



The Nature Conservancy in
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Chair Leon Lillie
House Legacy Finance Committee
365 State Office Building
100 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: Clean Water Council Appropriation Recommendations

April 1, 2024

Chair Lillie and Members of the House Legacy Finance Committee,

As the committee reviews the Clean Water Council's supplemental recommendations for the Clean Water Legacy funds, we write to highlight support for the work of and the update recommendations produced by the Clean Water Council.

The Clean Water Council, made up of both citizen volunteers representing diverse stakeholders and legislators, spent two years gathering input from state agencies and a variety of constituencies from across the state to aid in the development of its recommendations for how the Clean Water Fund should be spent. The Council is a deliberative body who spends significant time and effort in making recommendations in line with their strategic plan. In addition, the updates to their recommendations being presented to you today reflect time sensitive and emerging needs that have evolved since the Council developed their initial recommendations. Revised recommendations include efforts to protect areas of Southeast Minnesota and the Mississippi Headwaters in an effort to prevent water quality degradation.

The Council, state agencies and stakeholders have identified and recommended existing and new programs to address clean water needs. As a participant during many of the Council's meetings, The Conservancy fully supports its recommendations and the thorough process by which the Council has arrived at these updated recommendations.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the State of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Steven J. Herrington, Ph.D.
Associate Director of Water
The Nature Conservancy in Minnesota



*Working to protect the Mississippi River
and its watershed in the Twin Cities area.*

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Monday, April 1st

Re: Clean Water Council Clean Water Fund Recommendations

Chair Leon Lillie
Minnesota House Legacy Finance Committee
365 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Lille,

On behalf of Friends of the Mississippi River, thank you for the opportunity to share our support for the Clean Water Council's supplemental Clean Water Fund recommendations.

As you know, the Clean Water Council prepares Clean Water Fund recommendations for the governor and legislature. The Council's process has produced supplemental Clean Water Fund recommendations that we strongly support, including:

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA): Nitrate in Groundwater (\$1.0 million) and AgBMP Loan Program (\$3.402 million).
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH): Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern (\$384,000) and Southeast Minnesota Nitrate Response (\$2.79 million).
- Department of Natural Resources (DNR): Fish Contamination Assessment (\$90,000).
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA): River and Lake Monitoring and Assessment (\$326,000), Enhanced County Inspection/SSTS Corrective Actions (\$2.0 million), Chloride Reduction Grants (\$1.0 million) and Continuous Nitrate Sensor Network (\$2.0 million).
- Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR): Great Lakes Restoration Initiative LAMP match (\$1.0 million), Critical Shoreland Protection Easements (\$4.0 million), Working Land and Floodplain Easements (\$4.434 million) and Clean Water Partners Legacy small grants (\$2.0 million).
- The University of Minnesota: Stormwater BMP Performance Evaluation & Technology Transfer (\$1.0 million).

Given the relative scarcity of the supplemental Clean Water Fund dollars this session and the urgency associated with many of the Clean Water Council's recommendations, we encourage you to advance a 2024 Legacy Budget Omnibus Bill that reflects the Council's recommendations in their entirety.

Sincerely,

Trevor Russell

Water Program Director
Friends of the Mississippi River

FRESHWATER

April 2, 2024

Chair Leon Lillie
Minnesota House Legacy Finance Committee
365 State Office Building
St Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for Clean Water Council supplemental funding recommendations

Chair Lillie and committee members,

As you consider supplemental appropriations from the Clean Water Fund, we urge you to support the Clean Water Council's recommendations, which were informed by two years of stakeholder input and approved unanimously on March 18.

With more than \$25 Million available for appropriation, this is an important opportunity to make headway on clean water issues across the state.

Supporting the work of the Clean Water Council is a top priority for Freshwater. Our staff members regularly attend the Council meetings, and we know firsthand the thoughtful discussion and careful consideration Council members have given these latest recommendations.

We believe the Clean Water Council recommendations achieve the following:

- Address urgent water issues such as **nitrate contamination of private drinking water wells**, and **chloride pollution of lakes and streams** from excessive application of deicing salt.
- Provide a **long-term monitoring network** for Minnesota waters, which will help track the progress of state efforts to improve land-use practices.
- Fund **conservation easements** on private lands to protect and restore water quality.
- Reinforce support for the **Clean Water Council** and its careful stewardship of the Clean Water Fund, which is a nation-leading model for water conservation.

In 2023, the Legislature recognized the work of the Council and passed their appropriation as recommended. We encourage you to do the same this year and uphold the integrity of the Clean Water Council vetting process.

Thank you for considering these recommendations, and for helping to protect Minnesota waters.



Michelle Stockness, PE
Executive Director, Freshwater

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Freshwater is a nonprofit organization working to inspire and empower people to value and preserve water.



April 2, 2024

Chair Leon Lillie
Minnesota House Legacy Finance Committee
365 State Office Building
St Paul, MN 55155

Chair Lillie,

The undersigned organizations write to indicate our strong support for the Clean Water Council revised supplemental budget recommendations, passed unanimously on March 18. These recommendations are informed by two years of stakeholder input from across the state and leverage the additional \$25 million available in the Clean Water Fund after the February forecast to make headway on urgent water issues. We ask the House Legacy Finance Committee to pass these recommendations without revision, and we write to highlight the importance of the items outlined below.

The Clean Water Council recommendations provide critical support for public health measures outlined in the January 2024 State Agency Workplan to address nitrate groundwater contamination in Southeastern Minnesota. These actions respond to the “evident need for further action to safeguard public health” that the Environmental Protection Agency identified in a November 2023 letter to Minnesota state agencies. The Clean Water Council recommendations build local capacity to respond to this need through an expansion of the TAP-IN collaborative that was created through a Clean Water Council pilot project fund in 2021. Additional capacity in local county health departments is critical to successfully implement public health measures such as free access to well testing, a well inventory to identify at-risk wells, and education and outreach. With an estimated 9,218 residents of the karst region at risk of drinking contaminated water above the federal human health limit of 10mg/L, the time to act is now.

The Clean Water Council recommendations also fund important conservation measures to reduce nitrate contamination and begin to restore groundwater resources. For example, the working land and floodplain easements program within the Board of Water and Soil Resources will protect features like sinkholes that are direct conduits to groundwater, as well as springs that feed the prized trout streams of Southeastern Minnesota. Other important programs that address nitrate contamination include the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s Continuous Nitrate Sensor Network and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Nitrate in Groundwater initiative.

The Clean Water Council recommendations fund a variety of other programs that address timely challenges – such as PFAS and chloride reductions, Great Lakes restoration efforts, and river, lake, and fish contamination assessment programs – and will have a significant on the ground impact. These initiatives are informed by years of intensive watershed study, such as the comprehensive Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies (WRAPS), the 2014 Nutrient Reduction Strategy, and more. At this time, we feel that implementation of these on the ground programs should take priority over additional studies like the 50-year Clean Water Plan, which could be funded through the general fund or a proposal to the LCCMR.

We urge the committee to fund the Clean Water Council supplemental budget recommendations in their entirety and provide critical support to address urgent public health and conservation measures with impacts across the state.

Sincerely,

Carly Griffith
Minnesota Center for Environmental
Advocacy

Jeffrey Broberg
Minnesota Well Owners Organization

Kelley Stanage
Winona Clean Water Coalition

Barry Drazkowski
Will Dilg Chapter Izaak Walton League