



CGMC Environmental Program Successes, Emerging Issues & Continued Advocacy

Recent Successes

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl 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 expensive treatment, but there is no technologically feasible method for removing them from wastewater.

CGMC's Role: We advocated for a municipal source reduction strategy, which the Legislature established and funded this year. We also blocked legislation that could have held cities liable for the presence of PFAS in wastewater or drinking water. We continue to defend against detrimental proposals and seek ways to reduce sources of PFAS.

Chloride

More than 100 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, and a variance will still require efforts by the city to reduce chloride. Some cities may be required to install central water softening, 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 sought state funding for grants to assist cities with the removal or upgrade of home water softeners, which the Legislature passed this year. We also submitted comments to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) in favor of chloride variances that were approved. We continue to support cities on this issue.

Funding for Innovative Approaches and Climate Impact

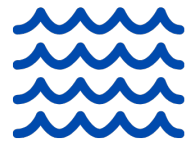


As the cost of wastewater treatment increases, cities are looking to alternative approaches to address water quality issues and the impacts of the changing climate. Current state funding may not always support innovative projects because they do not fit into traditional program definitions.

CGMC's Role: We advocated in favor of a new MPCA grant program that will help cities plan for the infrastructure needed to address extreme weather. The 2021 Legislature created and funded this program.

Lake Pepin TMDL

Nearly two-thirds of Minnesota's watersheds drain into Lake Pepin and are therefore subject to the Lake Pepin Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan. This plan seeks to impose phosphorus limits on cities' wastewater and stormwater even though data shows the lake is no longer impaired.



CGMC's Role: We joined with other local government advocacy organizations to bring a contested case action on the TMDL and negotiated several process changes that will assist cities in the future.

Class 3 & 4 Waters/Salty Parameters



Several CGMC members have unnecessary permit limits based on MPCA's outdated Class 3 and 4 water quality standards, which have caused major impediments to economic development. In addition to the cities that currently have problematic permit limits, more than 20 CGMC members are slated to receive outdated permit limits unless MPCA updates the underlying water quality standards.

CGMC's Role: We participated in MPCA's rulemaking process and submitted comments in favor of MPCA's plan to update the standards. The plan was recently affirmed by an Administrative Law Judge and we will continue to support these changes until they are finalized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



CGMC Environmental Program Successes, Emerging Issues & Continued Advocacy

Emerging & Ongoing Issues

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 continue to advocate for PFA funding from bonding and the Clean Water Fund. The 2020 bonding bill included an historic \$125 million for PFA programs, and the 2021 Legacy bill included \$15.9 million for the PFA's Point Source Implementation Grant Program. In 2022, we will continue to push for a large bonding bill that includes substantial PFA funding and will review whether current programs are meeting the needs of our member cities.

Wild Rice Sulfate Rule

Minnesota's standard for sulfate in wild rice waters is outdated and may result in permit limits that require expensive facility upgrades that would not actually improve water quality. In the spring of 2021, the U.S. EPA proposed adding 30 waterbodies to the impairment list which could result in cities facing sulfate limits in their permits.

CGMC's Role: We submitted comments objecting to the inclusion of these waterbodies on the impairment list and urging the U.S. EPA to work with Tribal Nations and other stakeholders to protect wild rice. We will continue to monitor and advocate on this issue.



Proposed Permit Fee Increase



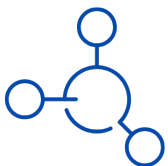
MPCA is seeking to impose a fee increase on water quality related permits to generate more funding for its water quality operations. A significant portion of this increase will fall on municipalities.

CGMC's Role: We are pushing for increased state general fund spending for water quality operations, rather than requiring local municipalities to pay for these increases. The 2021 Legislature appropriated \$3 million for the water quality budget, but we anticipate MPCA will seek an increase for the remaining deficit. We will monitor and advocate as the proposed fee increases move forward.

Drinking Water and Water Access

Access to safe, clean and affordable drinking water is critical for Greater Minnesota communities. Several cities throughout the state have identified environmental, regulatory and economic challenges related to drinking water and water access.

CGMC's Role: We are working to better understand our members' concerns, monitor emerging issues and trends, and develop strategies to ensure Greater Minnesota communities have access to affordable water resources for generations to come.



Nitrogen and Nitrate Standards (EPA Nutrient Criteria)

The U.S. EPA is developing nutrient criteria for lakes that will regulate nitrogen and nitrate. These standards could have major negative economic impacts for municipal wastewater facilities.

CGMC's Role: CGMC is participating in the federal rulemaking process and will monitor state developments.