



2018 CGMC Policy Positions: Environment & Energy

Water Standards, Regulations and Permitting

1. CGMC supports cleaning up polluted waters and preventing further impairment. Cities' limited financial resources must, however, be spent wisely on those projects leading to the greatest environmental benefits. The water quality regulations, permits, and other restrictions affecting cities must be grounded in solid peer-reviewed science and must be established in a manner that respects the due process rights of cities and other interested stakeholders. To accomplish these goals the CGMC supports legislative, regulatory, and/or legal action to accomplish the following objectives:
 - a. Opposing the unlawful implementation of the River Eutrophication Standard (RES) standards adopted in August 2014;
 - b. Establishing an integrated regional planning process that balances and prioritizes the multiple regulatory burdens imposed on our cities;
 - c. Updating outdated standards (such as sulfate) to reflect current science;
 - d. Requiring cost-benefit analysis of the impact of new or amended water quality regulations impacting our cities;
 - e. Requiring independent scientific peer review of regulations that will impose excessive costs on communities;
 - f. Requiring site-specific analysis when translating standards into permit requirements;
 - g. Requiring that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) respect due process rights when issuing new permits, watershed plans, regulations or other restrictions;
 - h. Enhancing the ability of Minnesota's courts to more vigorously scrutinize agency action; and
 - i. Preventing the enforcement of unadopted rules.
2. CGMC advocates for a more comprehensive clean water framework which focuses its efforts to address water pollution in the state in an efficient, effective and fair manner. Such an approach will require some additional pollutant reductions from point sources, but primarily relies on efforts to manage non-point source pollution from land use, agricultural runoff, and bluff and stream bank erosion.

Funding for such necessary point source pollution reduction efforts should be increased and maximum flexibility should be allowed to address non-point source reductions including collaborative public-private partnerships, point to non-point trading, and other local and market-based solutions. The CGMC supports establishment of a pilot trading program that includes point-to-non-point trading.
3. The CGMC supports the use of state-wide and other stream-lined variance procedures to provide municipalities relief from the burden of expensive water quality standards. Because variances are not permanent and approval by the EPA cannot be guaranteed, the CGMC opposes any reliance on the possibility of variances as justification for adopting water quality standards that are more stringent than necessary to protect Minnesota' waters.
4. CGMC supports the authority of cities to regulate or prohibit private wells within municipal service boundaries and opposes any attempt to restrict or remove that authority.



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Funding Issues

5. CGMC supports using the state general fund to support the MPCA water program and opposes increasing MPCA fees to fund its operations. Using the general fund, rather than relying heavily on fees, promotes legislative oversight and spreads the cost of regulation to everyone who benefits.
6. CGMC supports eliminating the fees and associated costs on municipal variance applications.
7. CGMC supports increased funding for the construction, reconstruction and improvement of municipal wastewater and sewer facilities in Greater Minnesota-and broadening the criteria, increasing the cap, and increasing the state portion of water infrastructure programs.
8. When the state is adopting a new water quality standard or a city's wastewater (NPDES) permit is up for renewal, cities are at a disadvantage because they often lack the technical resources to analyze and challenge, if necessary, the standard or permit, which could lead to expensive retrofitting or upgrades without a significant beneficial impact on water quality. The CGMC supports making financial resources available for independent review of draft NPDES permits and standards.
9. CGMC supports legislation directing the study and improvement of wastewater, storm water, and drinking water infrastructure needs in Minnesota to provide a more accurate picture of Minnesota's long-term infrastructure needs. The CGMC also supports funding for pilot programs to undertake integrative planning to evaluate funding needs for wastewater, drinking water, and storm water.
10. Minnesota's Legacy Amendment dedicates a portion of the sales and use tax to funding parks and trails. Regional parks and trails play an important role in improving the quality of life throughout Minnesota. CGMC supports the current funding formula that allocates 20% to regional parks and trails in Greater Minnesota and opposes any formula changes that reduce that share. In addition, the CGMC supports allocating funds to the Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails Commission so that it can continue development of a system plan, evaluating funding requests, and executing other duties to promote the regional parks and trails system in Greater Minnesota.

General Environmental Policies

11. Aquatic, plant and other invasive species threaten the lakes, rivers, and parks of Greater Minnesota. The advance of these species may threaten the enjoyment of these resources by residents, impede tourism, and interfere with municipal water supplies. The CGMC supports legislation targeted at slowing or stopping the spread of these species, including dedicating funding from the Legacy Amendment and other sources to address this issue.
12. Problem materials entering municipal waste streams can cause detrimental environmental effects and damage to municipal treatment and other water systems. Failure to recycle or otherwise properly dispose of consumer waste is an inefficient use of natural resources and can cause environmental harm and significant damage to city sewer systems. CGMC supports legislation and regulations that place responsibility for these materials with the manufacturers and consumers



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of these products and that require manufacturers to label products about appropriate usage and disposal.

13. CGMC supports requiring townships to meet the same environmental protections and regulatory requirements as cities.

Energy Policies

14. CGMC supports renewable energy and the transmission infrastructure necessary to develop these resources, but recognizes that municipal owned utilities are in the best position to determine the resource mix needed to support the electrical needs of their communities and the appropriate pricing for those resources.
15. CGMC supports tax credits, grants and other incentive programs to assist municipalities and their residents in developing and using alternative and renewable fuels. CGMC also supports state programs to assist municipalities in adopting energy conservation measures.