

FRESHWATER

2024 Legislative Agenda

➤ Nitrate contamination in drinking water

High levels of nitrate in drinking water continue to be an issue across Minnesota, especially in the southeastern part of the state where karst topography makes groundwater particularly vulnerable.

Freshwater supports legislative action to increase testing, protect private wells, and prevent nitrogen pollution, including:

- Implementing a stronger multi-agency statewide program for community education, private well testing, and well water treatment/mitigation.
- Expanding conservation easement programs to reduce nitrogen application. ([HF3474](#))
- Expanding best management strategies for landowners, including regenerative agriculture and perennial crops.
- Encouraging nitrogen load reduction and monitoring for sensitive groundwater areas. ([HF4319/SF4327](#))
- Improving manure management and feedlot regulation. ([HF3493/SF3537](#); [HF4320/SF4492](#))

➤ 2024 bonding bill

The 2024 Legislature can address aging drinking water, stormwater and wastewater infrastructure urgently needed by communities across Minnesota.

Freshwater supports water infrastructure investments for the Public Facilities Authority. ([HF4111/SF3910](#); [HF3768/SF3756](#)) We also encourage equity-based project prioritization, so that low-income communities have increased access to the state revolving funds.

Freshwater supports \$10 million for the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. This successful program leverages federal dollars to compensate landowners for granting conservation easements and establishing native vegetation habitat – and it can be used to complement other important water quality and climate related efforts such as soil health and water storage.

➤ Soil and water conservation district (SWCD) funding

For the last six years, SWCD funding has come out of the Clean Water Fund, despite efforts to appropriately shift it to the General Fund. Last year the final tax bill, HF1398, created a new SWCD aid funded at **\$30 million for this biennium** (\$15 million per year) and \$12 million per year in FY26/27. While it is an achievement to shift base funding to the General Fund, this will result in an **overall reduction of \$7 million per year** for SWCD's since they had been receiving \$22 million per year from the Clean Water Fund.

Freshwater supports an increase in SWCD funding ([HF4179/SF4422](#)). SWCD's are key partners for implementing soil health and water conservation programs designed to ensure clean water and resilient landscapes. Long-term sufficient funding is critical for SWCD's future work.

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➤ **Items to monitor:**

- Clean Water Council 2024 funding recommendations
- Chloride reduction and salt applicator liability legislation ([HF3565/SF3954](#))
- Minnesota Advisory Council on Infrastructure ([HF4025/SF4108](#))
- Legislation for drain tile reporting ([HF3389/SF4136](#))
- Establishment of a resilient community assistance program ([SF4116](#))
- LCCMR strategic planning and passage of 2024 recommendations ([HF3377/SF3507](#))
- Clean transportation fuel standard ([HF2602/SF2584](#) sustainable aviation fuel legislation ([HF4322 /SF4011](#)))

About Freshwater

Freshwater is a Minnesota-based nonprofit organization that works to inspire and empower people to value and preserve water. Since 1968, Freshwater has used science to engage communities on how to equitably improve water today and for future generations. We collaborate with elected officials, individuals, businesses, conservation groups, educators and government agencies to support these efforts.

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