2026 CGMC Policy Priorities
Environment & Energy

WATER STANDARDS, REGULATIONS, AND PERMITTING

1. CGMC supports cleaning up and protecting Minnesota's waters. Cities' limited financial resources must be spent wisely on those projects leading to the greatest environmental benefits. The water quality regulations, permits, guidance, and other policies affecting cities must be grounded in solid peer-reviewed science and must be established and implemented in a public and transparent 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. Pursuing innovative methods such as integrative planning, adaptive management, and pollutant trading to address water quality issues in the most cost-effective manner;
    B. Updating outdated standards to reflect current science;
    C. Analyzing the economic and environmental benefits of new or amended water quality regulations and permit requirements impacting our cities and using that information to improve outcomes;
    D. Requiring site-specific analyses when translating standards into permit requirements;
    E. Ensuring meaningful stakeholder engagement and transparency when developing and implementing standards and other requirements that impact cities;
    F. Requiring that memoranda, analyses, directives, and other documents that are incorporated into permits be subject to independent technical review and public comment before they become regulatory requirements; and
    G. When necessary, opposing the adoption or implementation of unreasonable standards, regulations, directives, and permit requirements.

2. CGMC advocates for the adoption of state-wide and other stream-lined variance procedures to provide municipalities relief from the burden of expensive water quality standards. CGMC further supports eliminating the fees and associated costs on municipal variance applications.

3. Efforts to monitor, control, and remediate Per-and-Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) should focus on controlling the initial sources of those substances rather than placing responsibility for PFAS on the receivers, such as wastewater treatment plants. CGMC supports state funding to assist with voluntary PFAS monitoring efforts. CGMC supports an exemption for municipalities from liability under the Minnesota Environmental Response and Liability Act (MERLA) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act

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(CERCLA) for the presence of PFAS in water, wastewater, or other municipal facilities.

4. Problem materials and manufactured pollutants entering the environment and municipal waste streams can threaten human health and the environment in our communities and cause physical damage to critical water infrastructure such as drinking water facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, stormwater, and sewer systems. CGMC believes that the responsibility for these contaminants rests with the manufacturers and supports legislation and regulations aimed at reducing, eliminating, or labeling these contaminants or products containing the contaminants.

5. 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.

FUNDING ISSUES

6. CGMC supports increased funding for the construction, reconstruction, and improvement of municipal wastewater, drinking water, stormwater, and sewer facilities in Greater Minnesota.

7. CGMC supports using the state general fund to support the MPCA water program. Using the general fund, rather than relying heavily on fees, promotes legislative oversight and spreads the cost of regulation to everyone who benefits. CGMC will not oppose reasonable fee increases if those increases are infrequent, are tied to specific outcomes, and are coupled with an increase in general fund dollars for the same water quality programs.

8. CGMC supports the state making more resources available to cities to develop voluntary resiliency plans and to construct associated infrastructure in the face of climate change and extreme weather events. These resources should be made available to cities of all sizes in Greater Minnesota to help local governments develop long term plans.

9. Lead pipes continue to pose a human health hazard to thousands of Minnesotans and required removal or replacement of lead pipes incurs significant costs. CGMC supports state funding to assist cities with the completion of EPA required inventories of lead pipes and the replacement of lead pipes, including privately owned lead services, identified for removal by those inventories.

10. Environmental infrastructure is growing increasingly technical and complex to implement. CGMC supports the creation and funding of a technical assistance program that would allow local governments to develop long-term plans for their wastewater, drinking water and other water infrastructure needs.

11. Aquatic and terrestrial 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. CGMC supports dedicated funds to address this issue, but the funds should be available to cities throughout the state.

GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

12. Local and Regional parks and trails play an important role in improving the quality of life throughout Minnesota. CGMC supports preserving and increasing the funds dedicated to regional parks and trails in greater Minnesota and to local parks and trails grant programs. In addition, CGMC supports allocating general fund dollars 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.

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

14. The MPCA defines Environmental Justice (EJ) as "...the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, concerning the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." CGMC supports EJ policies that:
    A. Are effective in addressing actual health economic and other challenges that a community may be experiencing because of past or future environmental policies;
    B. Are narrowly tailored to address the actual harms of past or future environmental policies without impacting communities that have not experienced those same harms;
    C. Provide incentives and resources for local governments, businesses, and non-profits to proactively address EJ issues within their own communities; and
    D. Are developed through stakeholder processes that include a broad set of perspectives including Greater Minnesota cities, businesses, and labor.

ENERGY POLICIES

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. The CGMC supports state, federal and other funding to locate electric vehicle supply equipment and DC fast chargers throughout the state, not just in designated corridors. CGMC further supports providing technical assistance to cities to access funding and installation assistance to build chargers.

18. Addressing climate change and sustainability issues often involves complexity and the need to weigh the costs and benefits of proposed solutions. The CGMC believes that the new policies, regulations and laws should be analyzed wholistically to balance competing priorities before adoption. The CGMC also supports the abilities of cities to adopt and implement their own sustainability policies that are tailored to the needs of their residents and businesses.