targeted at day care centers; and formal classes.

Protection of Wildlife Habitat

The need to protect wildlife habitat was discussed at each location. According to Congress participants, wildlife is an important part of Minnesota and it can not survive if its

Figure 12 Minnesota Wetland Loss by Region
1850-1984



Source: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs

habitat is destroyed. Specific concerns and suggestions of Congress participants included:

- *Long term funds are needed for the Re-invest in Minnesota program to insure that wildlife habitat is protected.*
- *Wetland protection is important for wildlife habitat and in managing our water resources.*
- *Owners of small wood lots and small plots of forests need to learn how to manage their land to improve wildlife habitat.*

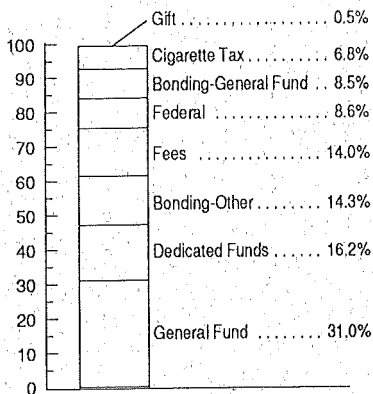
Better Overall Management

At each location, participants were concerned about the management of Minnesota environmental protection programs. This issue came up in a number of different ways.

- *In Mankato, there was a concern that the data needed for useful local water planning was either not easily available or incomplete.*
- *In Alexandria, people were concerned that we may be overusing our recreational resources.*
- *In Bemidji, there was concern about how we manage the quantity of water that we use and the potential effect of releasing water from the headwaters reservoirs.*
- *In St. Paul, people thought the state could better coordinate its efforts, both internally and with other groups that work to protect and improve our environment.*

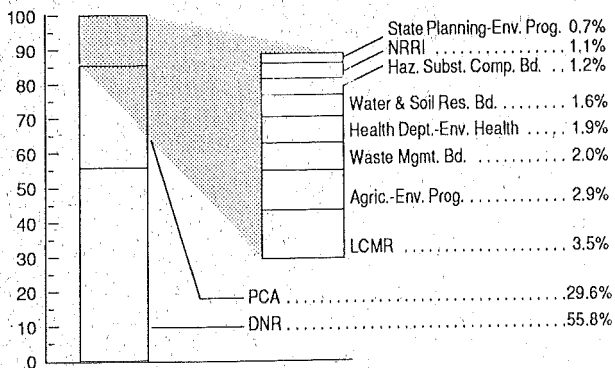
Basically, participants believed that by better managing Minnesota's environmental resources and programs, protection of the environment could be improved.

Figure 13 Environmental Funding Sources for the 1987-89 Biennium
(sources as a percent of the total)



Source: Department of Finance

Figure 14 Environmental Expenditures by State Agencies in the 1987-89 Biennium
(as a percent of the total)



Source: Department of Finance

Chapter 3

Financing Environmental Protection

After hearing what Minnesotans believe are the major environmental problems, the EQB turned the tables and asked, "OK, where will the money to address these problems come from?" Again, Board members conducted small group discussions to provide everyone a chance to participate.

Is More Money Needed?

All of the small groups came to the immediate conclusion that additional funds for environmental protection are needed:

- *Long term funding for long term environmental programs is difficult to maintain.*
- *Federal support for environmental protection will likely continue to decrease.*
- *We've already done the cheap and easy things, actions needed now will be more expensive.*

Many environmental problems can not be addressed by short term programs. Some problems, according to the participants, require long term research, multi-stage programs, or long term activities. With the payoff for some of these activities in the "distant" future, immediate political action is sometimes difficult. For example, money spent on preschool and elementary environmental education will not have its full effect until today's four to eleven year olds are adults.

