

## MEP Collaborative Priorities 2023

# *Ensuring a Just Transition to a Sustainable and Carbon Free Future*

## Climate Change • Healthy Ecosystems • Environmental Justice

### Facilitating: Supporting Narrative and Shared Messaging

The MEP coalition will support proactive and defensive message development and campaigns that are both public facing and behind-the-scenes:

- Hold state leaders and legislators accountable for real climate and ecosystem progress.
- Apply science and law in agency decision-making to meet their mission.
- Ensure environmental and racial justice is centered in policy solutions and appropriations.

### Co-Leading: Areas of Significant Engagement

**Fighting for a healthy climate.** Climate change affects everything and everyone, especially the most vulnerable communities. That is why, in 2019, the MEP Coalition adopted the climate crisis as an overarching critical challenge we must tackle collectively for the common good. MEP supports a comprehensive multi-sectoral approach to addressing climate change that protects our clean air and water, advances a just transition to a clean energy economy and ensures a healthy environment for all Minnesotans. MEP will work to make the goals laid out in the Minnesota Climate Action Framework a reality - to achieve a carbon-neutral, resilient, and equitable future for our state and people. MEP will devote significant resources to:

- Advance the Next Generation Climate Act to update Minnesota's science-based climate standards
- Secure state matching funds to maximize use of federal climate resources
- Champion significant broad state investments in climate solutions at the needed speed and scale that ensures a Just Transition to a carbon free future.
- Develop a plan to reach an equitable, net-zero economy by 2040.
- Invest in natural climate solutions: forests, prairies, native perennials, and established and emerging regenerative agriculture practices that provide multiple ecological and societal benefits.

**People and planet-centered public institutions.** Our public institutions were created to serve people and our environment – but increasingly, the public good takes a back seat. Too often, public institutions put profit over people in decision-making and treat industry as their primary clients, overlooking sound science, public health, and the clean water, air, and lands that sustain life. MEP will call on state, county and local governments to exercise transparency (including retaining and providing timely access to public records), accountability, and to meaningfully engage with communities about policies and projects that affect the environment and their well-being. MEP will work to:

- Call on state officials to require investigation and repair of damage from Line 3 construction that is polluting surface and groundwater, wetlands, wild rice beds and other sensitive ecosystems.
- Update the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and LCCMR process to be more equitable, community-centered, accessible, and impactful.
- Reinstate the MPCA Citizens' Board.

**Advancing Environmental Justice.** Minnesota’s communities of color and low-income communities are especially vulnerable to pollution and environmental catastrophes and are often excluded from the corridors of power where environmental and economic decisions are made. A just response to climate change and pollution requires listening to and learning from the communities who directly experience the effects of pollution and climate disruption where they live, work and play. MEP will actively partner with environmental justice leaders, communities, organizations and Indigenous Tribes to ensure that environmental and racial justice is centered in policy solutions. This includes protecting the right to clean air and safe and affordable drinking water.

- Get the Lead out. Lead exposure is a threat to public health and wildlife. It disproportionately impacts Black, brown, and Indigenous Minnesotans, children, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. Getting the lead out is crucial to advancing justice for all people. MEP will identify and bring awareness to lead levels in drinking water and the environment and advance state legislation + federal funds to replace all 100,000+ lead drinking water service lines across MN.
- Require MPCA to evaluate cumulative impacts of pollution from projects undergoing permitting on communities that will be impacted by a project seeking a permit.
- Call for policies to address the environmental health concerns posed by PFAS. Known as “forever chemicals” due to the persistence of PFAS in the human body, these chemicals pollute our water and accumulate over time, creating greater risk for adverse health impacts.
- Advocate for completion of the St. Louis River Total Maximum Daily Load study to protect surrounding communities from mercury exposure.

