

Budget for One Minnesota



PROTECTING MINNESOTA'S DRINKING WATER

Minnesota's clean and abundant water resources remain the envy of many states, but maintaining this treasure is a big responsibility that demands constant vigilance. In recent decades, growth and development in many communities have presented new challenges to our water resources. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that Minnesota will need \$7.4 billion in repairs, upgrades, and improvements in the next 20 years just to maintain existing infrastructure.

Recognizing that safe drinking water is essential for community prosperity, the Governor's budget includes a package of proposals designed to protect our sources of drinking water and ensure safe drinking water for Minnesotans now and decades down the road. These proposals take an integrated approach, using science and evidenced-based strategies to address issues and challenges affecting drinking water quality from the source to the sink. They also allow us to continue supporting Greater Minnesota communities in providing safe drinking water.

SECURE ONGOING STATE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL WATER SYSTEMS



Strengthen State Capacity by Raising Safe Drinking Water Fee

The Governor's proposal increases the safe drinking water fee by a penny a day per service connection to an annual fee of \$9.72. This will support drinking water protection activities for 7,000 public water supplies that serve water to people where they live, work, gather and recreate. This increase would start on January 1, 2020, and raise \$4.234 million per year (\$2.117 million in fiscal year 2020).

These additional funds will allow us to maintain service levels and reduce reliance on unpredictable federal funding. The funds will also help prevent costs from shifting to public water suppliers, many of whom are small business (resorts, restaurants, daycares, etc.) owners.

LEVERAGE CLEAN WATER FUND TO PROTECT DRINKING WATER

Strengthen Groundwater Restoration and Protection Statewide



Nearly 75 percent of Minnesotans get their drinking water from groundwater sources. However, it is not practical or efficient to expect local units of government to build capacity and expertise relative to groundwater at a scale equivalent to what exists at the state level. Instead, the Governor recommends investing \$1.3 million from the Clean Water Fund in FY 2020-21 for groundwater protection activities. This proposal supports the development of Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies

(GRAPS) for watersheds that are engaged in developing a local comprehensive water plan, referred to as a “One Watershed, One Plan.” A key objective of this work is to provide the information and appropriate, actionable strategies for groundwater protection to local partners. These strategies will also help ensure that Minnesotans across the state benefit from effective groundwater management regardless of local resource constraints.



Evaluate Potential Risks from Pathogen Contamination

Many Minnesotans drink groundwater that has not undergone disinfection, including more than 1 million Minnesotans who get water from their own private wells. These people could be subject to increased risk of illness, as a Clean Water Fund Virus Study conducted in FY 2014-16 found higher than expected detections of viruses, bacteria and protozoa in groundwater-sourced drinking water at selected public water supply wells. To better evaluate these risks and ensure protection for Minnesotans, the Governor recommends investing \$500,000 from the Clean Water Fund in FY 2020-21 to continue the virus study. More in-depth analyses will help the state develop strategies and tools to increase public health protection. An increase in funding over FY 2018-19 levels is requested to cover both epidemiological and source water protection work.



Encourage Water Protection Measures by Private Well Owners

The Governor recommends investing \$1.7 million from the Clean Water Fund in FY 2020-21 to reduce health risks from drinking water for private well owners. This proposal increases public awareness of the risks from contaminants in private wells and supports increased testing and treatment where needed. This proposal also supports the investigation of additional contaminants (such as radium) in Minnesota’s groundwater. In contrast to highly monitored public water supplies, water from a private residential well is not required to meet Safe Drinking Water Act standards and any actions to sample or treat depend on the owner’s initiative and vigilance. A 2016 MDH survey found about 34 percent of the respondents did not take action to reduce their exposure to arsenic and that less than 20 percent of respondents had tested their well water within the last two years.