According to the participants, Minnesota should plan on continued reductions in federal support of environmental preservation programs. For example, in the 1980's the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been simultaneously delegating new responsibilities to

Table 6 State Budgets and EPA Grants to States for Air, Water, and Hazardous Waste Programs

Total State Budgets (In millions of 1987 dollars)

	Air ¹	Water ²	Hazardous Waste
1982	210	236	64
1983	213	274	76
1984	206	296	110
1985	202	326	146
1986	213	336	169

EPA Grants as a Percentage of State Budgets

	Air	Water	Hazardous Waste
1982	49	49	76
1983	45	38	66
1984	46	35	47
1985	48	34	41
1986	46	33	40

¹ "Water" includes water quality programs; some drinking water programs may not be included.

² "Hazardous Waste" includes both hazardous and solid waste programs.

Source: Congressional Budget Office

the states and cutting grant funds for existing programs. (Between 1981 and 1984, more than two thirds of the U.S. EPA's enforcement activities were delegated to the states while EPA grants to states have decreased almost 50 percent during the 1980s.) The inaction of the federal government on acid rain is another example. As these examples indicate, in a number of important environmental issues, if anything is going to be done it will have to be done at the state or local level.

In many of the small groups it was pointed out that additional environmental protection and preservation will require more costly programs. One example used is finding and sealing abandoned water wells to protect Minnesota's groundwater from pollution. With an projected

cost of \$200 to \$3000 per well and an estimated 600,000 to 2 million abandoned wells in Minnesota, capping abandoned wells will cost at least \$120 million.

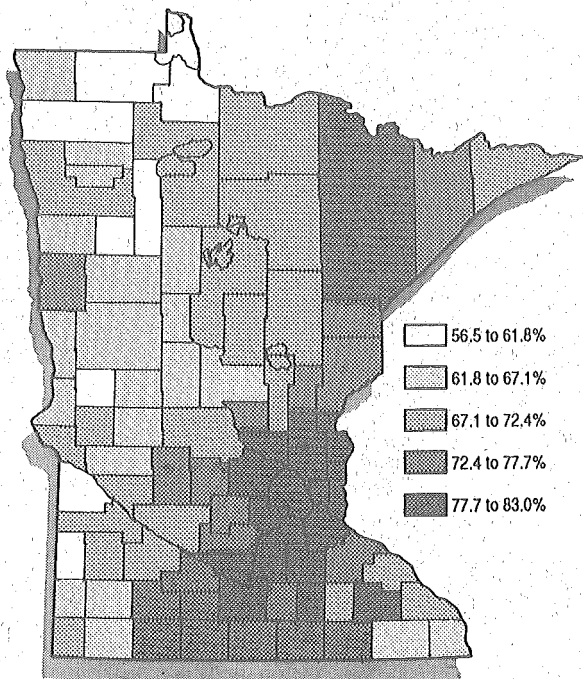
Another example cited by the participants is the need to safely deal with solid waste. It has become clear that the cheapest approach, and one that was considered safe a few years ago--putting it in a land fill--is neither safe nor cheap. All of the options for solid waste--elimination at the source, treatment, incineration, and safe disposal--are expensive.

A number of the participants also noted that local management of programs would both provide a sense of ownership in the programs by the local citizens and prove more efficient. However, local units of government usually do not have the resources or the taxes to support these programs. They will need financial assistance from the state or state permission to increase local taxes.

While the possibility of shifting some state funds from other programs to environmental protection programs was discussed in the small groups, most of the participants considered this possibility very unlikely. It was generally agreed that new funds would have to be found to improve environmental preservation and protection.

The positive side of these discussions was the belief of most participants that Minnesotans are willing to pay more in taxes, fees, and prices to insure a clean environment. At each of the locations, participants noted studies that indicated that, if the money would go toward environmental protection or cleanup, citizens were willing to pay more for goods and services and pay more taxes.

Figure 15 Minnesota Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund Ballot Results
Percent of vote in favor of Trust Fund



Source: The Nature Conservancy

Where Will the Money Come From?

