

Minnesota Environmental Partnership Community Legislative Priorities 2018

1) Clean Water Investments for Rural Communities:

- a. Bonding for wastewater treatment and drinking water infrastructure: \$167 - \$300 million, a range recommended by the Public Facilities Authority
- b. Bonding for the Conservation Reserve Easement Program (CREP): \$47 million
- c. Clean Water Fund: \$22 million payback, as written into last year's tax bill

2) Increase Perennials and Cover Crops for High Productivity Farming and Clean Water:

The Working Lands Watershed Restoration Program (WLWRP) aims to facilitate the creation of processes, incentives, products, and markets that will make it advantageous for landowners to plant perennial and cover crops to improve water quality and provide other ecological benefits. The initial 2016 program was an MEP initiative and funded an active two-year Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) effort to research and develop the program. [A project report was submitted to the legislature on February 1, 2018.](#) BWSR has submitted a legislative "placeholder" to the Governor's office and will be meeting with Water Cluster members to consider legislative initiatives. Proposals could range from the continuation of the working group to further studies or initiation of pilot programs.

The University of Minnesota Forever Green Initiative is a perennial and cover crop program that accelerates development and uses of economically viable winter annual and perennial cropping options for farmers that will dramatically reduce nonpoint pollution and habitat loss associated with the currently dominant annual cropping systems. Although two year funding was obtained last year for this program, the MEP coalition would like to see additional funds directed to this effort.

3) Renewable Energy Standard Increase to 50% by 2030:

The Renewable Energy Standard set in 2007 has been wildly successful, spurring the creation of 57,000 jobs while being on track to meet or exceed the 25% by 2025 requirement. Xcel Energy, which was charged with meeting a 30% standard by 2025, has already set higher goals for the company as it realizes that renewable energy is cheaper than its cheapest fossil fuels. Bi-partisan legislation proposed last year to increase the state's RES from 25% to 50% by 2030 is being actively pursued by most (if not all) the MEP Climate and Cluster member organizations as well as other clean energy related coalitions and the Dayton administration. These organizations know that in order to meet our state's carbon emission reduction goals, we need to make sure the transition to renewable energy continues across the state and across all power companies.

Defense

- **Defending Minnesota's Environmental Policy Foundation from rollbacks**, including laws, policies, rules and authorities, and opposing efforts to block, undermine, and undo state policy, standards, rules, and laws affecting (partial list):
 - Clean energy
 - Environmental review (MEPA, NEPA) and permitting processes
 - Agency authority
 - Citizen involvement in councils, processes, hearings
 - Clean, plentiful surface and groundwater
 - Local government control and authority
 - Public land acquisition and protection
 - Buffer, wetland, and calcareous fen protections
- **Broader defense of our traditional and constitutional funding sources**, such as:
 - Ensuring that the capital investments for Minnesota's Great Outdoors include at least the traditional amount of 22% of state general operating bonding dedicated to environment and conservation investments
 - Ensure that constitutionally-dedicated funds are not diverted to fund projects or activities traditionally paid for from the state's general fund. These constitutionally-dedicated funds include:
 - Legacy Amendment funds (The Clean Water Fund, Outdoor Heritage Fund, Parks & Trails Fund), and
 - Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund