

FRESHWATER

August 14, 2024

Steven Besser, Budget Outcomes Committee Chair
Clean Water Council
520 Lafayette Road North
Saint Paul, MN 55115

Paul Gardner, Council Administrator
Clean Water Council
520 Lafayette Road North
Saint Paul, MN 55115

Re: Clean Water Council FY26-27 funding recommendations

Dear Chair Besser, Council Administrator Gardner, and Clean Water Council members,

We have reviewed the Clean Water Council's list of funding recommendations for the next biennium, and we appreciate the considerable thought and discussion that has gone into its development thus far. As our state continues to address complex water challenges, we cannot overstate the importance of your work in stewarding the Clean Water Fund.

Within the current list of recommendations, we'd like to offer our strong support for the following:

- **MDH - Private Well Initiative (\$6.0 million)**
 - We believe safe drinking water for all Minnesotans should remain a top priority for the Clean Water Council. Unfortunately, residents who rely on private wells remain largely unprotected and under-represented in this area. The MDH Private Well Initiative is a needed step towards widespread testing of private wells, outreach and assistance to well owners, and coordination with local partners to implement these actions.
- **MDH - Future of Drinking Water Initiative (\$0.5 million)**
 - This funding supports completion of the State Drinking Water Action Plan, an important initiative to ensure long-term safety and public trust of drinking water systems.
- **DNR - Aquifer Monitoring for Water Supply Planning (\$4.0 million)**
 - With the high demand for groundwater across the state, including proposed data centers, expanded irrigation, and suburban development, it is critical that the DNR maintains a robust monitoring network to inform permitting decisions.
- **MDA - Conservation Equipment Assistance (\$3.5 million)**
 - This program is a powerful tool for driving adoption of soil health practices through access to specialized equipment. MDA has reported significant interest from the agricultural community with FY24 application requests totaling \$8.4 million.
- **MDA - Technical Assistance (\$3.2 million)**
 - Through initiatives like the Root River Field to Stream Partnership, this funding both implements conservation practices and evaluates their effectiveness to provide field-tested recommendations for protecting water.

- **MDA - Forever Green Agricultural Initiative (\$6.0 million)**
 - Perennial cropping systems represent a huge potential for improved water quality outcomes in our state, along with new economic opportunities for Minnesota farmers. We would like to see Clean Water Fund support continue at previous funding levels to maintain the momentum of this important work.
- **BWSR - Watershed Legacy Partner Grants (\$1.0 million)**
 - Tribal governments and local nonprofit groups are critical partners in Minnesota's clean water efforts. We support this funding to help implement watershed restoration and protection within local communities.
- **BWSR Accelerated Implementation (\$8.7 million)**
 - This program enhances the capacity of local governments and provides important technical assistance to conservation partners.
- **MPCA - Chloride Reduction Efforts (\$1.3 million)**
 - Chloride continues to permanently pollute Minnesota waters, and we support MPCA's efforts to train salt applicators and conduct needed outreach to address this problem.
- **Met Council Water Demand Reduction Grant Program (\$1.5 million)**
 - We have heard from cities and counties that are asking for this type of funding for water reuse and water efficiency/rebate programs. This program helps move Minnesota in the right direction toward more sustainable groundwater use.

Thank you for considering these comments, and for your work to protect and improve Minnesota waters.



Michelle Stockness, PE

Executive Director, Freshwater