

March 9, 2026

Co-Chairs Heintzeman and Fischer, Representative Scott and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HF 793 (Scott). For almost a decade Stop Over Salting volunteers have been advocating for chloride reduction at the legislature. Chloride is a permanent, invisible pollutant which is creating growing problems in Minnesota's lakes, rivers, streams, ponds and ground water.

Damages are well established. Excess salts in our waters create toxic environments for native fish and their food chains, diminish lake turning and oxygen availability, weaken native species and create opportunities for invasive species. They impact drinking water quality, kill plants, rob soils of critical functions, mobilize heavy metals in runoff water, present risks to wildlife and pets, and damage property.

We talk with many Minnesotan's who are concerned about these impacts, but assume that salts will naturally break down. They are surprised to learn that the chemical bond between water and chloride is impractical to break. Salts permanently travel with water wherever it goes. University of Minnesota research found that 3/4 of roads salts used in the metro area are either transported to local groundwater or remain in the metro area lakes or wetlands.

The #1 source of chloride pollution in Minnesota is winter maintenance deicing chemicals. We're often asked, "What can we use instead?". Because the alternatives have other tradeoffs, applying deicers only when, where, and in the amount needed is critical. Through the work of professionals at MPCA's Smart Salting and collaboration from local winter professionals, we now have a tested toolkit of practices that reduce the role of salts in maintaining winter safety and mobility.

Certified applicators and properties committed to Smart Salting practices are important to the future of clean water in Minnesota, however a ten year cycle of training is too long given the challenges and industry turnover, and designation of training to other entities vague. We hope that conversations at the legislature around reducing chloride reduction continue.

Sincerely,

Sue Nissen, Member Stop Over Salting

n.sue4408@gmail.com

1 teaspoon deicer permanently pollutes just 5 gallons of water

StopOverSalting (SOS) is a group of concerned Minnesota Water Stewards who find common ground in their advocacy around chloride pollution.





Co-Chairs Heintzeman and Fischer, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HF 793 (Scott). The issue of chloride pollution of surface and groundwater is an important one and this is an area where legislative action is needed. MCEA is neutral on HF 793 at this time for reasons I will outline below, but we appreciate the committee's attention to this issue very much.

Chloride is a powerful and potent chemical. One teaspoon of salt permanently pollutes five gallons of water. Every spring, salt applied during the winter dissolves and washes into streams, rivers and lakes. Every year, 445,000 tons of salt are applied to roads, sidewalks, and parking lots in Minnesota. Once chloride pollutes our water, it's impractical to remove, which means prevention is the only way to keep our waters clean.

High levels of chloride harm aquatic life. Fish, invertebrates, and amphibians are all at risk from chloride pollution. The 2024 impaired waters list from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) found 67 water bodies in Minnesota had excessive levels of chloride, up from 54 just two years earlier. MPCA has done nationally pioneering work educating the public and developing training for salt applicators that increases the precision of application and reduces wasteful use of salt. But these efforts need ongoing funding, and we need action to prevent even more lakes, streams and rivers from being polluted.

We would like to support HF 793 and MCEA has advocated for similar legislation in past sessions. However, this version of private applicator liability has several provisions that cause MCEA to be neutral on this bill.

First, the ten-year cycle of training is too long (line 2.5) for several reasons, including the availability of new information and the need to refresh information provided in the training. Second, current smart salting training is administered by the MPCA, but HF 793 would require the commissioner to "designate other entities" who are "approved to provide the training" (lines 2.10-2.11). There are no standards for the MPCA to use in determining which entities would be approved to provide the training, however.

Please don't make this the last time you consider the issue of salt application and chloride pollution this session. Chloride pollution is a complex and multi-faceted issue that needs legislative attention.

Thank you for considering this bill and discussing the important issue of chloride pollution today. MCEA would be happy to work with the author on our concerns.

Sincerely,
Aaron Klemz
Strategy Officer
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March 9, 2026

Re: H.F. 793

Dear Co-Chairs Fischer and Heintzeman and Members of the Committee,

Audubon supports reducing the amount of salt in our environment. The wildlife that Minnesotans hold dear, including the birds Audubon strives to conserve, are dependent on an interconnected food web that requires healthy air, water, and soil. Eagles, loons, and herons eat fish that live off other fish, amphibians, and microorganisms at the bottom of the food chain that depend on healthy freshwater. Warblers and swallows eat insects that eat the plants that require healthy soil to grow. In natural environments with adequate healthy soil and water, populations are relatively stable and thrive. However, a growing body of research finds that road salts make their way into our soils, groundwater, and surface water, unbalancing these systems and negatively affecting wildlife and human interests.

