

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, Minnesota has been blessed with an abundance of water. Our 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 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. Without water, there can be no life.

Water is a basic and universal human right. Access to safe, drinkable water is necessary for human flourishing. Pope Francis has called it “a basic and universal human right” (*Laudato si’* §30). In 2017, lawmakers introduced HF1095/SF 1968, the “Human Right to Water Act,” to ensure that every person has access to safe, clean, and affordable water. This bill should be re-introduced. All people, in light of their God-given dignity, deserve 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

Each biennium, the governor of Minnesota submits a capital budget recommendation to Minnesota's Legislature. Lawmakers then introduce capital investment bills to fund improvements in areas such as housing, education and water quality. We ask that you support the following capital budget requests, both of which seek to improve the quality and accessibility of clean water:

HF 3529/SF 3336 – Water Infrastructure Initiatives Funded: Appropriates \$200 million towards three of Minnesota's statewide clean water and drinking water infrastructure programs. The funded programs include:

- 1) \$25 million to the Clean Water and Drinking Water Revolving Funds matched by an estimated \$125 million in federal grants. Both funds help eligible communities finance improvements to their wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.
- 2) \$75 million to the Point Source Implementation Grant program, helping municipalities fund improvements towards wastewater, stormwater, and drinking water treatment facilities. These improvements help maintain high levels of water quality throughout the state, and reduce contaminants within Minnesota's water supply.
- 3) \$100 million to the Water Infrastructure Fund, which issues grants to communities to develop their clean water and drinking water infrastructure. These grants focus on reducing wastewater infrastructure costs in rural communities.

MNCREP – Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Funded: This request comes from the Governor's Capital Budget Recommendation, and appropriates \$16.5 million to the Water and Soil Resources Board to fund MNCREP; which the federal government will match two-for-one. MNCREP creates permanent conservation areas in ecologically-sensitive regions throughout 54 counties, and promotes natural groundwater filtration. The program restores wetlands, establishes wellhead protection areas, and creates buffer strips along water. These developments protect Minnesota's water resources and bolster grassland and wetland habitats, creating a better environment for many native species.

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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MINNESOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE