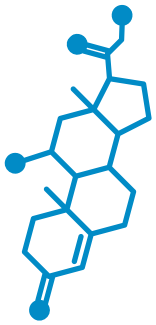
COALITION OF GREATER MN CITIES

CGMC ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM
SUCCESS, EMERGING ISSUES & CONTINUED ADVOCACY

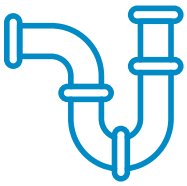


Per- & Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

PFAS are a class of pervasive chemicals that have been linked to various health concerns and have been found in waterbodies across the state. PFAS can be removed from drinking water through an expensive treatment process, but there is no technologically and economically feasible method for removing them from wastewater or the biosolids that result from wastewater treatment.

CGMC's Role: We actively engaged in several MPCA task forces on monitoring and source reduction, resulting in favorable changes to the monitoring proposal. We advocated for successful legislation, which will greatly restrict the sale of items containing PFAS and increases funding for PFAS source reduction grants for our communities. We will continue to defend against proposals that impose unreasonable demands on municipalities, seek ways to reduce sources of PFAS and work with the MPCA on biosolids management.

Lead Pipe Inventory & Replacement



The EPA requires all cities to inventory the lead pipes within their water systems by October 2024 and develop plans for mitigating and removing lead pipes. These processes will be challenging and expensive for many cities with older infrastructure.

CGMG's Role: The CGMC collaborated with two construction unions and other stakeholders to pass a historic funding package that will dedicate $240 million to the inventory and replacement of lead service lines throughout the state of Minnesota.

Water Infrastructure Funding

As facilities age and regulatory burdens increase, cities face increasing water infrastructure costs. Ensuring that cities receive help from the state in the form of Public Facilities Authority (PFA) grants and loans is vital.

CGMC's Role: We advocated for a large bonding bill with significant funding for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. The final bill included more than $500 million for the PFA, including $208.2 million for PFA grant programs. We also stopped a proposal that would have diverted PFA grant funding away from Greater Minnesota.

Supporting Precedent-Setting Litigation

Through the Environmental Action Fund (EAF), the CGMC engages in precedent-setting environmental litigation and regulatory matters that impact the interests of many members.

CGMC's Role: The CGMC is actively engaged in federal litigation seeking to overturn the MPCA's recent favorable amendments to the class 3 & 4 standards. We urged the MPCA to aggressively defend its rule changes and formally intervened in the litigation to defend our unique interests. Protecting these rule changes is critical because the old rules were leading to absurd regulatory outcomes and stood to impose significant costs on wastewater treatment facilities and hinder economic development in Greater Minnesota.

Voice for Greater Minnesota on Problematic Legislation

During the 2023 legislative session, multiple poorly drafted proposals were advanced that would have impacted growth in Greater Minnesota without helping the environment, including reinstatement of the MPCA Citizen's Board and a cumulative impact proposal that would have covered most wastewater facilities throughout the state.

CGMC's Role: We worked with other stakeholders to stop the re-establishment of the Citizen's Board, and played a lead role in negotiating the final cumulative impacts bill so that it only applies to a narrow set of air permits in the metropolitan area and in cities of the first class.

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Funding to Protect Critical Infrastructure

As the state continues to face extreme weather events, cities are looking to alternative approaches to address resiliency and related water quality issues. Many cities need assistance in developing resiliency plans. Moreover, current state funding may not always support innovative projects, including stormwater mitigation, because they do not fit into traditional program definitions.

CGMC's Role: We advocated for a local government grant program that will build infrastructure in areas with inadequate storm water infrastructure or vulnerability to extreme weather. The Legislature appropriated more than $100 million this biennium that will support planning and implementation of resiliency projects.

Proposed Permit Fee Increase

Over the last several years, the MPCA has signaled its intent to impose a fee increase on water quality-related permits to generate more funding for its water quality operations. A significant portion of this increase could fall on municipalities.

CGMC's Role: We worked with the MPCA to advocate for a general fund increase for these programs. The Legislature appropriated $5.4 million for the biennium, which will forestall a fee increase in the near term.

Wild Rice Sulfate Rule

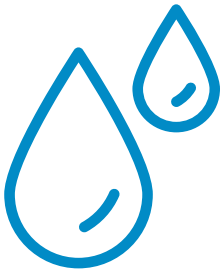
Minnesota's standard for sulfate in wild rice waters was adopted in the 1960's based on outdated science. The MPCA recently added 35 waterbodies to the Impaired Waters List for exceeding the sulfate standard and has begun to include sulfate effluent limits in draft permits for some cities. Unless cities can obtain some regulatory relief from the MPCA, hundreds of cities could receive costly permit limits for sulfate that may not be necessary to protect wild rice due to the outdated science used to develop the standard.

CGMC's Role: We will continue advocating for the MPCA to update the standard to incorporate the most recent and best available science. In the meantime, we will push the MPCA to provide regulatory relief for cities to avoid expensive and environmentally unnecessary permit limits by using site-specific standards, extended compliance schedules, and variances.

Total Nitrogen

The MPCA is developing and implementing a total nitrogen reduction strategy for municipalities, which could have significant cost impacts for municipal wastewater treatment facilities even though municipalities generate a relatively small portion of nitrogen pollution compared to other sources.

CGMC's Role: We are proactively working with MESERB and other municipal organizations to ensure that the MPCA strategy is based on the best available science and does not place undue burdens on municipalities.



Chloride

Many of our cities could face chloride limits in their wastewater permits, but there is no feasible method to remove chloride at a wastewater facility. Most cities will need a variance from these permit requirements, which will still require action by the city to reduce sources of chloride. Some cities may be required to install a central water softening system, but others may be able to address the issue by working with citizens to remove and/or upgrade home water softening equipment.

CGMC's Role: We advocated for $1.2 million for chloride reduction assistance for cities that was included in the Clean Water Legacy bill.

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