

Freshwater Society News

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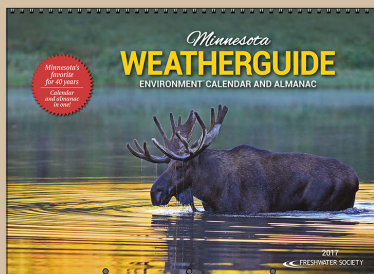
PHOTO: DON SPECHT

June 2016

June monthly normals from
the Minnesota Weatherguide
Environment™ Calendar:

Temperature: Max 78.8°F Min 58.8°F

Precipitation: 4.25 in.



2017 calendars will be ready in August.
Call 651-313-5808 for information about
The Easiest Fundraiser Ever!



Sometimes, things move quickly



I like when an agency asks for comments and intends to use them within the month. There's something disconnected about commenting, then waiting so long for an agency to act that you can't even remember what your comments were when the final document finally appears.

It's a little like that scene in *The Jerk* where Steve Martin's character rushes to see if his name is in the new phone book. It's a rush to see that your comments were taken seriously and they changed something.



The Clean Water Fund receives roughly \$100 million per year. During the 2013 session the legislature directed the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to assemble a plan for prioritizing project spending. They did. Now it's time to update the version they kicked out in June 2014.

The Draft Nonpoint Priority Funding Plan update is available on BWSR's website: bwsr.state.mn.us/planning/npfp/index.html. BWSR accepted feedback on the plan through June 6 and will post the final plan on July 1, 2016.

I can't wait to see if changes were made...

STEVE WOODS

Executive Director
Freshwater Society

Freshwater Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating and inspiring people to value, conserve and protect water resources.

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Freshwater Society

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Reuse: New life for an old idea

by Carrie Jennings

The foundation of my farmhouse was repaired in 1883, according to a carving in the mortar between the boulders. The small basement was full of shelves for canned goods and two big cisterns that captured rain from the roof. A hand pump in the kitchen pumped water directly from the cistern into the water reservoir of the woodstove; voila! hot water!

Indoor plumbing was added later and the ever-creative original owner, Farmer Borg, devised his own way of moving cistern water through the pipes he installed. In a closet much too small for a sink and a toilet he improvised by using a faucet mounted directly above the open toilet tank. Why not wash your hands and use the gray water to flush?

Outside, the pump house is built over a hand-dug well lined with beautiful, rounded, glacial cobblestones. The well water was used to cool milk cans while they waited for pick-up. A calf's trough in the attic of the pump house stored that water so that it could later be gravity-fed into a sink for washing up. Cleanliness in the pump house was on Farmer Borg's mind. His hand-painted "No spitting in here on floor" sign still hangs.



I am thinking about Almer and Elvira Borg's creative reuse of water as I begin work on Freshwater's Groundwater Reuse Report. Water reuse is not a new idea. In many rural areas of Minnesota I bet those cisterns are still in place and the soft water is used for watering plants and washing. Sure, there are inconveniences, safety concerns, and other issues to overcome with reuse. For example, not everyone wants bright green tree frogs living in their basement, even though they do eat bugs and make a soothing sound. They also might hop into the shower with you, which can be startling.

In this second of our three groundwater reports in 2016-17, we will identify the low-hanging fruit of water conservation, make recommendations for moving forward with reuse based on a recent workshop we co-hosted with Capitol Region Watershed District, and discuss aquifer storage and recovery policy needs. Watch for the final report later this summer.





Master Water Stewards program looks to expand statewide

by Deirdre Coleman

Freshwater Society developed the Master Water Stewards (MWS) program in 2013 to equip citizens with the knowledge and skills to help improve water quality at the grassroots level. In 2016 the program engaged seven watershed districts and one municipality, and is now expanding statewide.

This year, we will work with even more partners to train stewards. By 2018, we hope to see many of Minnesota's 46 watershed districts implementing the MWS program.

Master Water Stewards are certified by participating in a broad training curriculum led by experts in the fields of hydrology, stormwater management, water policy, community-based social marketing, and rain garden assessment and installation. They must complete a capstone project that captures rainfall and allows more water to soak into the ground, and lead a community outreach event. Stewards then become a point of knowledge and influence in their communities. Master Water Stewards are now working for watershed districts and environmental nonprofits (including Freshwater Society), participating on city and local government boards, influencing policy, and changing the health of our waters.

Pilot program results

To date, stewards have connected with more than 1,000 people through outreach and educational events, and have installed rain gardens, rain barrels, cisterns, a dry creek bed, and a permeable driveway. Their efforts have prevented more than 1.2 million gallons of polluted stormwater runoff from entering our lakes, rivers, and creeks EACH YEAR! Going forward, more than 400 pounds of silt, leaves and plant material, animal waste, automobile gas and oil spillage, excess salt, and other debris will be removed from our neighborhoods annually.

Learn more about becoming a Master Water Steward at an upcoming information session:

- > July 26, Freshwater Society
- > August 9, Freshwater Society
- > August 23, MCWD and Nine Mile Creek

Visit the [MWS site](#) for details.

