



## 2019 CGMC Environmental Accomplishments & Activities

Over the last several years, legislative and regulatory efforts targeting cities for more stringent (and sometimes unnecessary) regulation have combined with aging infrastructure and severe weather events to cause increasingly high wastewater, drinking water and stormwater costs for cities in Greater Minnesota. In response, the CGMC's environmental program has dramatically increased its activities to ensure funding for critical environmental projects and to push back against regulatory overreach.

We have made progress in recent years, but there is still much more work to do. Thank you to the cities who have contributed to the CGMC Environmental Action Fund to help support these efforts. As a result of this support, we were able to complete the important work summarized below:

### 1. **Broke logjam on bonding funding for water infrastructure**

The 2018 bonding bill appropriated more than \$123 million in funding for Public Facilities Authority (PFA) water infrastructure grant and loan programs. However, of that amount, \$58.6 million was funded through appropriation bonds whose sale was blocked by a lawsuit. CGMC advocated in the media and with legislators for a solution. In March, legislation replacing the appropriation bonds with general obligation bonds was signed into law.

### 2. **Obtained additional funding for water infrastructure**

The CGMC advocated for additional funding for the PFA programs through the Clean Water Fund and in a potential 2019 bonding bill. The Legacy bill included \$18 million for the Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) program. The proposed House bonding bill included \$67 million for the PFA, but was not passed by the Senate.

### 3. **Supported codifying external peer review**

The CGMC has advocated for an external peer review requirement for several years. In July 2017, in response to the CGMC's efforts, then-Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Commissioner John Linc Stine issued a directive requiring the agency to integrate external and transparent scientific peer review requirements into the water quality standards development process. This year, after much additional pressure from the CGMC and others, this directive was codified into law.

### 4. **Protected city representation in TMDL alternative process**

Proposed legislation would have allowed watershed organizations to develop plans that could serve as Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDLs), allocating a pollutant reduction to a municipality without involving the affected municipality in the process. The CGMC worked with the bill authors to ensure that no plan could be adopted as a TMDL alternative without engaging affected municipal permit holders.

### 5. **Participated in Legislative Water Commission stakeholder process**

The CGMC participated in a stakeholder process established by the Legislative Water Commission (LWC) focused on taking an in-depth look at regulatory and cost issues associated with wastewater, stormwater, and drinking water systems. The CGMC advocated for codifying the peer review requirement, increasing the amount and sources for infrastructure funding, and creating a chloride reduction report and plan. The LWC recommended several of the initiatives supported by the CGMC, including putting the directive on external peer review into law and appropriating bonding proceeds for water infrastructure programs.



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### 6. Established relationship with new MPCA Commissioner

Shortly after Governor Walz appointed Laura Bishop as the new MPCA Commissioner, CGMC staff met with her and top deputies to introduce CGMC's legislative priorities and concerns with the way the agency has conducted business in the past. CGMC staff has continued to work on strengthening that relationship throughout the legislative session and beyond.

### 7. Participated in new municipal stakeholder group

This winter, the MPCA established a municipal clean water discussion group to examine issues affecting our cities in greater detail. The CGMC has participated in these meetings to discuss issues ranging from recruiting and retaining wastewater operators, point-to-non-point source trading, and increased transparency on pre-TMDL memoranda.

### 8. Participated in Class 3 and Class 4 waters rulemaking

The water quality rules governing Class 3 and Class 4 waters, commonly known as salty water quality parameters, are outdated and causing problems for many of our cities. The CGMC is participating in the process to update these rules.

### 9. Opposed changes to well interference claim and groundwater management process

The CGMC worked with the League of Minnesota Cities and other stakeholders to successfully oppose changes to the groundwater management process. If implemented, the changes would have abandoned plans protecting groundwater if the Department of Natural Resources could not solve the problem quickly enough and would have made it difficult to raise claims for well interference with older wells.

### 10. Participated in wild rice sulfate water quality issues

Former Governor Dayton created a task force to find a compromise solution on wild rice restoration and protection in Minnesota. The CGMC participated as an observer and submitted comments that were reflected in the recommendations.

### 11. Commented on Fond du Lac Band's proposed water quality standards

Because of the potential impact to city wastewater permits, the CGMC submitted comments on a proposed revision to the Fond du Lac Band's water quality standards that included a standard for "specific conductance" (which relates to salty discharge and like sulfate or chloride limits) that could be difficult for cities to meet if included in their permit limits.

### 12. Opposed arbitrary fee increases

The CGMC actively opposed the MPCA's push to increase fees for water quality permits and opposed similar efforts at the Legislature. To date, the effort to raise these fees has not been successful.

### 13. Engaged legislators on flushable wipes issue

Legislation to address the flushable wipes problem that clogs many city pipes and sewers stalled during the 2018 legislative session. With a new House majority, the CGMC has been engaging with the new committee chair on potential legislative solutions for the 2020 session.

### 14. Participated in McKnight Foundation clean water discussion

The CGMC participated in a clean water discussion sponsored by the McKnight Foundation. The gathering, titled "Multi-Million Dollar Infrastructure and a Million Little Decisions," brought together representatives from local government, state agencies, public health, agriculture, philanthropy, tribal nations, and the environmental community for a discussion on the value of clean water.