

# Minnesota Environmental Partnership Collaborative Priorities 2026



## 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 has 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.
- 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.
- Invest in **natural climate solutions**: forests, prairies, peatlands, native perennials, and established and emerging regenerative agriculture practices that provide multiple and measurable ecological and societal benefits.

## People and planet-centered public institutions

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Our public institutions were created to serve people and our environment – but increasingly, the public good takes a back seat. Too often, the leaders of our 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. We recognize that many capable, dedicated professionals within these institutions are committed to upholding these values. MEP will:

- Call for state agency leaders to use their authority to address threats to our air, land, and water and the communities which rely on these resources for their health and well-being at the scale and speed required to address the challenge.
- Call on state, county and local governments to address exercise transparency (including creating, retaining and providing timely access to public records), and meaningfully engage with communities and the media about policies and projects that affect the environment and our well-being.

## Advancing environmental justice

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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.
- Collaborate with DNR and community allies to enhance community outreach and support implementation of the new **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 strong and community-centered 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 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 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. MEP will continue to identify and bring awareness to lead levels in drinking water and the environment.
- 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.
- Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA) and Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)
- Minnesota's clean water protection laws.
- State operating budget appropriations for environmental agencies.
- Free speech, especially in the face of harmful impacts of extractive projects.

## Supporting: Policy Portfolio for a Just Transition

The MEP coalition will support a dynamic slate of proactive legislation. This includes:

### Key Investments

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**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 and Budget

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#### **Agency Accountability**

- Enable reasonable response and enforcement of MN Chapter 13 **Data Practices** and **reasonable data retention policies** from government entities so that information is protected from destruction. (League of Women Voters Minnesota, Izaak Walton League Minnesota Division)

#### **Agriculture and Working Lands**

- 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)
- Enact guardrails for the production of **Sustainable Aviation Fuel** in Minnesota to protect clean water, habitat, and climate.

## Climate, Energy, Infrastructure, and Transportation

- Stop metropolitan sprawl by **reforming land use** for climate and equity. (Sierra Club North Star Chapter)
- Define what constitutes an **acceptable demand forecast for petroleum pipelines** requiring a certificate of need from the Public Utilities Commission and ensure that applicants demonstrate real demand from end-use consumers. (CURE)
- Establishes a right for Minnesota landowners to have a **decommissioned pipeline removed from their property** and their land restored at the pipeline company's expense (CURE)
- Allocate \$1 Million for level 2 and level 3 **electric school bus chargers** to school districts to build out supportive electric school infrastructure grid. (MN350)
- Adopt a **Model Lighting Ordinance** (MLO) that can be used by municipalities, counties, and the state to improve the quality of their outdoor lighting. (Starry Skies North)
- Direct the state to adopt lighting standards and guidelines that maintain public safety while **reducing over-lighting for transportation**. (Starry Skies North)
- Limit the **color temperature of street lighting** installed in residential areas. (Starry Skies North)
- Advance **flexible and safe pedestrian, bicycle, and transit options** and ensure that policies promote best practices for safety of vulnerable road-users and robust MnDOT implementation. (Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota)
- Unlock conservation finance to **restore and protect Minnesota's peatlands** for school trust lands, tribal nations, and counties. (Minnesota Wildlife Federation.)
- Pass new **protections concerning data centers**, including a two-year moratorium to allow their impacts to be studied as well as specific guardrails to protect clean water, communities, and Minnesota's electrical grid.

## Mining and Clean Water

- Protect the **Boundary Waters/Quetico/Voyageurs National Park** from sulfide-ore copper mining pollution by banning these practices from being established in the Rainy River Watershed. (Save the Boundary Waters)
- Enact a **"Prove it First"** policy for sulfide mines, requiring 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 in Minnesota could be permitted. (Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness)
- 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 Wilderness)
- Require sulfide mining companies to put **cash upfront to cover the liability** for this type of toxic mining. (Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness)

## Pollinators and Wildlife

- Establish a reasonable effective date, after which **toxic lead ammunition and toxic lead fishing tackle** are prohibited. (Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas and MN Division, Izaak Walton League.)
- Provide Bonding support for reducing the shortfall of **Scientific and Natural Areas Program acquisitions**. (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
- **Protect Minnesota's state-listed endangered plants** within 135,000 + miles of Minnesota rights-of-way. (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)

### Pollinators and Wildlife (cont.)

- Reduce impacts from **Off Highway Vehicles** by requiring OHVs to stick to posted and mapped trails only, helping to protect forest biodiversity and providing better protection to critical environmental habitats, waters and wildlife. (Izaak Walton League Minnesota Division)
- Reduce **scientific and natural area acquisition shortfall** via bonding. (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
- Prohibit unnecessary uses of **neonicotinoid-treated seeds**. (Natural Resources Defense Council, Pollinator Friendly Alliance)
- Create a dedicated, voluntary funding source for **Habitat Friendly Solar** and other habitat programs via a new license plate. (Audubon Upper Mississippi River)
- **Prohibit wolf trophy hunting** and trapping. (Humane World for Animals)
- Use **sustainable outdoor lighting** to reduce climate impacts and light-induced impacts on pollinators and ecosystems. (Starry Skies North)
- Enact **protections for wild rice** in state law to safeguard this critical crop and Indigenous resource from reckless boating, pesticides, and polluting projects. (Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light)

### Waste and Pollution

- 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, League of Women Voters Minnesota)
- Require the largest producers of organic waste to **reduce food waste, donate unused food, and responsibly compost** remaining food waste. (Eureka Recycling)

# Minnesota Environmental Partnership

## Member Organizations

### Partner-Level Members

Alliance for Sustainability  
Austin Coalition for Environmental Sustainability  
Citizens' Climate Lobby  
Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund  
COPAL (Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Acción Latina)  
Environmental Initiative  
Environmental Working Group  
Fresh Energy  
Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural Areas  
Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness  
Friends of the Cloquet Valley State Forest  
Friends of the Mississippi River  
Izaak Walton League - Minnesota Division  
League of Women Voters Minnesota  
Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota

Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy  
Minnesota Ground Water Association  
Minnesota Herpetological Society  
Minnesota Trout Unlimited  
Minnesota Well Owners Organization  
MN350  
Move Minnesota  
National Parks Conservation Association  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness  
Resilient Cities and Communities  
Save Lake Superior Association  
Save Our Sky Blue Waters  
Solar United Neighbors  
Soo Line Community Garden  
WaterLegacy  
Wild Ones Natural Landscaping - St. Croix Oak Savanna Chapter

### Associate-Level Members

Audubon Upper Mississippi River  
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota  
Bush Lake Chapter - Izaak Walton League of America  
Clean River Partners  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Climate Generation  
Climate Land Leaders  
CURE MN  
Elders Climate Action Twin Cities  
Environment Minnesota  
Environmental Law and Policy Center  
Eureka Recycling  
Freshwater  
Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County  
Hastings Environmental Protectors  
Humane World for Animals  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Land Stewardship Project  
League of Women Voters Duluth

Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light  
Minnesota Land Trust  
Minnesota Ornithologists' Union  
Minnesota Renewable Energy Society  
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter  
Minnesota Wildlife Federation  
Northern Waters Land Trust  
Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota  
Pesticide Action Network North America  
Pollinator Friendly Alliance  
Renewing the Countryside  
Sierra Club - North Star Chapter  
Saint Paul Bird Alliance  
Starry Skies North  
Sustainable Farming Association  
The Nature Conservancy  
The Trust for Public Land  
Third Act Minnesota  
Vote Climate  
Voyageurs Conservancy  
Wild Rivers Conservancy