

PROTECTING WHAT MINNESOTANS LOVE

MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP 2015 BRIEFING BOOK

The Minnesota Environmental Partnership is a coalition of more than 70 environmental, civic and conservation organizations working together for clean water, clean energy, and investments in Minnesota's Great Outdoors. We engage state leaders, unite environmental efforts and help citizens take action for the Minnesota they love.

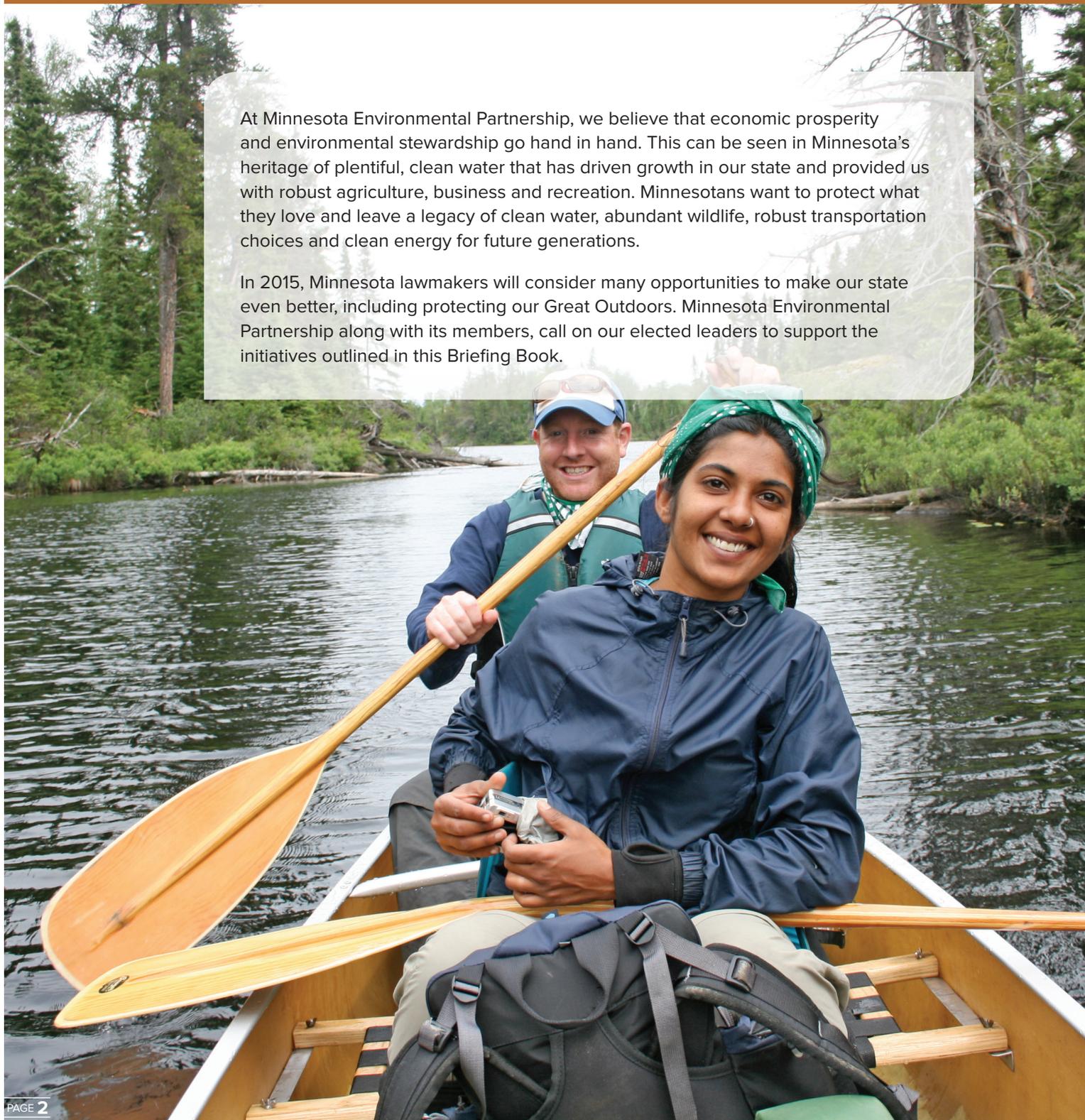
**Minnesota
Environmental
Partnership**



GREAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE ON THE HORIZON

At Minnesota Environmental Partnership, we believe that economic prosperity and environmental stewardship go hand in hand. This can be seen in Minnesota's heritage of plentiful, clean water that has driven growth in our state and provided us with robust agriculture, business and recreation. Minnesotans want to protect what they love and leave a legacy of clean water, abundant wildlife, robust transportation choices and clean energy for future generations.

