

Impact of Senate's proposed 25% budget cuts to conservation and environment work in MN

SF 2314 proposes a budget for environment and conservation that, compared to the previous biennium, cuts overall General Fund support by 25% or \$89.6 million. Letters from state agencies to the Senate committees (linked below) outline the impact of these proposed cuts.

Department of Natural Resources:

A \$38.67 million cut (17%) of General Fund support will mean:

- **Failure to Address Chronic Wasting Disease:** The Gov. recommended \$4.57 million to respond to Chronic Wasting Disease – this bill *does not include any* General Fund investment for CWD.
- **Deep cuts to protecting Water Resources:**
 - \$6.4 million cut to Division of Ecological and Water Resources
 - \$4.4 million reduction to groundwater protection
- **Neglect of Aquatic Invasive Species:** cuts funding to programs that fight the spread of AIS.
- **Reduction of State Park Opportunities:** staff and service reductions that eliminate camping at up to 34 parks, close campgrounds for the shoulder seasons (Labor Day and Memorial Day), reduce trail service, and reduce tours
- **Lax Enforcement:** \$1.8 million reduction in the Division of Enforcement
- **Diminishment of Minnesota's precious Scientific and Natural Areas:** a recommendation by the LCCMR for \$3.5 million for scientific and natural areas is eliminated

Board of Water & Soil Resources:

A \$12.54 million cut (39%) of General Fund support will mean reductions to work that:

- **Reduces soil erosion:** Reduction of funds that go to landowners to help keep soil on their land and treat and store water to provide water quality improvement and flood control
- **Controls invasive weeds:** Elimination of funding to local government for weed management cooperatives
- **Maintains wetlands and manages public drainage:** Elimination of funding to carry out the Wetland Conservation Act and Public Drainage management put both man-made and natural water systems at risk.
- **Funds local Soil and Water Conservation Districts:** these are the boots on the ground serving our current and future generations.

Pollution Control Agency:

A \$12.49 million cut (86%) of General Fund support will mean:

- **Reliance on permit fees and enforcement actions to fund the agency work.** “This is not a healthy situation for businesses, the public, nor for the environment and human health.”

In addition, the proposed budget means:

- **Elimination of the Business-Friendly Data Services:** this will stop efforts to increase efficiency for both the agency and businesses by moving processes online.
- **Lost opportunity to clean up St. Louis Area of Concern:** Removal of all funding (\$484,000) to keep cleaning up this area, which leverages \$ 47.2 million federal dollars for the clean-up.
- **Elimination of Greater Minnesota recycling and composting grants.**
- **Elimination of dedicated staff for railroad emergency preparedness and response.**
- **Elimination of \$230,000 in historical funding for watershed monitoring activities.**
- **No funding for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure** as recommended by the Governor.
- **No funding for engineering work to begin to clean up the dangerous Freeway Landfill and Dump in Burnsville** as recommended by the Governor.
- **No funding to accelerate review of Closed Contaminated Sites to ensure people’s homes are not impacted by soil vapors or private wells contaminated** as recommended by the Governor.
- **No funding to reduce food waste** as recommended by the Governor.
- **No funding to support Recycling Market Development** as recommended by the Governor.

Policy Provisions of Concern in SF 2314

The PCA Commissioner detailed [14 policy provisions of concern](#). Here are just two:

- **Requiring unanimous agreement of all 87 county boards in order to obtain a “social permit”** in Minnesota before the state can change a water quality standard to make them more protective of human health and the environment.
- **Restrictions on extending comment periods unless the project proposer agrees.** Though the agency rarely extends comment periods, it understands that sometimes 30 days is not enough time for the public to understand an issue, read all relevant documents, then compose and submit comments on issues that could greatly impact them – all while taking care of their regular duties, such as bringing in the harvest, during certain times of the year.