

Clean Water Fund budget proposals

Accelerated implementation of municipal stormwater permits

Challenge

Stormwater runoff is a major source of water pollution for many of Minnesota's 11,000+ lakes and 92,000+ miles of rivers and streams. Population density and increased impervious surface area have played a role, and so has the state's changing weather. Climate change is causing more frequent and heavier rain events, and local governments have expressed their need for funds to plan for and upgrade their stormwater systems to handle these new rainfall patterns.

Proposal

A \$400,000 Clean Water Legacy fund biennial appropriation is proposed for technical assistance, guidance development, and direct outreach to local governments to accelerate compliance with stormwater permit conditions. The assistance should bring all municipal stormwater systems up to a standard baseline of operating compliance, which is important because many are noncompliant now. This proposal will help cities comply with new requirements in the 2020 MS4 General Permit, especially as it relates to meeting total maximum daily load allocations. Cities, counties, and townships with MS4 permits vary in size, available resources, and status of the development of their stormwater program. MPCA staff collaborate with these local governments to determine what assistance they need and ensure they get it. Proposed MPCA costs of technical assistance and guidance materials remain consistent with FY 2020-21 costs.



County implementation of septic system requirements

Challenge

Thousands of Minnesotans without municipal or county sewer access rely on subsurface sewage treatment systems (SSTS) to manage their wastewater. In 2019, over 608,000 such systems were reported in Minnesota. This represents an estimated 41.7 billion gallons of wastewater annually, about 25-30% of all wastewater produced in Minnesota each year. If not properly installed, operated, and maintained, SSTS can contaminate groundwater and create imminent risks to public health. Counties manage SSTS, and a large portion of the funds will provide critical support to low-income families whose failing systems would otherwise go unaddressed.



Clean Water Legacy support for these efforts have produced positive results statewide over the past decade:

- The percent of systems in compliance to have increased from 65% to 82%
- The percent of systems failing to protect groundwater to have decreased from 25% to 12%
- Septic systems that pose an imminent threat to public health to have decreased from 11% to 4%
- Over 1,000 SSTS have been replaced or repaired

Proposal

A \$5.324 million biennial appropriation from the Clean Water Fund will continue this critical support to counties to operate their SSTS program requirements (under M.S. 115.55). These grants are targeted at helping low-income families replace their failing septic systems.

Accelerating the implementation of TMDLs and watershed science in wastewater and stormwater permits

Challenge

Stormwater and wastewater can be significant contributors of pollutants to impaired waters. More than 3,000 Minnesota lakes, rivers and streams are not fishable, swimmable, and drinkable. Under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program, the MPCA oversees about 1,000 municipal wastewater and stormwater permits. Legacy funding has resulted in a dramatic increase in TMDLs, which in turn have wasteload allocations that need to be incorporated into a large majority of these municipal wastewater and stormwater permits. In addition, there is



other watershed science that also must be considered when renewing permits. Proper permitting and management of stormwater and wastewater to include TMDL wasteload allocations is crucial to our success in protecting and restoring Minnesota's waters. This funding supports the technical staff who play critical roles in both participating in the development of TMDLs and in supporting permitting processes. This funding has also supported the creation of a wide array of data and data analysis tools for the public and community partners. For example, wastewater monitoring data are available in a Tableau data browser with over 35,000 views since March 2016. The application lets users select data by a facility or area of interest and plots results along with monitoring limits to provide context of facility performance.

Proposal

A \$1.8 million biennial appropriation is proposed from the Clean Water Fund for point source implementation activities related to municipal wastewater and stormwater permitting. The proposed funding for FY 2022-23 will support staff who play key roles in incorporating wastewater and stormwater information into the TMDL process and to ensure TMDLs are appropriately represented in permits. A very small amount of this appropriation (<3%) has historically been used to update the Stormwater Manual with state-of-the-art stormwater guidelines and tools. MPCA will continue to make these periodic updates.

Preventing chloride from entering Minnesota's lakes and streams

Challenge

Chloride is a persistent pollutant that continues to plague bodies of water across the state. Across the state, more than 50 bodies of water are known to be impaired due to chloride and this number continues to grow. Once chloride enters our lakes and streams, it is very difficult and extremely expensive to remove. The Smart Salting Training Program has been effective in providing local partners with strategies and best management practices for reducing and minimizing chloride use. Unfortunately, as a result of limited and expiring federal funds, the training is only offered sporadically and will have to be discontinued altogether if a new sustainable funding source is not identified.



Proposal

A biennial appropriation of \$520,000 from the Clean Water Fund is for ongoing statewide chloride reduction efforts led by the MPCA to assist communities in reducing salt at the source. These funds will support the Smart Salting Training & Certification program for communities and businesses that provide snow removal and deicing services. The funds will also be used to reduce the chloride entering our waters through wastewater treatment plants, by offering targeted grants to communities that would like assistance working with their residents and businesses to voluntarily upgrade home water softeners to low-salt use systems, and to interested communities that centrally soften their water to assist with voluntary removal of unnecessary water softening units.

Dedicated funding will support essential operation and logistics of the Clean Water Council

Challenge

The 28-member Council represents organizations with a major role in achieving clean water, enabling consensus building and coordination on a wide array of issues critical to the people of Minnesota. The Council, and its Policy Committee and Budget and Outcomes Committee, hold public meetings monthly to discuss a variety of water topics and conduct Council business. The recommended appropriation will cover costs of meetings, necessary travel for members and the production of the Council's biennial report.

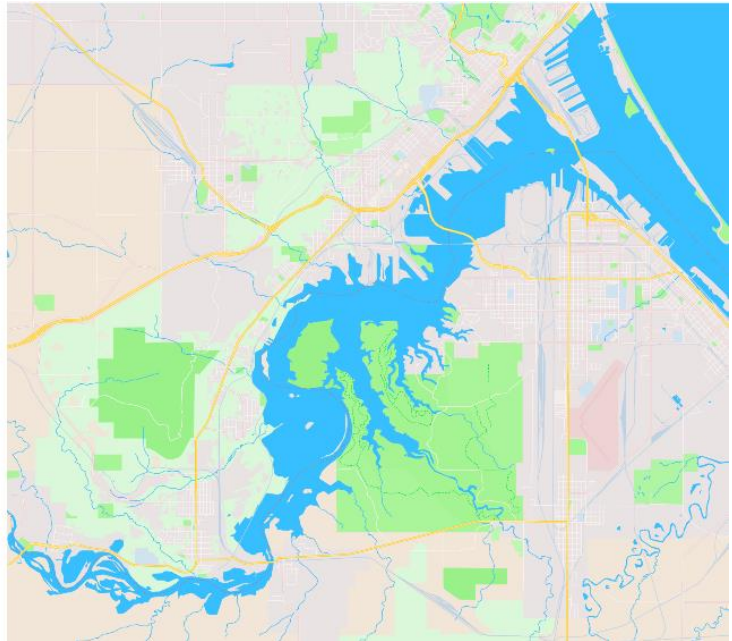
Proposal

An appropriation of \$550,000 from the Clean Water Fund will continue funding Clean Water Council operations in FY 2022-2023.

Crucial resources to restore Lake Superior and improve water quality in the St. Louis River Area of Concern

Challenge

The St. Louis River Area of Concern (SLRAOC) is one of 43 AOCs across the Great Lakes under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1987. AOCs represent the most severely impacted areas around the Great Lakes Basin and are required to develop remedial action plans (RAP) to address their specific beneficial use impairments (BUI). A century of runoff from agricultural and industrial land uses left a lasting impact harming habitat and the lake's recreational and economic viability. Thanks to decades of successful collaboration and ongoing cleanup efforts, the SLRAOC continues to achieve new milestones towards delisting in 2025.



Proposal

A biennial appropriation of \$1.5 million from the Clean Water Fund will continue work to implement the Remedial Action Plan for the St. Louis River Area of Concern, in partnership with multiple local, state and federal stakeholders and Tribal Nations. In addition to the CWF, the St Louis River Area of Concern management actions have had funding support from various accounts in the federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative fund, EPA's Office of Research and Development funding, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)'s technical assistance funding, the Duluth-Superior Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund, the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund, and the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Continued financial support from the CWF is needed to complete the management actions listed in the Remedial Action Plan and complete this cleanup work.

Monitoring groundwater, including crucial sources of drinking water for Minnesotans

Challenge

The majority of Minnesotans rely on groundwater as the source for their drinking water. In order to ensure continued access statewide to clean drinking water, we need clear data concerning the status of Minnesota's groundwater resources. Groundwater monitoring and assessment helps the MPCA and local and state partners understand groundwater quality and investigate potential sources of contamination.



