

# Making Sure Our WATER WORKS



**In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, it can be easy to take water for granted**—it’s literally all around us. From the Boundary Waters to the Mighty Mississippi, Lake Superior to Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota has been blessed with an abundance of water. Our fresh waterways are essential to the cultural heritage of our state, and are a major contributor to the Minnesota economy.

**But water is not just another commodity.** It is an essential component of human life, a gift from the Creator that has been entrusted to our stewardship. Water runs through every aspect of human activity. It is the common ingredient in all food growth and preparation. It’s used to clean both our clothes and our bodies. And it provides an enjoyable medium for recreation, as we spend quality time swimming, fishing, and boating with our loved ones. In fact, 60 percent of our bodies are water. There can be no life without water.

**Water is a basic and universal human right.** Access to safe, drinkable water is necessary for human flourishing. Because of this, Pope Francis has called it “a basic and universal human right” (*Laudato Si* §30). All people, in light of their God-given dignity, are entitled to clean water as a matter of justice.

**We have a duty to ensure access to clean water.** While individuals should be encouraged to use water in prudent and selfless ways, we should also take steps as a society to ensure access to clean water for all, now and in the future. As Pope Benedict XVI stated in his address for World Water Day 2007, “[T]he sustainable management of water [is] a social, economic, environmental and ethical challenge that involves not only institutions but the whole of society.”

## BUT WE FACE TROUBLED WATERS



**Half of the lakes in southern Minnesota are often so polluted that they are unsafe for swimming and fishing.**

*(Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 2015)*



**Many Twin Cities lakes will be unable to support native fish and plants by 2050, given rising salt levels.**

*(As quoted in the Star Tribune, April 10, 2017)*



**Over 100 rural communities have wastewater infrastructure systems over 30 years old, and many are unable to afford improvements.**

*(Center for Rural Policy and Development)*

Water pollution and inadequate treatment facilities may seem like localized problems, but they can affect us all. If left untreated, polluted water can flow downstream, affecting our urban areas. And polluted lakes and rivers will take a toll on tourism and rural Minnesota, creating a broader ripple effect that could negatively impact Minnesota’s economy.

Water flows through the  
basics of human life.



Can we really  
afford to let it run dry?

## LET'S TAKE STEPS TO PROTECT MINNESOTA WATER NOW

These proposed policies may improve the quality and accessibility of clean water:

**HF 1796/SF 1417 - Water quality improvement provided, and improvement goal established:** Establishes a water improvement goal of 25% by 2025, encouraging the reduction of chloride, infectious agents, phosphorus, sediment, nitrates, lead, and other factors that can contribute to biological and human health risks in our fresh waterways.

**HF 1095/SF 1968 - Human Right to Water Act:** Publicly recognizes water as a basic and universal human right, and affirms Minnesota's commitment to ensuring access to clean, drinkable water.

**HF 75 - Rural municipal water treatment facility renovation loan program created, and money appropriated:** A water treatment facility renovation account is created in the special revenue fund, from which rural municipalities struggling to make needed improvements to their wastewater treatment facilities can receive low or no interest loans.

**HF 1731/SF 1734 - Clean water fund money appropriated:** Appropriates money from the clean water fund for various water research/testing/evaluation projects and programs based upon the recommendations of the Clean Water Council.

By contrast, the following proposed policies could harm the quality and accessibility of clean water, and should be heavily scrutinized:

**SF 723, sec. 19:** Suspends certain water quality standards until 2019

**SF 723, sec. 19:** Delays wastewater system compliance with new water quality standards for up to 16 years

**SF 723, sec. 15:** Doubles the size animal feedlots can be before environmental review is required

The **Minnesota Catholic Conference**, the public policy voice for the Catholic Church in Minnesota, encourages our public officials to adopt common sense legislation and public policies that protect and care for the most valuable resource we have: **WATER**

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