## Coordinating: Defense to protect our Environment

We must defend our bedrock laws, rules and funding that protect our people and planet. As a coalition, MEP will work to help coordinate defense strategies and tactics, protecting, for example:

- Appropriations of constitutionally dedicated environment and conservation funds
- Definition of Public Waters.
- 2023 state biennial budget appropriations.
- Free speech, especially in the face of Line 3 and other extractive projects.

## Supporting: Legislative Policy Portfolio for a Just Transition – Session 2023

The MEP coalition will support a dynamic slate of proactive legislation with sign-on letters, action alerts, and other services. This includes:

### *Investments*

**Capital Investment For Climate and Equity.** Highlights include:

- Transit, equity and active transportation
- Solar, HVAC and efficiency Improvements in schools, public buildings and affordable housing
- Natural lands, prairies and forests

**Bond for Water Infrastructure:** At least \$300 million in water infrastructure bonding to replace and improve aging infrastructure and upgrade water treatment facilities. The amount should maximize our ability to take advantage of the federal match made possible by federal infrastructure legislation.

**Replace Lead Service Lines:** Funding for private lead service line replacement. Seeking state bonding and general funds to maximize federal funds to meet Minnesota’s need to replace all lead service lines over a ten year period at no cost to residents.

## Policy

**ENRTF / LCCMR Redesign and Ballot Question:** The current constitutional dedication of lottery funds will expire in 2024. A coalition including many MEP members has developed a proposal to increase the amount, equity, effectiveness, and community responsiveness of the ENRTF funding allocation process while extending the constitutional dedication.

### Climate, Energy, Infrastructure, and Transportation

- Access federal matching infrastructure funds to help build new clean energy and clean transportation infrastructure. (Fresh Energy)
- Move the state to 100% clean electricity production as fast as possible. (100% Campaign and partners)
- Update MN’s 2007 emissions reduction goals and benchmarks to meet needs outlined by current science. *Next Generation Climate Act* (MN Center for Environmental Advocacy)
- Clean and equitable transportation funding including dedicated sales tax for metro-area transit, general fund resources for transit in Greater Minnesota, and a “fix it first” approach to road funding. (Sierra Club)
- Climate Impact Analysis: Require calculation of greenhouse gas emissions that would be incurred or saved through the adoption, construction and annual operation of proposed policies or projects. (League of Women Voters Minnesota, Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light)

### Environmental Justice

- Provide technical and financial support for communities impacted by climate change. (League of Women Voters Minnesota)
- Require MPCA to evaluate cumulative impacts of pollution from projects undergoing permitting on communities that will be impacted by a project seeking a permit. *MN Frontline Communities Protection Act, also known as Cumulative Impacts Bill* (COPAL)
- Reduce exposure and address the environmental health concerns posed by PFAS.

### Agriculture and Working Lands

- Set soil-healthy farming goals of 5.75 million acres of soil-healthy practices by 2030, 12.5 million by 2035, 25 million by 2040. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Soil Health Cost-Share Funding of \$20 million to financially support farmers transitioning to soil-health farming practices. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Fully Fund Forever Green. The Forever Green Initiative at the University of MN is developing the next generation of winter-hardy perennial and winter-annual cropping systems that protect our water, improve soil health, and enhance farm prosperity. (Friends of the Mississippi River)
- Fund Farmer Resiliency Planning. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Fund for Climate Resiliency Research Position from the Higher Ed Budget. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Fund Continuous Living Cover Value-Chain Development. A state funded grant program for supply-chain businesses within the emerging Continuous Living Cover farming sector that will grow the markets and products for these crops. (Friends of the Mississippi River)