Many methods of raising funds were discussed during the Congress--user fees, fines, general taxes, product specific taxes, lotteries, and voluntary contributions. One guiding principal did emerge from all the discussions: **The people who use or pollute the resource should pay the cost of cleaning or maintaining the resource.**

Participants noted that this would not only raise revenue to address the problems but would also reduce activities that harm the environment by increasing the cost of those activities.

Two applications of this principal were discussed in a number of the small groups--solid waste and water quality.

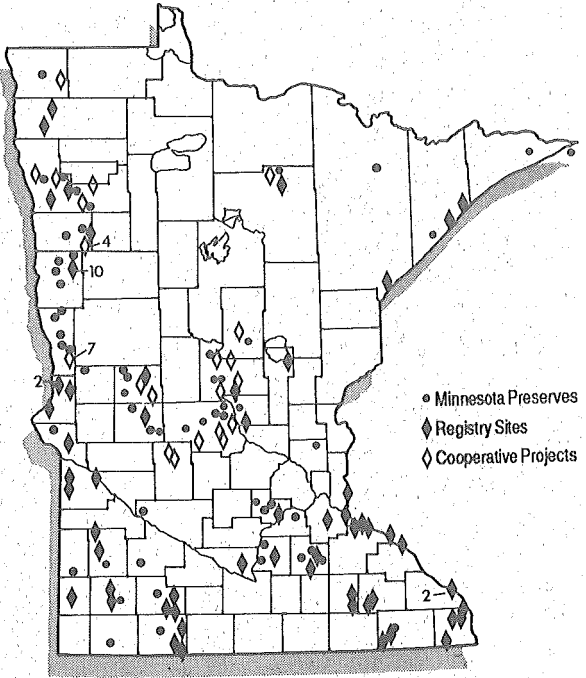
Solid Waste

With solid waste identified as a major problem during the first small group sessions, much of the funding discussion also involved this issue. The basic principal of user fees or taxes was evident in the number of ways that the real costs of disposal could be built into the direct cost of a product to the consumer. Some suggestions by the participants included:

- *Taxing packaging that is not recyclable;*
- *A special tax on plastics;*
- *A sales tax on toxic substances; and*
- *A disposal fee charge on new batteries and motor oil at the time of the sale.*

This approach was summed up by a Mankato participant as taxing the producer as well as the consumer. While the taxes generated could help pay for waste disposal, the hope of the participants was that this tax would reduce the amount of waste generated by making the products that produce the waste more expensive and changing people's behavior.

Figure 16 Nature Conservancy Lands in Minnesota



Source: The Nature Conservancy

Water Quality

The participants suggested some ways of financing water protection programs:

- *Require a fee for each water well like Iowa does and use the funds to seal abandoned wells;*
- *Remove the current exemption from sales tax that now applies to pesticides, using the money for ground water protection; and*
- *Increase sewage treatment fees to pay the real costs of sewage treatment (both the operating and the capitol costs).*

Again, besides raising revenue to address specific problems, participants thought these options may reduce water pollution by increasing the cost of polluting activities to the consumer.

Environmental Trust Fund

The need for the Environmental Trust Fund was also mentioned in all small group sessions. Having a fund specifically to address long term issues was viewed as a good start to addressing the longer term programs.

One major concern was how to assure substantial funding for the Environmental Trust Fund. Three major options were suggested:

- *Annual appropriations from the General Fund;*
- *Dedicate an increase in the "sin taxes" on liquor and tobacco to the fund; and*
- *A state lottery with a portion of its proceeds dedicated to the Environmental Trust Fund.*

Other Funding Sources

All the small groups recognized the importance of voluntary support through organizations such as Ducks Unlimited and the Nature Conservancy and through mechanisms such as the Non Game Wildlife Fund. While some increase in voluntary contributions was believed possible, the participants thought this source would never be large enough to address all the needs.

Chapter 4

Water Protection Needs

The entire evening session at each Congress location was devoted to plans to protect Minnesota's water resources. At each of the meetings, members of the EQB Advisory Committee on Ground Water Protection and local water planning representatives provided other perspectives to Minnesota's protection plans.