For example, a study of Twin Cities urban lakes found sodium and chloride levels 10 and 25% higher than those of non-urban lakes. With these high levels, we can measure a reduction in the diversity and abundance of zooplankton that eat the algae that cause algae blooms. Many small fish and amphibians are less healthy in these saltier lakes and survive at lower rates, making less food available for large fish. The salt can also alter water density and inhibit the seasonal turnover of water, affecting nutrient availability in lakes.

We know that freshwater ecosystems are critical to the well-being of birds and humans. Scientists have documented widespread wildlife declines over the past century. A recent study from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology shows a staggering loss of almost three billion birds since 1970. These population declines are tied to reductions in habitat quality associated with human-dominated landscapes.

Thank you for considering alternatives that minimize salt and its negative impacts on birds, wildlife, and our shared water resources.

Sincerely,



Dale Gentry Ph.D., Director of Conservation
[Audubon Upper Mississippi River](#)
National Audubon Society



March 9, 2026

The Honorable Peter Fischer
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The Honorable Josh Heintzeman
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The Honorable Peggy Scott
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Re. HF793 – limited-liability legislation for certified chloride applicators (Scott)

Representatives Fischer, Heintzeman, and Scott,

Minnesota Watersheds is a statewide nonprofit organization representing watershed organizations, which are charged by statute to use sound scientific principles to protect and improve water quality in the water resources of the same.¹ The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has designated 68 chloride impairments in 42 waterbodies in the state – numbers that are steadily increasing. Salt persists in the environment, making chloride contamination one of the most pressing concerns in watershed management; reduction in the amount used is critical. Our members, especially in the metro area, continue to work to reduce chloride pollution in our lakes, creeks, and rivers.

Minnesota Watersheds has supported since 2017 enactment of state law that provides limited-liability protection to commercial salt applicators and property owners using salt applicators who are certified through the established MPCA salt-applicator program and follow best management practices. We continue to support such policy and appreciate that you recognize the increasing impact on Minnesota’s water from the use of chloride compounds to remove snow and ice from roads, sidewalks, and parking lots, and your consideration of HF793 addressing the issue.

While refraining from comment on the negligence standard stated in the bill, Minnesota Watersheds urges revision of HF793 to:

- Designate MPCA’s existing Smart Salting program as the source of certification, with administrative authority for the agency to contract with companies and individual training providers, rather than a requirement that the agency authorize third-party certification providers.
- A three-year certification term ideally; five years at the longest.

Beyond the insights into the operation of such a chloride-use certification available to you from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, our organizations

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¹ Minnesota Statutes chapter 103D, subdivision 2(2)

possess significant relevant experience and would be glad to respond to any request for background, testimony, or other information from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jan Voit". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jan" and last name "Voit" clearly distinguishable.

Jan Voit, Executive Director
Minnesota Watersheds

c/ The Honorable Aric Putnam, Minnesota Senate



March 10, 2026

Hospitality Minnesota support for certified salt applicator program

H.F. 793

Chair Fischer, Chair Heintzeman, and Committee Members:

Hospitality Minnesota represents hospitality businesses, including restaurants and food service, hotels and lodging, resorts and campgrounds and more. We advocate for policies that promote and support the hospitality and tourism industries.

Hospitality Minnesota supports the establishment of a certified salt applicator program. We respectfully request your support on this bill to help operators stay apprised of best practices for keeping their employees and guests safe while introducing more accountability to the industry.

Keeping employees and guests safe during the icy winter months is of the utmost importance to our members. Without either, our members would not have businesses. Providing incentivized opportunities to expand our members' training knowledge on best practices to de-ice will lead to safer working environments, and in turn, reduce the number of injuries that occur over winter in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Department of Labor released their annual Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illness which studied workplace injuries in 2022. According to their results, the third most common injury events were falls, trips and slips (17% of all injury events). They also found that the second most common sources of injury and illness were floors, walkways and ground surfaces (11% of all sources of injury). Slipping on ice in Minnesota is a challenge that our members face every winter, and this bill goes a long way toward addressing this challenge.

Finally, understanding the best practices for de-icing will reduce the amount of salt that our members use throughout the course of the winter. Not only will this be a cost-saving measure for businesses, it will also reduce the amount of salt that pollutes our lakes and waterways.

We are thankful for your consideration of this request and hope you will support the bill. Please contact Hospitality Minnesota with any questions.

Sincerely,

Ryan Hamilton
Director of Government Relations