In 2015, Minnesota lawmakers will consider many opportunities to make our state even better, including protecting our Great Outdoors. Minnesota Environmental Partnership along with its members, call on our elected leaders to support the initiatives outlined in this Briefing Book.





2015 INITIATIVES AND ONGOING PRIORITIES



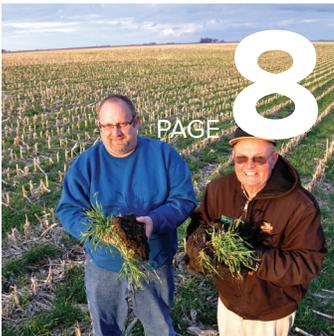
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CLEAN ENERGY IS AVAILABLE HERE AND NOW

Minnesota has taken great strides toward a clean energy economy, but there is much more we can do. We can scale up energy efficiency, saving more energy and creating jobs. We need to ensure Minnesotans get at least half of their electricity from clean renewable sources, like wind and solar, by 2030.

Minnesota has long been a leader in developing clean renewable energy, but in recent years we have fallen behind other states. Iowa has 40 percent more installed wind generation capacity than Minnesota and three times as many jobs in the wind industry.¹ Minnesota is forty times larger than Delaware, yet the smaller state far surpasses us in installed solar capacity.²

Over the next two years, our state and utilities will make choices that will shape Minnesota's energy system through 2030 and beyond. Taking the next steps today to promote efficiency and renewable energy will ensure family-supporting jobs, clean air to breathe, clean water to drink and attainment of Minnesota's carbon pollution reduction goals.



POSITION STATEMENT

Adopting a responsible clean energy plan for our state is the right thing to do. This plan will build on existing laws to transition our state to clean renewable energy and improve energy efficiency.

We support:

- Increasing the existing Renewable Energy Standard (RES) to 40% by 2030.** Right now, Minnesotans get 15% of our energy from renewables, but we're only using 1% of our wind potential. Improving the RES will help save money in the long-run and create family-sustaining jobs

here in our state—especially in Greater Minnesota. Renewable energy is also cost effective and is only becoming more so each year. The cost of wind power has dropped 58% in the past five years, and is the cheapest form of energy besides energy efficiency.¹ This technology is available here and now. A recent study commissioned by the 2013 Legislature found

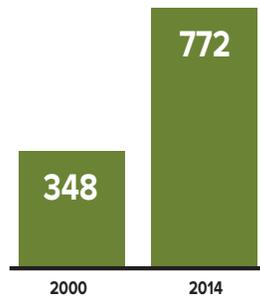
Minnesota's current electric power generation and distribution system would accommodate 40% of its supply from wind and solar generation.²

- Improve the yearly energy savings goal for utilities from 1.5% to 2%.** The goal currently in law is already saving enough energy to power more than 102,000 homes.³ Improving it will create good jobs in construction and manufacturing and save money for families and businesses in the long run.
- Implement policies that will grow renewable energy in Greater Minnesota.** These policies will help cities grow renewable energy in a smart way and provide a tax credit for Greater Minnesota farmers and businesses to buy and install small-scale wind turbines, clean energy storage and other technologies.