Proposal

An appropriation of \$1.9 million from the Clean Water Fund continues operations of the groundwater monitoring network of about 270 wells across the state. The network targets aquifers that are most vulnerable to pollution by non-agricultural chemicals, typically shallow aquifers that underlie urban areas of the state. Monitoring data are analyzed to evaluate groundwater conditions and trends. MPCA staff also work with the US Geological Survey and others to better understand the relationships among groundwater recharge, precipitation, streamflow, and lake levels and water quality. This work informs protection efforts for both groundwater and surface water. The funding will also continue to support the evaluation of potential sources of concern for groundwater contamination to ensure requirements and best management practices (BMPs) are protective of groundwater resources.

Monitoring Minnesota's precious water for future generations

Challenge

Lakes are central to Minnesota's economy and our way of life, making it imperative that we protect our high quality lakes and work to restore those with poor water quality.

Ongoing water quality testing of Minnesota's over 10,000 lakes and streams is essential to continuing the systematic progress of monitoring and assessing lakes, rivers and streams to detect long-term changes over time in water quality. These data also help to identify waters to restore, those requiring protection from future degradation, and those

that have been restored due to recent efforts. Without the necessary resources to continually monitor our aquatic resources, we put Minnesota waters under threat of future impairment.



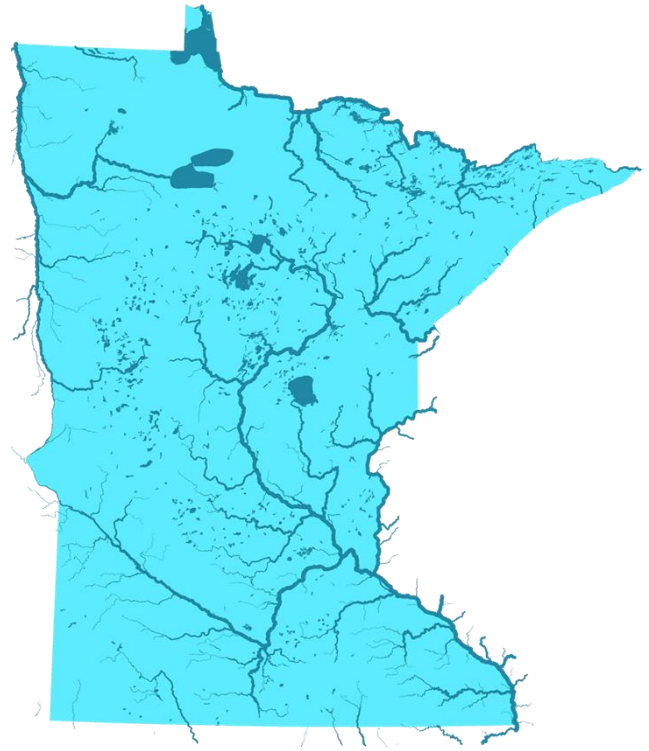
Proposal

A biennial appropriation of \$14.432 million from the Clean Water Fund supports ongoing water monitoring that includes biological, chemical, and habitat monitoring at lakes, streams and rivers. Data are evaluated to determine if waters are impaired and if previously impaired waters have been restored, and to inform solutions to watershed problems. Chemical monitoring is also conducted at watershed outlets to further inform implementation efforts and track changes over time. Monitoring data are used to help prioritize the development of tools to evaluate the potential risk to human health and aquatic life posed by the presence of these contaminants in the environment. This proposal would fund monitoring in at least 17 major watersheds.

Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies provide a vital roadmap that helps guide critical investments statewide

Challenge

Minnesota has a total of 80 major watersheds - each facing distinct threats and challenges based upon land use, topography, geology, and other conditions. What we do on land affects the water that is shed from the land into lakes and streams as well as aquatic life, wildlife, and other users downstream. The MPCA works with local government partners to conduct watershed-level science that determines what is causing our waters to be polluted, and what the most effective strategies are for restoring and protecting our waters. This scientific work informs local water planning and implementation, ensuring implementation dollars are well-spent.



Proposal

A biennial appropriation of \$13.208 million from the Clean Water Fund continues work with local partners to develop Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies, or WRAPS, including reports for impaired waters called Total Maximum Daily Loads or TMDLs. TMDLs are required by the federal Clean Water Act. These efforts set strategies for restoring impaired waters and protecting unimpaired waters and set pollutant reduction and waterbody protection goals, milestones, and measures to guide state and local government implementation efforts. WRAPS and TMDLs are foundational to the development of science-based, efficiently targeted local water plans. The proposal includes maintaining MPCA staffing and other operating costs, and money for contracts with local units of government and other contractors.

For more information

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