

The City of Lake Elmo 2026 Legislative Priorities



Lake Elmo Water Use Permits

Issue at a Glance

In 2003, the Metropolitan Council directed Lake Elmo to significantly increase its population and urban development footprint. The City appealed in an effort to preserve its rural character; however, the Minnesota Supreme Court upheld the ruling in 2004. As a result, Lake Elmo has been obligated to expand infrastructure and water capacity to support mandated growth.

Beginning in 2012, litigation related to groundwater use and lake levels in the White Bear Lake area restricted municipal water use, including in Lake Elmo. These restrictions continue to create uncertainty around long-term water supply planning.

In 2019, the State of Minnesota settled with 3M to establish a fund for water treatment infrastructure to address PFAS contamination in the East Metro. Lake Elmo is utilizing these funds to construct an estimated \$50 million water treatment facility. However, questions remain regarding whether the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will permit additional wells necessary to ensure adequate water supply to the new treatment plant once operational.

In summary, Lake Elmo has been subject to conflicting state directives—one requiring the City to plan for and accommodate growth, and another restricting access to the water resources necessary to support that growth. Passage of House File 3399 (H.F. 3399) would provide clarity and help ensure long-term drinking water reliability for the community.

Support

City of Lake Elmo Previous Considerations

- The DNR values recreational use of White Bear Lake over clean drinking water for citizens.
- 2023 bill does not guarantee water supply to operate new treatment plant.

No Action

If the DNR does not grant Lake Elmo new well permits, the City may have a \$50,000,000 PFAS treatment plant with no water to treat.

Financial Implications

- Potential waste of \$50,000,000 3M Settlement Fund

