

FRESHWATER

2026 Legislative Agenda

1. Smart design and development of new high-volume water users

Whether it's data centers, sustainable aviation fuel facilities or green hydrogen, we encourage more regional planning, cross sector collaboration, transparency, community input, evaluation of impacts, and sustainable water use around new developments with high-volume water users.

1a. Promote efficient design with emphasis on water circularity. Incentivize closed loop geothermal systems and water reuse systems.

1b. Increase transparency during the planning process. Restrict non-disclosure agreements from pertaining to water use, and limit the scope and timescale of these agreements. We are following bills [HF4077/ SF4379](#).

2. Water infrastructure funding

The 2025 Legislature passed a small bonding bill, but there is a backlog of critical infrastructure projects across the state not being funded. Infrastructure is critical to thriving economies and healthy communities. The 2026 Legislature can address these needs, including aging drinking water, stormwater, and wastewater infrastructure urgently needed across Minnesota.

Freshwater supports water infrastructure investments for the Public Facilities Authority (PFA). We also encourage equity-based project prioritization, so that low-income communities have increased access to the state revolving funds.

Freshwater also supports funding for the Minnesota Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). 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.

3a. Lead service line funding. Consider additional appropriations to fund lead service line replacement programs through the PFA. We are following bills [HF3748/ SF4122](#).

3b. Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP). We support the creation of a statewide assistance program for water and wastewater bills.

3. Safe drinking water for private well owners

High levels of nitrate in drinking water indicate significant agricultural contaminant issues in Minnesota, especially in the southeastern part of the state where the karst topography makes groundwater particularly vulnerable. Geogenic contaminants like arsenic and manganese also present risks to private well owners.

Freshwater supports strong legislative action to increase well testing, protection for private wells and private well owners, and well water treatment and mitigation of contaminants. We are following bills [HF3252/SF3577](#).

Items to monitor in 2026

- Chloride/safe salting legislation
- Sustainable aviation fuel standards and tax incentives
- Clean Water Fund and LCCMR recommendations support
- White Bear Lake, Little Rock Creek work groups and solutions to water conflicts
- Neonicotinoid pesticide regulation
- Wild rice and sulfate standard
- Funding for SWCD's and local governments

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Freshwater's mission is to inspire and empower people to value and protect water.

We envision a future with sustainable and accessible sources of clean water that support healthy communities, ecosystems, and economies.

We value:

- Collaboration. We connect across communities, institutions, and public and private sectors to build consensus, increase capacity, and create impact.
- Equity. We value diverse and well-rounded perspectives, with everyone having access to safe and clean water.
- Trust. We build trusted relationships across sectors to be a resource for advancing impact and collective action.
- Evidence-Based Decision Making. We value scientific evidence and ecological knowledge as a basis for our advocacy and action.