

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## 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. We're excited about how the report highlights our concerns over the state of water and wastewater systems and excited that 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 that 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; it 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 has worked with numerous local governments and undertaken projects throughout the Midwest as a private sector consultant and a public sector manager, and through his energetic tenure at the nonprofit Freshwater. 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](http://freshwater.org)