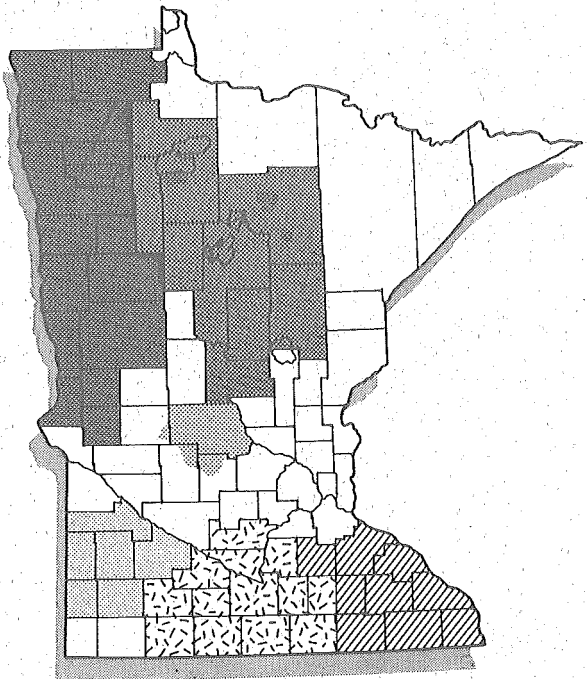
After the presentations, the Board members solicited comments from Environmental Congress participants and answered questions.







Mankato

Lester Anderson, chair of the South Central Minnesota Counties Water Planning Project, and County Commissioner from Blue Earth County, described the joint comprehensive water planning occurring in thirteen counties in south central Minnesota. He noted the public concern shown in regional surveys about ground water quality. He stressed the importance of a continued local-state partnership. How to pay for the implementation of the plans was a major concern of his because of the levy limits placed on counties by the Legislature.

William Bryson, Member EQB Advisory Committee on Ground Water Protection, Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation Supervisor, and farmer, described the efforts of the Advisory Committee to address such issues as nondegradation and pollution limits, and to wrestle with how to protect water from pollution. Ground water quality has prompted consideration of a regional laboratory. He indicated that the drought has made water rights a growing

Figure 17 LCMR Pilot Comprehensive Water Planning Regions



-  Zumbro-Root River Joint Powers Board
-  South Central Minnesota Counties Water Planning Project
-  Redwood-Cottonwood Rivers Control Area
(includes Yellow Medicine River Watershed District)
-  Stearns County *(includes North Fork Crow River Watershed District)*
-  Mississippi Headwaters Board
-  Northwest Minnesota Joint Powers Board

Source: State Planning Agency

concern. He stressed within the goal of nondegradation the state would still have to accommodate agriculture.

During the open discussion in Mankato, a number of important issues about water protection were raised:

- *The need for reliable information about home drinking water treatment systems, their effectiveness in removing pollutants, and proper disposal of water purification filters;*
- *The need for cost-sharing for private water well testing for pesticides;*
- *The need to stop the dumping of pesticides and pesticide containers in such places as ravines and ditches;*
- *The need for pesticide use education and training;*
- *The need for a central data base at the state for ground water data;*
- *The need to stop the pollution resulting from septage and sludge disposal; and*
- *The need to resolve local funding difficulties.*

Alexandria

Dick Eischens, a farmer and a member of the EQB Advisory Committee on Ground Water Protection and of the Farm Bureau, discussed the recommendations of the Advisory Committee. He explained that as a farmer he was concerned about how farming could be reconciled with the goal of nondegradation and noted that the Committee spent a great deal of time discussing this issue. He supports the goal of nondegradation and will monitor subsequent legislation to ensure it does not jeopardize farming.

Jim Van Alstine, Project Planner for the Northwest Minnesota Joint Powers Board, discussed the fifteen county joint effort to develop comprehensive water plans in northwestern Minnesota. He stressed that local

leaders are trusted and that they understand local concerns. The interest in ground water quality has prompted consideration of a regional laboratory. He indicated that the drought has made water rights a growing concern. He stressed within the goal of nondegradation the state would still have to accommodate agriculture.