April Recap

State of Water Conference inspires water protection and preservation

More than 200 Minnesotans attended this year's State of Water Conference, which focused on preparing professionals and community members to address the health of their lakes, streams, and wetlands. Highlights included keynotes by [Governor Mark Dayton](#) and Ron Schara, and a Q&A with DNR, MPCA, and BWSR leaders.

Policy and a Pint: Water, Water Everywhere, But...

On April 26, our own Steve Woods, along with Shannon Lotthammer of MPCA and Lark Weller of NPS, fielded questions from a sold-out crowd of beer drinkers gathered for the popular Policy and a Pint event, sponsored by 89.3 The Current and the Citizens League. After comparing Steve Woods to Mark Trail, emcee Steve Seel guided the evening's discussion. Listen [here](#).

Moos lecture: Evolution to Cleaner Water and Greener Water Companies

If you think a lecture about water protection and municipal water treatment plants can't stand toe-to-toe with the latest episode of CSI, think again. [George Hawkins](#) – a rock star in the water utility world – brought the science, politics, financing, and community relations of DC's mega-plant to life on the stage of the St. Paul Student Center Theater in April. Catch other Moos lectures [here](#).

Moving water reuse forward

In early May, 120 water use professionals gathered at one of the Twin Cities' finest examples of new construction that integrates water reuse practices — CHS Field in Saint Paul. They talked about ways to overcome barriers and expand these kinds of practices in Minnesota. We are polishing a policy agenda to move the needle on reuse in the state. Check out the [presentations](#) and watch for a report coming soon.

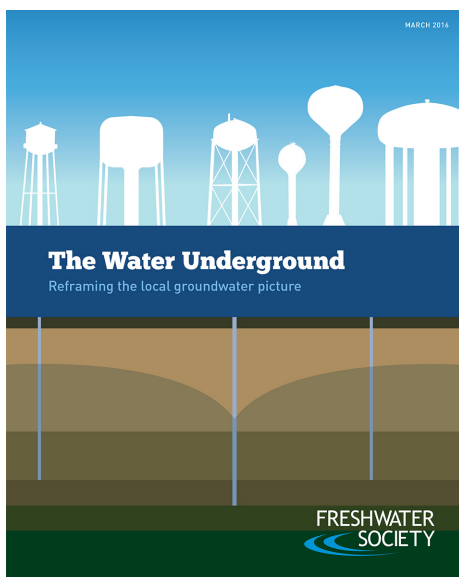
Freshwater Society releases groundwater report

by Steve Woods

We've just released the first of three targeted groundwater reports that build on one we published in 2013. Our latest report, *The Water Underground: Reframing the local groundwater picture*, speaks to public water suppliers. We have found that municipalities generally have the knowledge and skills to sustainably manage their shared aquifers but lack the urgency to halt long-term aquifer declines. By acting now to provide stable funding, we will maximize local control, something most water suppliers can get behind.

We have begun presenting these recommendations at conferences, regional meetings, and local official venues. Basic themes:

- Agencies should de-emphasize communications that use statewide groundwater statistics because they mask intensely localized phenomena.
- Local suppliers are the best people to manage groundwater...
- ...until they don't or won't — at that point they are inviting intervention from higher levels of government.
- Approximately half the metro area water-supply aquifers are showing downward trends. That can't continue. Solutions are pretty straightforward, understood, and undramatic.
- Higher water charges don't greatly change behaviors, but they do raise money to offer efficiency incentives and manage systems better — especially as a city successfully reduces water use.



- Public water suppliers should have “full-cost rates” that include the basics (pump, treat, store, distribute) PLUS inter-city coordination, residential and industry efficiency incentives, smart metering adoption, and water loss (leak) reduction programs.
- The state needs to move from its patchwork of temporary funds to a stable funding platform that will allow it to follow through on promises made to local governments and industries, especially after the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment sunsets in 2034.

Later this summer, we will issue a report addressing policy changes to promote more reuse and aquifer recharge projects. These changes will help local suppliers constructively manage and increase groundwater volumes for the current and future needs of their communities.

Upcoming events

Big Lake and Back! 10K Paddle
August 14, 10 am start,
The Beach at Excelsior Commons

Tune up your canoe, kayak, or paddleboard and head on over to Excelsior for an all-ages, friendly race out around



Big Island and back followed by an after-party at Excelsior Brewing Company. [Learn more.](#)

Clean Water Summit — Rethinking Redevelopment and Retrofits

September 22, 9:00 am-4:30 pm,
Minnesota Landscape Arboretum

Featuring up-to-date knowledge and research in green infrastructure practices for redevelopment and retrofit sites. [Details here.](#)

Help us raise \$50,000 this summer just by sharing your photos!

For every lake photo tagged #MichGolden, #CYL, and #Sponsored from June 9 to September 6, Michelob Golden Light will donate \$5 to Freshwater Society, up to \$50,000.

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> **Facebook:** Add a description to your photo that includes those tags.

Find out more at freshwater.org.



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“City engineers will want their councils to know what’s in this report.”

— Steve Woods