1.4 MILLION
 EFFICIENCY SAVINGS AND RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY GENERATION IN MINNESOTA IS EQUAL TO ENOUGH ENERGY TO POWER HOMES IN THE STATE FOR ONE YEAR (2012)

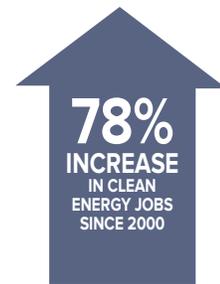

42% MORE
 PAY RATE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY JOBS AS COMPARED TO THE AVERAGE WAGE IN MINNESOTA

Source: DEED



Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

122% INCREASE
 IN CLEAN ENERGY BUSINESSES SINCE 2000




+11% OVERALL STATE EMPLOYMENT GROWTH DURING SAME TIME PERIOD

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¹ Lazard, Lazard's Levelized Cost of Energy Analysis, September 2014

² Minnesota Department of Commerce, Minnesota Renewable Energy Integration and Transmission Study, October 2014

³ Minnesota Department of Commerce, Minnesota Conservation Improvement Program Energy and Carbon Dioxide Savings Report for 2010-2011

A 10-YEAR COMMITMENT TO CLEAN, EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION

Minnesota's transportation systems are out of date and overdue for needed repairs and improvements. With comprehensive and balanced statewide funding, we can create a clean, efficient transportation system in Minnesota, an investment that will pay valuable environmental dividends.





PROBLEM

Transportation generates 24% of the carbon pollution in Minnesota, second only to the power sector.¹ Air quality is often worst near areas with bad traffic congestion. This means residents in suburban and urban areas, especially those living close to major roads and highways, confront the highest health risks due to poor air quality.

- Building out the metro regional transit system would save \$185 to \$395 million in reduced emissions.²
- Bus transit produces 33% less carbon pollution per passenger mile than the average single-occupancy vehicle.³
- Minnesota’s roads are in poor condition, costing the average motorist \$396.25 per year in extra vehicle repairs and operating expenses.⁴
- Inadequate funding is the biggest challenge faced by 94% of Greater Minnesota transit providers.⁵ In the Twin Cities metro area, 70% of jobs are not reachable by transit in 90 minutes.⁶
- More than 50 communities across Minnesota have unfunded Main Street enhancement projects, while statewide in 2013 MnDOT received proposals for nearly four times as many Safe Routes to Schools projects as it could fund.⁷

¹ Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

² Itasca Project. 2012. Regional Transit System Return on Investment Assessment. www.corridorsofopportunity.org/sites/default/files/Transit_ROI_Executive_Summary.pdf

³ Federal Transportation Administration, Public Transportation’s Role in Responding to Climate Change, www.fta.dot.gov/documents/PublicTransportationsRoleInRespondingToClimateChange2010.pdf

⁴ American Society of Civil Engineers, www.infrastructurereportcard.org/minnesota/minnesota-overview/

⁵ MnDOT. Greater Minnesota Transit Plan 2010 – 2030. December, 2009

POSITION STATEMENT

Minnesota’s transportation problems cannot be solved with one-time stop-gap fixes. We need a 10-year plan that solves our transportation problems by dedicating new investments in roads, bridges, transit and safe walking and bicycling infrastructure throughout the state.

We support:

- A 10% increase in license tab fees and a 6.5% sales tax on the business of selling fuel at wholesale (also known as a gross receipts tax), with proceeds dedicated to our aging roads and bridges;
- Dedicating the existing leased vehicle sales tax revenue to suburban county road work and meeting Greater Minnesota residents’ transit needs with new bus routes and expanded service hours;
- Increasing the current metro sales tax for transit by ¾-cent, with 10% devoted to safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the metro, and 90% to complete the current metro transit plan, including expanded bus service; and
- Reallocating \$16 million in current flexible federal transportation funds to help Greater Minnesota communities create vibrant downtowns and develop safe, accessible pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

⁶ Adie Tomer et al., Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan (Brookings Institution, May 12, 2011). Twin Cities data available at www.brookings.edu/~media/Series/jobs%20and%20transit/MinneapolisMN.PDF

⁷ MnDOT. MnDOT Safe Routes to School grants support 101 Minnesota schools. News Release. Feb. 10, 2015

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SMART CROPS FOR CLEAN WATER

Clean, safe water is important to Minnesota's families, communities and economy. Addressing today's most common cause of water pollution – non-point source runoff from cropland – is doable. New high-efficiency agricultural cropping systems in development by the Forever Green Program at the University of Minnesota will boost farm productivity, profitability and nutrient utilization, as well as reduce farm pollution to protect our water.