The issues raised in Alexandria during the open discussion tended to relate to implementation of the water protection policies:

- *The importance of education about water well issues and cost sharing for sealing abandoned wells;*
- *The importance of inter-agency cooperation for environmental protection;*
- *The need to curb agriculture and urban chemical use;*
- *Support for a fee on agriculture chemicals;*
- *The need for promotion of returning to mechanical weed control; and*
- *The need for funds to implement county water plans.*

Duluth

Molly MacGregor, Executive Director of the Mississippi Headwaters Board and Project Manager for eight counties developing comprehensive water plans, discussed the comprehensive water planning underway by eight counties in northern Minnesota. Through this effort, the counties are forging a role in resource management, especially in education, advocacy, and enforcement. Issues of concern include the interaction of ground and surface water and related land uses. Counties are frustrated that the strategies are developing in middle of their planning efforts. It would work better if the strategies to address these issues came at the end of the process.

Linda Lehman, Member of EQB Advisory

Committee on Ground Water Protection, President of Minnesota Ground Water Association, and President of Lehman and Associates, discussed the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee. She emphasized that coordination must be an integral part of the strategies. Coordination is needed at every level, including the agencies' field staff. The focus must be on the "big picture" and not a piecemeal approach. People must understand how the strategies fit with existing efforts, and how they fit together.

The public comments in Duluth suggested some additional ideas for the water protection plans:

- *Resolving farmers liability resulting from pesticide use;*
- *Requiring that at property transfer the deed indicate that the well and septic system meet the state code;*
- *Providing information and education on proper well sealing;*
- *Establishing new programs, especially emphasizing environmental education;*
- *Providing consumers options, such as organic products; and*
- *Applying taxes/fees to polluting products for educational purposes and placing a surcharge on nonrecyclable items.*

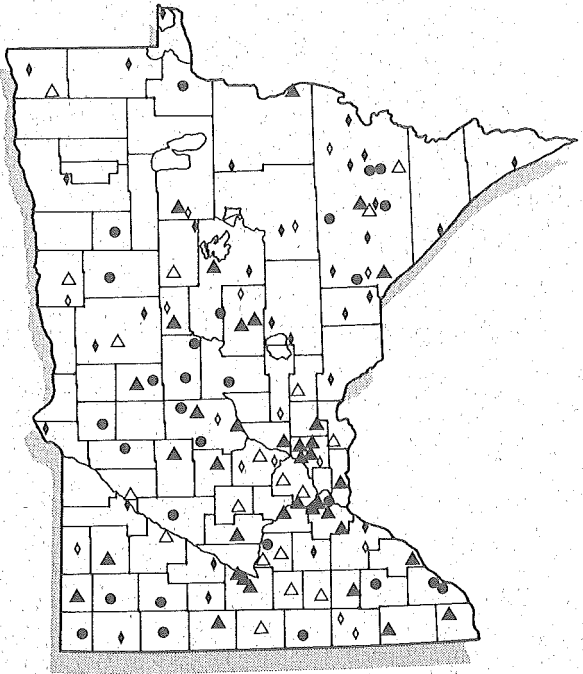
The value of preserving small wetlands, when compared to other needs, was questioned by one participant.

Bemidji

Molly MacGregor again summarized the comprehensive water planning underway by eight counties in northern Minnesota.

In Bemidji, the open discussion ranged from the management of state water protection programs to methods for dealing with abandoned or poorly constructed water wells:

Figure 18 Ground Water Pollution at Permitted Mixed Municipal Landfills



- ▲ Known ground water pollution (*violates standards*)
- △ Known ground water impacts (*elevated standards*)
- Suspected ground water impacts
- Other Landfills
- ◆ Active
- ◇ Closed

Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

- *Concern about state data bases and the quality control for the data;*
- *Need to automate old well records (LCMR has funded some);*
- *Problems with poorly constructed wells in use as well as problems with wells abandoned and not sealed;*
- *Need cost-sharing to seal abandoned wells;*
- *Concerned that the Metropolitan area gets all the "Clean Water Partnership" funds; and*
- *Suggested a study of pesticide residue in foods.*

St. Paul

William Bryson, a member of the EQB Advisory Committee on Ground Water Protection, Freeborn Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor and farmer, related the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and stressed the importance of the conservation ethic. He related his concern as a farmer about pesticide use and misuse both in agriculture and urban areas.

Calvin Alexander, a member of the EQB Advisory Committee on Ground Water Protection and of the Department of Geology and Geophysics at the University of Minnesota, discussed the strategies from the viewpoint of a researcher and educator. He emphasized that education is essential to any ground water protection effort. People need to understand what practices will protect water resources or else they will not support the measures that need to be taken.

The open discussion in Saint Paul concentrated on the effects of various chemicals on Minnesota's waters:

- *Solutions should be flexible so that practices can adapt as more is known;*
- *Differentiate between chemicals when regulating, for example, DDT was banned*

when problems were understood but all chemicals not banned;

- Address the problems caused by the use and disposal of household chemicals and urban lawn chemicals;*
- Provide more certified laboratories are needed to test water quality;*
- Develop capability in regional labs for common parameters (e.g. nitrate or even atrazine) freeing state labs for less common parameters; and*
- Address the need for an educational emphasis for agriculture that reflects concern about the environment and not just yields.*

Other Environmental Issues Raised During Open Discussions:

A number of issues not directly related to the water protection plans were raised by the public in the open discussions:

- Concern about safety of stray voltage from power lines and proposed the state set standards for strength of electric and magnetic fields;*
- Concern about the potential for increased air and water pollution from incinerating solid wastes;*
- Concern that all of Minnesota's hazardous wastes could be disposed of on Northern Minnesota; and*
- Need to get labor and industry together to address recycling.*

Appendix A

Current Minnesota Initiatives

A number of the concerns expressed by the public in the 1988 Environmental Congress are now being addressed by the Minnesota state government. Some activities were started in the recent past while others are to be debated by the Legislature this session.

Protection of Minnesota's Ground and Surface Water Quality

The proposed "Comprehensive Water Resources Protection Act of 1989" will address a number of the concerns expressed during the 1988 Congress:

- *Assessment of groundwater quality, improved data management, and increased research;*
- *Increased educational activities aimed specifically at water quality protection;*
- *Improved enforcement of well construction and sealing;*
- *Identification of sensitive areas;*
- *Development and promotion of improved pesticide and pollution management practices;*
- *Improved state control of pesticides and fertilizers; and*
- *Partnerships with local government.*

The proposed \$8.5 million for the Minnesota Superfund will help address the contamination of groundwater from existing landfills leaking toxic chemicals.

Solid Waste Management

In November, 1988, the Governor's Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment (SCORE) developed over 70 recommendations for a comprehensive approach to waste

reduction, litter reduction and statewide recycling. Their primary recommendations included:

- *A goal of 25 percent recycling statewide by 1993; and*
- *A broad loan and grant program totalling \$20 million per year to encourage and facilitate recycling, litter reduction, market development, and education.*

In September, 1988, Governor Perpich signed an executive order requiring recycling of materials at state agencies, purchasing recycled materials by state agencies, and assisting local governments in establishing recycling.

The Governor's proposed 1990-91 budget includes:

- *\$1.4 million to assist counties in addressing existing contamination problems and to help ensure that solid waste management facilities are properly constructed and operated; and*
- *\$1.4 million for a comprehensive regulatory program for municipal solid waste and municipal and industrial waste incineration activities.*

Environmental Education

Two of the major legislative initiatives for the 1989 session include major environmental education components:

- *The proposed Comprehensive Water Resources Protection Act of 1989 includes proposals to increase the education on preventing groundwater pollution, controlling sources of pollution, and farm management practices designed to reduce environmental effects; and*
- *The recommendations of the Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment includes major efforts to better educate the public on recycling and solid waste management issues.*

In addition, the Environmental Trust Fund, approved in the November, 1988 election, would help fund long-term environmental education.