- Establish a Hemp Supply Chain Grant Program to advance the processing and marketing of hemp. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Expand funding for the Farm-to-School Grant Program and provide resources to hire regional program coordinators. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Invest in greatly expanding cold storage infrastructure, which is critical for local food systems to function. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Provide grants to local governments, regional planning organizations, and tribes to develop and implement agriculture economic development plans, such as amendments to zoning ordinances, adding co-packing and community kitchens, and providing land to disadvantaged farmers. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Publicly invest in urban agricultural programs and organizations, including local food distribution, urban farming and community gardens, and more. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Provide a grant to the Good Acre's Local Emergency Assistance Farmer Fund (LEAFF) to compensate small-scale emerging farmers within 200 miles of the Twin Cities for products donated toward hunger relief. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Provide additional funding and eliminate matching requirements for the Down Payment Assistance Grant Program. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Next Generation Farmer Development Program: Assist farmers in the cost of hiring apprentices who gain high-quality farming experience. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Safe Workplaces for Processing Workers Act: Support the United Food & Commercial Workers Union Minnesota locals as they fight for safe large meat processing facilities, including regulating line speeds and providing appropriate PPE. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Low Carbon Fuel Standard Legislation: This policy is currently in discussion and has the potential to be harmful if it expands or invests in the corn-based ethanol that harms our waters and adds significant greenhouse gas emissions. The policy has the potential to be helpful in advancing adoption of electric vehicles and/or deployment of the next generation of winter annual oilseeds like camelina or pennycress.
- Support small and medium-sized meat processors (50 or fewer FTEs) with safety and business training, technical assistance, MDA resource staff to help navigate inspection processes, subsidized meat-processor education and apprenticeship programs. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Enact a statewide animal unit cap to prevent high density and ownership of many “smaller” concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs).

## **Pollinators**

- Require all cities to allow native plant landscaping. (Wild Ones)
- Highways for Habitat: Adopt a roadside habitat management program that mandates ecologically sound practices and provides funding for the program and an ecologist manager.” (Pollinator Friendly Alliance)
- Ban the use of synthetic systemic insecticides and pesticide-treated seed in all DNR-managed lands including state parks, state forests and wildlife management areas. (Pollinator Friendly Alliance)

## Waste

- Require the accuracy of labels on compostable products to protect the quality of compost (Minnesota Composting Council, Eureka Recycling)
- Transition to a Zero Waste Economy, including supporting the Right to Repair, implementing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to eliminate plastics, investing in recycling infrastructure for e-waste, researching alternatives for plastic and advanced recovery of minerals, and requiring clear labeling for plastics, PFAS, and compostable waste. (League of Women Voters Minnesota)

## Mining

- Require that industry show a successful example of a copper nickel sulfide mine that has operated for 10 years and been closed for 10 years without polluting before building such a mine in Minnesota. *Prove it First* (Friends of Boundary Water Wilderness)
- Enact a ban on sulfide-ore copper mining on state lands and prohibiting the issuance of state permits, licenses or leases anywhere within the Rainy River Headwaters. *Boundary Waters Permanent Protection Bill* (Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness)
- Shift duty to promote mining from DNR to Department of Employment and Economic Development to prevent conflict between promotion and regulation (Friends of the Boundary Water Wilderness)
- Ban Minnesota from issuing non-ferrous mining permits to "bad actors" who have violated certain international laws including corruption, bribery, or natural resources destruction. (Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness)
- Require mining companies to fully fund any Financial Assurance package upfront and in cash. (Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness)

## Water, Lands and Wildlife

- Repeal an exemption for endangered plants, otherwise protected by MN endangered species law, within Minnesota's 135,000 miles of public rights of way (Friends of MN Scientific and Natural Areas)
- Enact a statewide ban on lead fishing tackle and ammunition (Friends of MN Scientific and Natural Areas)
- Provide free water screening and financial assistance to well owners and communities to secure safe drinking water. (Minnesota Well Owners Organization)
- Fully fund Soil & Water Conservation Districts out of the Environment Finance Budget. (Land Stewardship Project)
- Adequately fund acquisitions of Scientific and Natural Areas. (Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas)
- Fund the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (Land Stewardship Project)

*Is your MEP member organization championing legislation that isn't on this list? This is a dynamic document. Contact Cecilia Calvo at [cecilia@mepartnership.org](mailto:cecilia@mepartnership.org)*