










Protect Minnesota's Future

2008 Legislative Summary

Strong Finish for Environment; Missed Opportunities on Energy Independence

How'd we do?	
	<p>Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment In the first week of session, the Minnesota Legislature approved this constitutional amendment, which will be on the November 2008 ballot. Voters will be able to approve dedicated funding for Minnesota's lakes, rivers and streams; forests and natural areas; arts and cultural heritage; parks and wildlife habitat; and drinking water. This accomplishment followed 10 years of debate and discussion.</p>
  	<p>Clean Energy Minnesota</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Solutions Act – We are pleased that the Legislature provided funding for cost and benefits studies related to a regional cap & trade system to reduce global warming pollution. However, we are disappointed that the legislature passed up an important opportunity to shape the regional policy by not taking a more specific action outlining Minnesota's stance before Gov. Pawlenty meets with other Midwest governors this fall. • Clean Cars Standards – Legislation that would have reduced emissions from new cars and trucks was defeated in a Senate committee during the last week of the legislative session. We are disappointed that a few lawmakers failed to realize that this legislation is about Minnesota – keeping our air clean and lowering our pain at the gas pump. The good news is that some agriculture groups now understand that this legislation will help farmers by boosting the ethanol industry; keeping hard-working trucks and equipment on the road; and cleaning up our air at the same time. Passing the Clean Cars Act is an important milestone in moving toward cleaner air, lower global warming pollution and greater energy independence. • Growing Better Fuels – Unfortunately, the Legislature missed the opportunity to lay the groundwork for the next generation of biofuels and ethanol in the session's first bonding legislation. We will continue to work with farmers, industry, researchers and legislators to reach agreement on the best mechanism to grow better energy fuels, while protecting our water and lands.
	<p>Transportation Choices 2020 The Minnesota Legislature made history by overriding the Governor's veto to provide funds to relieve traffic congestion, expand transit, and improve Minnesota's roads. The long-overdue funds will create a transportation system with multiple options to get people where they need to go. In addition to reducing traffic congestion and getting us where we need to go, increased transit options are a critical part of the solution to reduce Minnesota's global warming pollution.</p>
 	<p>Capital Investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Traditions Investment – While not every important project was funded, the Minnesota Legislature and Governor Tim Pawlenty did approve long-term investments with a strong emphasis on protecting Minnesota's lakes, rivers and streams; conserving lands; and maintaining and enhancing parks and trails. Of the 29 projects included in MEP's original bonding package, 20 projects totaling \$114.65 million survived to become law. • Central Corridor Light Rail Line and Lake Vermilion State Park – The session ended on a high note with the passage of a supplemental bonding bill that included funding for these two projects, which are crucial to protecting Minnesota's future, our economy and our way of life. By funding these signature projects the Minnesota Legislature and Governor Pawlenty contributed to a proud legacy to pass on to our children and grandchildren.

Protect Minnesota's Future

Minnesota's Future - Enjoy it. Protect it. Pass it on.

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Additional Environmental Legislation Enacted in 2008

Early Action to Reduce Emissions of “Superwarmers”: High Potential Greenhouse Gases – The law requires large users and manufacturers of these gases, which trap heat thousands of times more effectively than carbon dioxide, to tell the Pollution Control Agency how much they use and make. Also, the PCA must recommend measures to reduce the emissions. For more information, contact Allison Wolf of Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy at 612.750.5449 or awolf@mncenter.org.

Minnesota 2030: Promoting Exceptional New Buildings – The law requires ever stronger standards so that by 2030, new buildings financed by state bonds will be carbon neutral. The bill intends to transform the building industry and will also apply to renovations financed by state bonds. For more information, contact Sheldon Strom of Center for Energy and Environment at 612.335.5878 or sstrom@mncee.org. Or contact Allison Wolf of Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy at 612.750.5449 or awolf@mncenter.org.

Great Lakes Invasive Species Ballast Water – This initiative was passed as part of the Permanent School Trust Fund bill, SF 3056. The law requires ballast water management plans and ship logs to address the threat posed by invasive species such as viral hemorrhagic septicemia, which can be transmitted through discharge of ballast water. For more information, contact Allison Wolf of Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy at 612.750.5449 or awolf@mncenter.org or Gary Botzek of the Minnesota Conservation Federation at 651.293.9295 or gary@capitolconnections.com.

Lessard-Heritage Enhancement Council – This initiative was passed as part of the omnibus game and fish bill, SF 2651. The law establishes a council of twelve members that will make recommendations to the Legislature on appropriations of money from the outdoor heritage fund, which will be created if the Clean Water, Lands and Legacy Amendment is passed on the ballot by the voters this fall. For more information, contact Gary Botzek of the Minnesota Conservation Federation at 651.293.9295 or gary@capitolconnections.com.

Recommendations of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources – The Legislature approved the recommendations of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources in passing SF 2492. Subject to the governor’s approval, which is expected, \$23.4 million will be expended on environmental projects for land and habitat, water resources, natural resource data and environmental education. Several MEP member groups received funding in the bill - visit the LCCMR web site for a list of projects and details: www.lccmr.leg.mn.

Composting and Climate Change - The Legislature passed legislation that will make it easier for metro-area cities to start collecting compostable household waste at the curb like food scraps and non-recyclable paper (provisions included in SF 3056). Lawmakers also passed legislation to promote more recycling of construction waste, composting of organic household waste, and cost effective recycling of hazardous household waste (provisions included in HF 1812 and SF 3056). For more information, contact Susan Hubbard of Eureka Recycling at 651.222.7678 or susanh@eureka recycling.org.