

Subject White Bear Lake – Water Use

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Overview

This bill would temporarily allow the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to issue water-use permits for the city of Lake Elmo and prohibit the DNR from reducing the permitted volume under existing permits in the White Bear Lake area. It also provides funding for developing a comprehensive plan to ensure the area has sufficient access to safe drinking water.

In 2012, a lawsuit was filed against the DNR arguing that the DNR permitted the withdrawal of too much groundwater in the White Bear Lake area which was negatively affecting the lake. At the time of the lawsuit, lake levels were near historic lows. In 2017, the court ordered the DNR to stop issuing or increasing water use permits for groundwater wells within a five-mile radius of White Bear Lake until certain conditions were met.

Summary

| Section | Description |
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| 1 | Water use permits; city of Lake Elmo. Temporarily allows (until June 30, 2027) the DNR to issue permits necessary for the city of Lake Elmo to construct and operate a new municipal water supply well and to amend existing permits to increase the volume of water allowed. |
| 2 | White Bear Lake area water-use permit modification moratorium. Temporarily prohibits (until June 30, 2027) the DNR from reducing the total amount of groundwater use permitted under a White Bear Lake area water-use permit issued or amended before January 1, 2023, unless necessary to address emergency preparedness or other public health and safety issues. |
| 3 | White Bear Lake Area Water-Use Work Group. Appropriates \$1,000,000 in fiscal year 2024 from the general fund to the Metropolitan Council to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure the communities in |

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| | the White Bear Lake area have access to sufficient safe drinking water. Requires the council to establish a work group to advise the council in developing the plan and specifies requirements for the membership of the work group and what the plan must include. |
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