Photo: USDA, via Wikimedia Commons

PROBLEM

Minnesota’s agricultural landscape is dominated by summer-annual crops (e.g., field corn and soybeans). During the summer months, crops soak up most of the nutrients available in the soil. But this happens only a few months of the year. The rest of the year, the fields are inactive. Without active plant root systems to hold soil in place and absorb the water, fields are much more vulnerable to wind and water erosion, and nutrient run off, a major contributor to non-point source pollution. Six out of seven – 86% – of water quality impairments in Minnesota are caused by such non-point sources.¹

Ongoing funding is required to continue development of next generation high-efficiency, smart cropping systems that increase farm profitability and productivity while improving soil health, wildlife habitat and water quality. The Legislature provided one-time funding in 2014, which is now being utilized effectively in the University of Minnesota Forever Green Program. Key to the program’s success, however, is ongoing funding to do the necessary research over multiple growing seasons.

POSITION STATEMENT

Advance the Forever Green Program: provide long-term funding for research at the University of Minnesota to accelerate development of economically viable perennial and cover crop options that enhance farm prosperity, habitat and water quality.

¹Source: Minnesota Water Quality – David Fairburn – University of MN Water Resources Center – MN Water Sustainability Framework – page 24

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BUFFERS PROTECT OUR WATERS AND HABITAT

Minnesota Environmental Partnership supports Governor Dayton’s initiative to create a 50-foot buffer of vegetation along the shores of all Minnesota’s rivers, streams and lakes. Buffers are strips of permanent vegetation that stabilizes the stream banks and shorelines to prevent erosion and act as sponges, filtering runoff of pollutants such as sediment, fertilizers and pesticides.

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, buffers intercept surface runoff and remove up to 75% of sediment, 60% of some pathogens and 50% or more of fertilizers and pesticides before they end up in our rivers and lakes.

Not only are buffers effective at reducing nutrient pollution and improving water quality, they also provide critical habitat for many species of wildlife, including pheasants, migratory songbirds and pollinators such as bees and monarch butterflies. Better lake and stream buffers are urgently needed to protect and restore water quality and wildlife habitat.

GREAT LAKES DESERVE GREAT PROTECTION

Minnesota is the headwaters state for the Great Lakes, counting 190 miles of rugged Lake Superior coastline among its natural assets. The North Shore contains 246 trout streams and eight state parks. While Minnesota's Great Lake is widely viewed as the cleanest of the five Great Lakes, it can also be considered the most threatened.

CONSIDER THESE FACTS:

- Lake Superior is the fastest-warming large lake in the world;
- The port of Duluth and Superior is the busiest inland port in the country, and more ballast water is discharged here than at all other ports on the Great Lakes combined;
- Development along the North Shore and its streams is reducing forest cover and causing increases in stream temperatures, erosion and habitat destruction;
- Oil companies have proposed shipment of fracked oil and tar sands oil across Lake Superior;
- Expanded mining activity all around Lake Superior threatens to reverse years of progress and increase mercury, sulfates and other toxic pollutants entering the lake; and
- 1 in 10 infants born on the Minnesota North Shore has levels of mercury in their blood that places them at high risk of adverse effects.



SAFEGUARDING THE GREAT LAKES RESTORATION INITIATIVE

The Great Lakes region's business leaders, mayors, governors, tribes and conservation and environmental communities have worked together since 2005 to implement a science-based plan of action known as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The GLRI is a long-term plan to protect and restore the Great Lakes while stimulating the region's economy. The first five years of funding provided Great Lakes projects in Minnesota with an estimated \$17 million in grants, with an emphasis on the St. Louis River estuary. The GLRI has also funded North Shore trout stream restoration, research on ballast water treatment and support for tribal engagement.

The GLRI has been a powerful opportunity to address our state's restoration needs. Minnesotans help lead the way for full Congressional funding of the GLRI. Here at home, we must take advantage of the federal funding by leveraging state dollars, including funds from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. We can make great progress addressing problems that have awaited action for decades.

