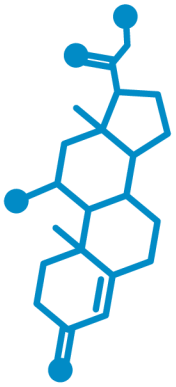
COALITION OF GREATER MN CITIES

CGMC ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM
SUCCESSES, 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 increase funding for PFAS source reduction grants for our communities. We will continue working to ensure that municipalities are not unfairly burdened with unreasonable compliance requirements or liability for PFAS contamination beyond their control. Moving forward, we will continue to collaborate with state agencies, policymakers, and stakeholders to advance practical, science-based solutions for PFAS monitoring, treatment, and biosolids management.

Lead Pipe Inventory & Replacement

All Minnesota cities completed an initial inventory of the lead pipes within their water systems by October 2024. It is estimated that 100,000 lead service lines in Minnesota will need to be replaced at a cost of $1 billion. Last biennium, 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.

CGMG's Role: To ensure all cities can replace their lead service lines, the CGMC is working with this same coalition and is seeking $240 million this biennium to continue this work.

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—and that those programs keep up with inflation—is vital.

CGMC's Role: Last biennium, the CGMC advocated for a large bonding bill that included more than $500 million for the PFA, including $208.2 million for PFA grant programs. This session, we are advocating for $299 million for the PFA programs and to increase the caps on individual grants.

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 actively engaged in federal litigation defending the MPCA's recent favorable amendments to the class 3 & 4 standards, securing a win on court that ensures they remain in effect—which will reduce regulatory burdens and foster growth in Greater Minnesota. We continue to monitor litigation as the state and federal level and ready to intervene to protect the CGMC's interests as needed.

Created for the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities by Flaherty & Hood, P.A. 4/23/25.

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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 MN 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. We worked with other stakeholders to protect Greater Minnesota in these discussions.

CGMC's Role: With a legislature split along partisan lines, we will continue to monitor and advocate on environmental legislation to ensure that Greater Minnesota's interests are protected.

Total Nitrogen

The MPCA is 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. Given the potential widespread impact of the MPCA's proposed nitrogen reduction policies, we are committed to advocating for a balanced approach that prioritizes local water quality concerns while recognizing the economic realities cities face. We will engage directly with the MPCA, state lawmakers, and other stakeholders to push for policies that protect water resources without imposing excessive costs on communities.

Wild Rice Sulfate Rule

The MPCA is implementing its outdated Wild Rice standard rather than working to update it based on the best available science. As a result, our cities will need flexible variances and site-specific standards to avoid the harsh economic consequences of this rule. Data from the Lower Mississippi River pools and other regions indicate that wild rice can thrive at sulfate levels well above this limit. Despite this, unless cities obtain regulatory relief, many could face costly and technologically unfeasible permit limits that may not be necessary to protect wild rice.

CGMC's Role: We successfully advocated for the MPCA to prioritize the development of a multi-discharger variance and site-specific standards for the Mississippi River Pools—actions that if finalized could benefit a large subset of CGMC members. We will continue to support and advocate for the MPCA to prioritize these efforts and if necessary, we will further organize to intervene and defend them.

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 continue to advocate for chloride reduction assistance for cities in the Clean Water Legacy bill.

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