

Subject Lake Elmo Water-Use Permits

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Summary

This bill amends a law passed in 2023 that allows the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to issue water-use permits necessary for the city of Lake Elmo to construct and operate a new municipal water supply well and to amend existing permits issued to the city to increase the volume of water allowed.

The bill makes a number of changes to the law including: requiring the DNR to issue and amend the permits; allowing for multiple new wells; removing a provision requiring the water-use permits to contain the same water-use conservation and planning measures required of municipal wells located within a five-mile radius of White Bear Lake; and making the law permanent (it currently expires on June 30, 2027). The bill would become effective the day following final enactment.

The original 2023 law was passed after a 2017 court order required 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. The court order was in response to a 2012 lawsuit that 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.