

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: John Linc Stine
Executive Director, Freshwater Society
651-313-5800
jlstine@freshwater.org

Freshwater honors Clean Water Champions at annual gala

Saint Paul, Minn. – Freshwater Society (Freshwater) will honor two organizations, a citizen group, and two individuals with Clean Water Champion Awards at its annual *Ice Out, Loon In* Fundraising Gala in Golden Valley, Minn. on May 4 from 5:00 to 9:00 pm. Clean Water Champion Awards are given to individuals and organizations whose excellent work has a direct and positive impact on the quality and quantity of our freshwater resources. This year's awardees include:

- **Paul Huttner, Chief Meteorologist at Minnesota Public Radio and creator/host of Climate Cast.** Paul has been a loud and clear voice communicating the facts about Minnesota's changing weather. His Climate Cast program offers a platform for the voices of many experts from around the country to weigh in on what their data is telling them about how our "new normal" is stressing the natural and man-made systems we all depend upon. Paul emceed our annual gala for many years, and has contributed his expertise to our Weatherguide Calendar/Almanac, along with helping distribute hundreds of the calendars through his work at the State Fair and speaking to community and school groups. His work reinforces our efforts to help local officials prepare for the water challenges they are attempting to manage.
- **American Society of Civil Engineers – Minnesota Section & Minnesota Infrastructure Report Card.** The Minnesota section of the American Society of Civil Engineers produced the state's first-ever Infrastructure Report Card in 2018. Our economy operates on systems built by previous generations with the expectation that we will build for the future and steward the systems we inherited. This report card offers a glimpse at just how well society is doing that. It provides an opportunity to share our knowledge with the public and offers a snapshot for residents, businesses, and policymakers so they can consider where we are and where we want to be. We're excited about how the report highlights our concerns over the state of water and wastewater systems and how the Governor, commissioners, and media have seized on its messages this legislative session.
- **Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community.** The Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community has a truly enlightened vision of long-term management of natural resources. For years they've quietly advanced state-of-the-art systems for water management and shared their knowledge at an array of technical conferences for city engineers, resource managers, and local governments.

They are early adopters of systems other communities may one day [deploy](#), including strategies to promote the sustainable use of groundwater through water reuse, as well as careful consideration of the potential for enhanced groundwater recharge.

- **MWMO Master Water Stewards Columbia Heights Lions Club Garden project.** Two years ago the City of Columbia Heights and the Columbia Heights Lions Club approached the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) with a desire to revamp and restore the Lions Park garden in Columbia Heights. The garden had not been maintained, was overgrown with aggressive, non-native flowers and had compacted, poor quality soils. A group of Master Water Stewards planned and implemented a project to remove unhelpful plants, improve soils and replant it with native plants, a significant aesthetic improvement that improved the garden's drainage and increased pollinator activity. This group of stewards continues to oversee garden maintenance and has conducted outreach at the site in partnership with HeightsNEXT, a nonprofit group in Columbia Heights.
- **Steve Woods.** Steve Woods joined Freshwater in December 2013 as executive director and played a key role in revitalizing Freshwater and expanding our reach statewide. He is a civil engineer who previously was one of two assistant directors of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, a \$60 million-a-year state conservation agency. He spent more than thirty years as an environmental professional working on policy, planning, design, granting, and restoration with private, public, and nonprofit organizations. Steve has left an indelible mark on water resources in the state of Minnesota.

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Freshwater is a member-supported organization. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that works to inspire and empower people to value and preserve our freshwater resources. To learn more about our Clean Water Champion awards or to purchase tickets to our May 4 event, visit freshwater.org