This combined effort has had a real impact on Lake Superior. Restoration efforts have accelerated in the St. Louis River Estuary with combined funding of more than \$36 million over the past five years. An unprecedented action plan has also been released mapping out nearly 60 actions to restore the St. Louis River by 2025.

OTHER PRIORITY ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF LAKE SUPERIOR

- Continue to work for state and federal ballast water programs that protect Lake Superior and include lake carriers.
- Encourage adoption and enforcement of laws that limit the impact of development along North Shore streams, including impacts of sediment.
- Advocate for laws that improve the speed and effectiveness of clean-up of polluted North Shore streams, including the threatened St. Louis River.
- Ensure that Minnesota follows through on fully implementing the Great Lakes-Saint Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact.
- Work with our allies to reduce the threat of spills from oil transport by pipeline and tanker.

MINING THREATENS OUR CLEAN WATERS

Proposed sulfide mines in Northeast Minnesota, such as the PolyMet NorthMet project and the Twin Metals Minnesota project, threaten our lakes and rivers with significant ongoing water pollution. PolyMet's own data show that ongoing water treatment would be required long after the mining stops – for 500 years or more.

These mines are different than traditional iron ore mines. No operation of this type is known to have operated and closed without polluting nearby lakes, rivers or groundwater. The proposed sulfide mining areas drain into the St. Louis River and Lake Superior or the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Voyageurs National Park.

The technology to fully protect our clean water for future generations does not exist. Even the most advanced water treatment does no good if water can't be captured to be treated. Sulfate from mining has been shown, by science recently funded by the Legislature, to affect the entire ecosystem.

Sulfide mining in a water-rich environment like Minnesota is a high-risk gamble. We need to protect our water, our families' health, our wildlife and taxpayer resources from pollution and harm caused by sulfide mining.

DEFENDING MINNESOTA'S ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FOUNDATION

When we have something we love, its protection is worthy of investment. Our lakes, rivers, prairie lands, forests, wildlife, parks, trails and more contribute to Minnesota's economy, the health of our families and our treasured Minnesota way of life. That's why we must maintain traditional levels of funding to our Great Outdoors, and uphold the language of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment, which states:

“money under this section must supplement traditional sources of funding for these purposes and may not be used as a substitute.”

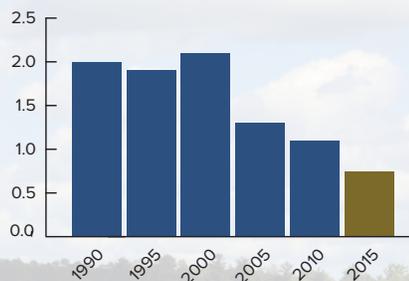
– Article XI, Section 15 of the Minnesota Constitution

Our coalition of nonprofits is dedicated to three principles to help state leaders make funding decisions that are in line with the Minnesota Constitution.

- We must reverse the disproportionate cuts to the environment and conservation programs and renew the state's commitment to regaining the traditional 1% share of the total state general fund budget for our Great Outdoors.
- Capital investments for Minnesota's Great Outdoors must be maintained at a level at least equal to the 10-year average of 22% of total general obligation bonds authorized.
- Statutorily dedicated funds for Minnesota's Great Outdoors cannot be raided to pay for other budget items.

Minnesotans cherish our natural resources and take pride in our outdoor heritage. Over the years, Minnesota Environmental Partnership and our member organizations have fought for laws that strengthen our ability to protect our land, water and air. These laws provide the bedrock

Conservation & Environment as Percentage of All State General Fund Spending FY 1990-2015



of Minnesota's environmental policy. As our coalition moves forward with our priority issues we will continue our work of defending existing laws from being weakened or repealed.

These include:

Clean Energy — Implementing sound energy policies that increase our use of renewable energy sources, provide incentives to utilities to promote energy efficiency and achieve our goal of reducing Minnesota's global warming

pollution 80% by 2050. This includes maintaining the moratorium on construction of new nuclear reactors and coal plants.

Minnesota Environmental Policy Act — Maintaining Minnesota's environmental review standards, which protect our Great Outdoors and our communities from avoidable harm caused by poorly thought-through projects and decisions.