Protection of Wildlife Habitat

The Re-Invest in Minnesota (RIM) program is the nation's first state-sponsored reserve/set-aside program protecting wildlife habitat and restoring fish habitat. The Governor's proposed budget for 1990-91 includes \$27.3 million to continue this program until the lottery generates dollars for long-term maintenance of the program through the Environmental Trust Fund.

Better Overall Management

Administrative and legislative proposals for the 1989 session include a number of improvements in managing Minnesota's environment and environmental protection programs:

- *Increased research and data collection for water protection programs;*
- *Increased cooperation between local governments and state government for water protection planning;*
- *Technical and monetary assistance from the state for local solid waste management programs; and*
- *The Governor's proposal for a nation-wide Environmental Compact to address challenges to the environment beyond the control of any single state.*

Financing Environmental Protection

The overwhelming approval of the Environmental Trust Fund by 77 percent of Minnesota's voters in November established the first constitutionally protected comprehensive environmental and natural resources trust fund in the nation. The Governor's proposed budget for 1990-91 includes \$10.8 million for expenditures consistent

with the Environmental Trust Fund until the Trust Fund begins receiving lottery generated revenue.

The passage of the lottery by the voters provides the opportunity for the Trust Fund to receive significant funding from a state-wide lottery after passage of enabling legislation.

Appendix B

Evaluation

Congress participants were asked to evaluate the usefulness and format of the 1988 Environmental Congress through an evaluation form included in each information packet. Eighty-five percent of the 250 participants returned evaluation forms.

The format used for the 1988 Congress appears to have been liked by the participants. Over 90 percent rated it as good or excellent. Only 10 percent rated it as average or poor.

One question specifically asked how often the Environmental Congress should be held. An overwhelming number of participants (80 percent) said future environmental congresses should be held annually instead of every two years.

The 1988 Congress had three distinct parts - identifying important environmental issues, financing environmental protection, and protection of Minnesota's Groundwater. Eighty percent of the participants in this year's Congress would prefer that the Congress format alternate between a single topic one year and general environmental issues the next year.

The evaluation form allowed participants to make specific comments. These included:

The Congress should be the end result of town meetings and citizen study groups on environmental issues. "The impetus must come from the grass roots up, not from the Environmental Quality Board, to effect social change."

Narrow the scope for each meeting so single

topics can be explored more fully. "The group discussions tried to cover too many topics. Perhaps each group should have discussed one or a narrower group of subjects, this would enable people to select a group to attend."

To more effectively address the many environmental issues, perhaps a 2 or 3 day Congress would be very beneficial. "The small group sessions were excellent but not long enough to fully discuss the issues and concerns."

Keep small groups small. Thirty people are too many for a good discussion. The moderator could be more directive - tell the group specifically their task and evaluate responses as they are given. Don't deviate from the task under consideration.

Being able to talk directly to the members of the Environmental Quality Board is one of the best parts of the Congress. Citizens rarely have a chance to brainstorm with the State's decision makers.

Besides providing a chance for citizens to talk with Board members, the Congress also fulfills another role - providing an opportunity for a variety of people concerned about Minnesota's environment to talk to each other. Besides citizens, Congress participants came from city and county governments, soil conservation districts, nine state agencies, regional development commissions, school districts, the University of Minnesota and the State University System. Government employees from different agencies, and from different levels of government exchanged information; citizens had a chance to talk with state and local program administrators; and citizens interested in one environmental issue exchanged information with citizens interested in other issues.

One of the problems encountered with this year's Environmental Congress was insuring adequate

publicity. Except for one direct mail notice that went to a mailing list of 4000, free publicity through the media and word of mouth through the various interest groups was relied on to inform Minnesota's citizens about the Congress. Increased direct mail efforts, as well as radio public service announcements and paid advertising in local newspapers would insure better notice to the public.