



Minnesota Environmental Partnership

Collaborative Priorities 2024

Ensuring a Just Transition to a Sustainable & Clean Energy Future
Climate Action • 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 clean energy, resilient, and equitable future for our state and people. MEP will devote significant resources to:

- Ensure successful implementation of the 100% Law that establishes a goal to achieve a transition to 100% carbon-free electricity in Minnesota by 2040 in a way that avoids extraction or incentives that create rural, Indigenous, or environmental justice community sacrifice zones.
- Secure state matching funds that foster just environmental and climate solutions to maximize use of federal climate resources.
- Champion significant broad state investments in equitable climate solutions at the speed and scale needed to ensure a Just Transition to a clean energy future.
- Support the goals of the MN Climate Innovation Finance Authority to address existing inequities in financing access, promote community-based economic development, and leverage historic federal and state funding to bolster equitable climate solutions.
- 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 address regulatory neglect and exercise transparency (including creating, 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.
- Rededicate lottery funds to the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and develop a new Community Grants process to improve access, equity and impact for local communities.
- 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.

MEP will:

- Seek to strengthen its relationships with Indigenous Tribes and leaders and make good faith efforts to obtain their input when developing or supporting policies that affect tribal lands, waters, airsheds, or treaty-reserved rights.
- Support rededication of lottery proceeds to the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund and the creation of the ENRTF Community Grants Program that will support community based projects with the priority to respond to environmental degradation and related health concerns of communities historically overburdened by pollution.
- Call for a community-centered rulemaking process and strong implementation of the Cumulative Impacts Law that shifts regulatory power to our most overburdened communities and addresses the disproportionate burden of pollution in frontline communities.
- Call for producers to pay for the lifecycle of their packaging and for the collection of 100% of Minnesota's electronic waste stream by making manufacturers responsible for paying the costs of sorting and collection. In the US pollution from our waste is disproportionately born by marginalized communities. Waste and Incinerators and landfills across the country are disproportionately located near communities of color and low-income communities.
- 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 continue to identify and bring awareness to lead levels in drinking water and the environment.
- Call for the strong and broad implementation of PFAS provisions enacted last Legislative session that will 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 human and animal health impacts.
- Advocate for completion of the St. Louis River Total Maximum Daily Load study to protect surrounding communities from mercury exposure exacerbated by sulfate releases and by local and regional sources of mercury air emissions.

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.
- State budget appropriations.
- Free speech, especially in the face of harmful social and environmental impacts of extractive projects.

Supporting: Policy Portfolio for a Just Transition – Session 2024

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. Continue to invest in water infrastructure bonding to replace and improve aging infrastructure and upgrade water treatment facilities consistent with long-term preservation of aquifers and compliance with water quality standards. The amount should maximize our ability to take advantage of the federal match made possible by federal infrastructure legislation.

Policy

Climate, Energy, Infrastructure, and Transportation

- Require a consumer demand forecast for fossil fuel infrastructure (MN350)
- Stop metropolitan sprawl by reforming land use for climate and equity (Sierra Club North Star Chapter)
- Require a climate impact analysis for new state policies and projects (League of Women Voters Minnesota)
- Engage in the 100% Carbon-Free Electricity Law implementation docket in front of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to ensure the successful implementation of the 100% Law. Successful implementation would ensure that all utilities are held to these standards, that false solutions are not adopted under the guise of being “carbon-free,” and that there are robust means of measuring compliance with these standards.



Environmental Justice


- Call for a community-centered rulemaking process and strong implementation of the Cumulative Impacts Law that shifts regulatory power to our most overburdened communities and addresses the disproportionate burden of pollution in frontline communities. (Clean Water Action Minnesota, Frontline Communities Protection Coalition)
- Define exposure to toxics as an injury in Minnesota so that those exposed to plumes can sue for medical monitoring (Clean Water Action MN)




Environmental Justice (cont.)

