

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MINNESOTA WATER POLICY- STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Remote Information Meeting

JULY 21, 2021

10 AM

Co-Chairs:

Sen. Chris Eaton

Rep. John Poston

Jim Stark, Director

Subcommittee Support: Sandy Most

AGENDA

- Describe potential legislative topics related to water governance
- Topics derived from bills introduced and from Legislators and stakeholders
- Topics are prioritized based on stakeholder survey
- There will be two more meetings, focusing on other topics
- We are looking for input
- Do topics address a need?
- If so, what are your suggestions for specific content
- This is an opportunity for your input
- There are four topics to discuss– time will be limited
- Details in the posted position papers
- Kris Van Amber, MMB, is here to facilitate

CATEGORIES OF LEGISLATION

- **WATER GOVERNANCE**
- **POLICY**
- **SAFE DRINKING WATER**
- **FUNDING**
- **EDUCATION**
- **TAXES**
- **WASTEWATER**
- **WATER QUALITY**

TOPICS FOR TODAY

G1: SWCD STATUS AND FUNDING

**G2: RE-ACTIVATION OF WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

G3 RE-ACTIVATION OF THE LEGISLATIVE WATER COMMISSION

G4. CREATING A DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

G5 STREAMLINING WATER GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

G1: SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

- **SWCDs carry out the state's conservation programs**
- **The are regarded highly**
- **Funding is a continual problem--SWCD's have no taxing authority**
- **Funding: local sources, general funds, capacity funding, and clean water funds**
- **CW funding can dilute the CW funding recommendation process**
- **Bills have been introduced that would allow voluntary consolidation of SWCDs and WD or to provide funding from property transfer fees**

G1: OPTIONS

- *Phased out CW funds/ increased general funding?*
- *General funds--an equal allocation to all SWCDs and an allocation based on performance?*
- *Levy authority?*
- *Fixed and permanent funding from CWF?*
- *Voluntary consolidation/cooperation among of SWC's and WDs?*
- *Changes to the tax bill?*
- *Local fees?*
- *Property transfer fees?*
- *Dedicated sale's tax?*
- This is a complicated issue
- The issue lingers and need permanent resolution
- Proposing a dedicated hearing to listen to testimony from affected parties

G1: SWCD FUNDING OPTIONS

- **Comments and suggestions**

G2: RE-ACTIVATION OF WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER ADVISORY COUNCIL

- **The water and wastewater operators certification council was created in 1971.**
- **Council had rule-making authority as well as operator certification responsibilities**
- **Council was sun-setted in 1995**
- **At that time, the Water supply Systems and Wastewater Treatment Facilities Advisory Council with somewhat different responsibilities (no rule-making)**
- **The council was reviewed by the Legislature (2013) with a positive outcome for keeping the council**
- **However, the Council sun-setted in 2019**

G2: RE-ACTIVATION OF WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER ADVISORY COUNCIL

- The activities of the committee were generally well accepted by the legislature.
- Could provide legislative input regarding water--supply systems, climate change, wastewater treatment, and operator education and certification
- Re-creation is supported by Small Cites and others
- *Re-activation to ensure professional input regarding rules and guidelines*
- *Council would advise MDH and the MPCA*
- *What kind of staff support is needed?*
- *Solicit input from stakeholders, refine duties and prepare a bill*



G2: RE-ACTIVATION OF WATER SUPPLY AND WASTEWATER ADVISORY COUNCIL

- **Comments and suggestions**
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G3 RE-ACTIVATION OF THE LEGISLATIVE WATER COMMISSION

- **Water issues are important, complex, controversial, and costly**
- **Development of water policy should be undertaken thoughtfully**
- **The 12 member, bi-cameral and bipartisan commission, created by the 1989 Groundwater Protection Act, brings value to the legislature by:**
 - **Having staff provides members with a broad understanding of water issues**
 - **Venue to discuss technical information**
 - **Creates a public forum with Legislators that informs legislation**
 - **Develops water expertise within the legislature**

G3 RE-ACTIVATION OF THE LEGISLATIVE WATER COMMISSION

- The LWC was re-established in 2014, consisting from six Senators and six Reps, it is bi partisan
- Staff coordinate with the CWC, LCCMR, LSOHC and the agencies
- The LWC expired in 2019 and was replaced by the Subcommittee on Water Policy
- *If the work of the Commission is important it should exist for more than 2 years?*
- *This would allow for a staff commitment over reasonable amount of time?*
- *Prepare a bill that that would re-activate the LWC for a five year period?*

G1: LWC

- **Comments and suggestions**

G4-G5: CREATING A DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES- STREAMLINING WATER GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- **Bill introduced that would combine water responsibilities and abolish some departments (SF 2102)**
- **Could provide benefits as well as unintended consequences.**
- **One-Water Agency has been proposed and studied**
- **Several reviews have made suggestions for efficiency**
- **There should be value in evaluating some of the existing recommendation for better inter-agency coordination or consolidation of agency roles and responsibilities.**
- **There generally are two schools of thought:
Governance is too complicated with too many agencies or the current system provides a strong and healthy competition among agencies**

G4-G5: CREATING A DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES- STREAMLINING WATER GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- *Recently, the UM/ MDH (2020) studied the issue in detail*
- *Recommends creation of a formal coordinating entity across agencies.*
- *Recommends minor changes to the current statutory framework that clarifies connections among agencies and addresses recommendations that have been made in previous reports and studies*
- *Bill creating the coordinating entity with a report to the legislature based on existing reports?*



G4/G5 CREATING A DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES- STREAMLINING WATER GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

- **Comments and suggestions**
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Next Stakeholder meeting– July 30 at 10 am**
- **Focus on Policy**



THANKS

Adjourn