Clean Water — Defending clean water laws and regulations so that we can restore and protect our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and ground water, not weaken the laws or lower the pollution standards so that tainted water is reclassified by the state as clean.

Wetlands — Defending Minnesota's Wetland Conservation Act to avoid, minimize and mitigate the impacts of wetland-destroying projects. Minnesotans expect leaders to maintain or improve – not weaken – current wetlands law, and to ensure that mitigation projects and policy are based on the best science available.

Community and Township Rights — Protecting the core democratic principle of community and township rights that allow local communities to enact planning and zoning ordinances that are stronger than state regulations. This ensures that proposed developments benefit the area and do not harm neighbors and the local environment.

Chart data courtesy of Conservation Minnesota.

Divesting the Minnesota state investment funds from fossil fuels

OVERVIEW

Fossil fuel companies market products that are the primary contributors to climate change. Fossil fuel divestment is a way to hold the fossil fuel industry accountable, and challenges the fossil fuel industries socially, politically and economically.

PROBLEM

Fossil fuel pollution threatens our health, standard of living, environment and financial security. Scientists agree that human consumption of fossil fuels is driving significant changes in our climate. More frequent storms, periods of drought, shifts in biomes, poor air quality, reduced water quality and other impacts of climate change threaten Minnesota's way of life and major industries, such as agriculture, forestry and tourism.

In order for our climate to remain stable, we must leave 67% to 80% of known fossil fuel carbon reserves in the ground.¹ This means those reserves will eventually become stranded assets, which could cost the industry tens of trillions of dollars and render them grossly overvalued.² This projection has become known as the Carbon Bubble, with its predicted impact "so large it represents a systemic global financial risk," dwarfing bubbles of the past.³ The Minnesota State Board of Investment must take action to make sure stranded assets do not damage the pensions of hardworking Minnesotans.

Along with the financial justification, divestment also carries a moral imperative. Taking significant steps to address climate change as a state while simultaneously investing in the very companies that are driving the crisis is illogical. Worse, it promotes a sense of complicity and acceptance that we cannot afford in addressing this challenge.

SOLUTION

Committing to divestment leverages our state's institutional credibility, sending a message to business and policy leaders that our irresponsible use of fossil fuels has to stop. Minnesota currently has policies in place related to divestment from companies doing business in Sudan and Iran, and can be a leader in the movement to divest from fossil fuels.

While fossil fuels make up a significant percentage of State of Minnesota investment funds, there are many other sectors that also provide high returns, including healthcare, consumer goods and technology.⁴ New and emerging clean technologies are also proving to be profitable, and investing in them could drive jobs and clean energy in Minnesota.



Photo: Flickr/Nadine Toukan

Sponsoring organization:

MN350

Supporting organizations:

Alliance for Sustainability
 Community Power *
 Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy
 Institute for Local Self-Reliance
 Friends of the Cloquet Valley
 State Forest
 Mankato Area Environmentalists
 Renewing The Countryside
 Windustry

* not an MEP member organization

¹ International Energy Agency. (2012). World Energy Outlook 2012. Executive Summary. <http://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/English.pdf>; Cristophe McGlade & Elkins, P. 2015. Letter: The geographical distribution of fossil fuels unused when limiting global carbon to 2° C. Nature 517, 187-190. January 8, 2015.

² Russell Sage Foundation. (2012). Social and Economic Effects of the Great Recession. Russell Sage Foundation Website. Retrieved from <http://www.russellsage.org/research/chartbook/great-recession>

³ Gilding, P. (2013). Victory at Hand for the Climate Movement? Renew Economy. Retrieved March 19, 2013, from <http://reneweconomy.com.au/2013/victory-at-hand-for-the-climate-movement-99405>

⁴ Morningstar. (2014) Stocks. Retrieved from <http://news.morningstar.com/stockReturns/CapWtdSectorReturns.html>

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CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)
cureriver.org

Do it Green! Minnesota
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Environmental Law and Policy Center
elpc.org

Eureka Recycling
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Freshwater Society
freshwater.org

Greater Minnesota Housing Fund
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