Develop a Broader Plan for Protecting Drinking Water

The Governor recommends investing \$700,000 from the Clean Water Fund in FY 20-21 in drinking water protection planning. This proposal supports a two-phased approach to individual actions that protect Minnesota’s drinking water as well as the development of a statewide, multi-agency Drinking Water Protection plan.

Threats not addressed by the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) have increased in recent years. Ensuring safe and sufficient drinking water to protect public health and meet citizen expectations requires a series of strategic safeguards from our drinking water sources to the taps in our homes and state policies that go beyond the minimum requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act. This initiative engages local and national experts to develop an action plan and policies that go beyond current regulatory requirements to address emerging threats and ensure long-term safe drinking water in Minnesota.



Accelerate Source Water Protection Planning

The Governor recommends investing \$5.494 million from the Clean Water Fund in FY 20-21 to address source water protection planning and implementation. Source water protection planning is a science-based process to manage and protect sources of drinking water used by public water systems. Clean Water funds will be used to continue providing assistance for Source Water Protection planning and implementation work, which has focused on communities with vulnerable water supplies and small public water systems that are challenged by health equity issues. Additional work will address gaps in source water protection planning and implementation for surface water systems. There will also be an effort to increase coordination and integration with the state's comprehensive watershed planning efforts.



Protect Minnesotans from Contaminants of Emerging Concern

The Governor recommends investing \$2.8 million from the Clean Water Fund in FY 20-21 to address contaminants of emerging concern (CECs). Studies are finding unexpected chemicals in lakes, rivers and groundwater and health officials need to understand if people's exposures to these chemicals could pose a health risk. There are more than 84,000 chemicals in commercial use, with 700 new chemicals being introduced every year. CECs are often chemicals that the scientific community knows little about, especially regarding the potential impact on people's health. The increased request is to support CEC monitoring efforts at selected public water systems statewide. This proposal enables MDH to gather new data and develop new models and methods in risk assessment for emerging concerns in water. The agency will also continue the work of the public health laboratory to test for CECs in water supplies. In addition, the agency will provide up to \$130,000 in grants each year to local or tribal governments, non-profits, academic institutions or water resource organizations to reduce the health impacts associated with exposure to CECs in drinking water.



Support Safe Practices for Water Reuse

The Governor recommends investing \$550,000 from the Clean Water Fund in FY 2020-21 to proceed with water reuse recommendations. This request supports planning and implementation of the eight Minnesota-specific water reuse recommendations outlined in the interagency report, *"Advancing Safe and Sustainable Water Reuse,"* released in March 2018.

There is an increasing demand by agencies, organizations and cities in Minnesota to implement water reuse strategies including harvested rainwater, storm water reuse and reuse of graywater and reclaimed municipal wastewater. Water reuse has the potential to reduce demand on water resources, improving long-term sustainability and reducing the release of contaminants and sediment to surface waters. Reusing water also poses potential risks to public health and the environment. Currently, there is no comprehensive statewide approach for development of a regulatory or non-regulatory framework and guidance on water reuse.

This proposal builds on the interagency initiative that prepared earlier recommendations to help increase water reuse in Minnesota.



Protect Underground Aquifers by Sealing Unused Wells

Unused, unsealed wells pose a threat to groundwater quality and public health by providing a direct conduit from the surface to groundwater—allowing contaminants to travel deep into the ground, bypassing the natural protection provided by layers of clay, silt and other geologic materials. The Governor recommends investing \$500,000 from the Clean Water Fund in FY 2020-21 for well sealing. This proposal uses funds for cost sharing to help Minnesotans seal unused wells and borings.

Although Minnesota leads the nation in efforts to seal unused wells, nearly 500,000 unused wells remain unsealed. This proposal increases the number of unused wells sealed by 200 per year, removing potential pathways for contaminants to reach groundwater. The funds from this proposal provide incentive for well owners to seal wells through a cost share approach. It also provides resources for unused public water supply wells that are often deep and large diameter. These wells can be very costly to seal, pose a significant risk to deep aquifers and can be a physical hazard.