- Call for producers to pay for the lifecycle of their packaging and for the collection of 100% of Minnesota's electronic waste stream by making manufacturers responsible for paying the costs of sorting and collection. In the US pollution from our waste is disproportionately born by marginalized communities. Waste and Incinerators and landfills across the country are disproportionately located **near communities of color and low-income communities. (Eureka Recycling, Zero Waste Coalition)**


Agriculture and Working Lands

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- Provide funding for the Forever Green Initiative (Friends of the Mississippi River)
 - Provide funding to develop markets for continuous living cover (CLC) crops (Friends of the Mississippi River)
 - Direct the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to develop a regulatory program for treated seeds, filling a regulatory loophole that allows an enormous source of pesticide contamination to go largely unregulated in Minnesota. (Pesticide Action Network)
 - Prohibit non-agricultural uses of neonicotinoid pesticides (Pesticide Action Network)
 - Fund manure management grants to help small feedlots increase manure storage (MCEA)
 - Create a fellowship program for new farmers to gain farming and business management skills (Land Stewardship Project)
 - Set aside 25% of soil health grants and cost share dollars for emerging farmers and prioritize regenerative farming practices (Land Stewardship Project)
 - Reform rules for feedlots' manure management practices (Land Stewardship Project)
 - Increase funding for the Farm-to-School program (Land Stewardship Project)
 - Create dedicated state staff in each region to coordinate stable local food markets. (Land Stewardship Project)

Pollinators and Wildlife

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- Improve the pollinator plant diversity of agricultural buffers (Wild Ones)
 - Ban lead ammunition and lead fishing tackle (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
 - Provide funding for Scientific and Natural Areas Program (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
 - Protect Minnesota's state-listed endangered plants within 135,000 miles of Minnesota rights-of-way (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
 - Fund Invasive Carp Deterrent Systems in the Mississippi River (Friends of the Mississippi River)
 - Expand Highways for Habitat program (Pollinator Friendly Alliance)
 - Prohibit wolf trophy hunting and trapping (The Humane Society of the United States)

Waste and Pollution

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- Repeal the state ban on local plastic bag bans (Clean Water Action MN)
 - Enact a Plastics Reduction Act to reduce plastic pollution in the waste stream (Clean Water Action MN)
 - Require producers to pay for the lifecycle of their packaging and move towards more recyclable, compostable, and reusable products and packaging (Eureka Recycling)
 - Enable the collection of 100% of Minnesota's electronic waste stream by making manufacturers responsible for paying the costs of sorting and collection (Eureka Recycling)
 - Ban and phase out mercury-based lighting to protect Minnesotans' health and save energy (Fresh Energy)

Mining



- Require independent scientific proof that a copper-sulfide mine has operated elsewhere in the United States for at least ten years without causing pollution and that the mine has been closed for at least ten years without causing pollution before a copper-sulfide mine could be permitted in Minnesota. (Friends of the Boundary Waters)
- Move the requirement for promoting mining from Minnesota DNR to a state department responsible for economic development (Friends of the Boundary Waters)
- Prohibit bad-actor corporations with histories of environmental violations, corruption, child labor, and other legal abuses from operating a sulfide mine in Minnesota (Friends of the Boundary Waters)
- Require sulfide mining companies to put cash upfront to cover the liability for this type of toxic mining. (Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness)
- Permanently protect the Rainy River Headwaters from the hazards of sulfide ore mining. (Campaign to Save the Boundary Waters)

Water and Land



- Clearly establish an inclusive definition of public waters to ensure their protection (Minnesota Center of Environmental Advocacy)
- Follow Amara's Law to protect Minnesotans from PFAS; ensure strong implementation without loopholes for exemptions (Clean Water Action Minnesota)
- Establish a state account, funded by a fee on nitrogen fertilizers, to pay for mitigating nitrate pollution of private wells – a major health threat to rural Minnesotans.
- Require testing of land-applied biosolid fertilizer for PFAS “forever chemical” pollutants and provide funding for testing.



Agency Accountability

- Prevent Minnesota agencies from granting or renewing leases, licenses, or permits in various chapters of the law to corporations that have been convicted of a felony related to bribery, corruption or fraud or have entered a plea admitting such facts (WaterLegacy)
- Ensure that Minnesota agencies prioritize people and planet over polluting interests. (Pollinator Friendly Alliance)