

Governor's Conservation Budget Raises Questions

Statement by Paul Austin, Executive Director
Conservation Minnesota



In the fine print of his proposed budget, Governor Tim Pawlenty acknowledges that funds from the recently passed Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Amendment are not available to offset the projected budget deficit.

The language of the constitutional amendment clearly says the new funds may not be used to substitute for traditional funding sources. But budget cuts proposed by the Governor on Tuesday, including cuts to clean water programs and fish and wildlife habitat work, are inconsistent with what 1.6 million Minnesotans voted for and raise serious questions that must be answered.

The Governor's budget results in a 21.5% drop in general funds for the state's core conservation agencies compared to the 2008-09 budget cycle. As a result conservation funding slips to barely 1% of general fund spending in 2010, and drops to 0.93% in 2011, the lowest percentage in 30 years. In 2001, the share was 2.25%.

The Governor's proposal cuts over \$23 million from conservation budgets for 2010-2011, and clean water and habitat programs appear to be targeted. The Governor proposes cutting \$1.9 million from the Pollution Control Agency's water programs, including the Clean Water Partnership program which helps local communities clean up lakes and rivers, and \$1.3 million from the Department of Natural Resources' division of waters. In addition, the budget slashes \$5.5 million from the DNR's fish and wildlife division.

The proposed budget also includes large amounts of unspecified, agency-wide cuts. The DNR suffers \$3.9 million in unspecified cuts to agency operations, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources is cut by \$3.47 million, which it says will result in "unspecified service level reductions" and staffing decreases.

These cuts leave Minnesotans to wonder:

- How will cutting the Clean Water Partnership program help increase water cleanup efforts that voters overwhelmingly supported in November?
- How does reducing general fund support for conservation to its lowest level ever keep faith with voters' demands, and their investment, to increase conservation efforts through the amendment?
- How will unspecified agency wide cuts be implemented, and how will voters know that amendment dollars are not used as a substitute?
- How can dramatic cuts in traditional funding not be seen as using the amendment funds, meant for long term investments, to backfill agency budgets to help solve a short term budget crisis?

Minnesotans look forward to receiving answers (January 29, 2009).

17th Annual CURE Meeting

If you haven't already, please let us know if you are coming to the **17th Annual CURE Meeting** this Saturday Feb. 7 from 5 to 10 p.m. at the Hollywood Theater in downtown Montevideo. You can do so by [replying to this e-mail](#) or by calling 1-877-269-2873. We are getting some great silent auction items that will be up for grabs that night, including:

- A personal geology Trip with Dr. Carrie Jennings.
- A 1930's era wood and canvass Shell Lake canoe.
- A Rush Limbaugh poster and other great wildlife prints.
- Fine jewelry and coins.

- An Earth Flag.
- Oriole Feeders.
- And dozens of more one of a kind items!

We still are in need of donations of door prizes and silent auction items so keep them coming or **let us know if you plan to bring something** on Saturday night. Looks like the weather will be warm. There is no better place this time of year to celebrate the growing family of the Minnesota River! Patrick J. Moore
rivervoices@cureriver.org

p.s. There were more than 100 people who attended the Green Economy Forum in Milan last Thursday and 40 more who took part in the local energy security roundtable discussion in Marshall later that night. CURE engaged in excellent dialogue with Municipal utility companies and reps from Rural Electric Cooperatives. There is much we can work together on. Come to the annual meeting and find out more!

Hawk Creek Watershed Information & Appreciation Meeting

On February 5th, the Hawk Creek Watershed Project is hosting its annual Information & Appreciation Meeting at the Kandi Entertainment Center (500 19th Ave. SE) in Willmar. Registration starts at 8:30 a.m. and lunch is free to those with reservations. The meeting is open to the public.

- Hawk Creek Update by *Cory Netland, Hawk Creek Watershed Project,*
- Conservation Drainage-Production & Environmental Goals by *Craig Schrader, U of M Extension,*
- Drainage Water Management by *Dr. Jeff Strock, U of M Southwest Research/Outreach Center,*
- Self-Sustaining Design for Drainage Ditches by *Dr. Bruce Wilson, U of M, BioProducts / Biosystems,*
- Local Raingarden Experiences by *Rick Reimer, Kandiyohi SWCD; Tom Warner, Chippewa SWCD; Madeline Dalton, Shakopee Creek Headwaters Project and Dan Nadeau, Crow River Organization of Water.*

3rd Crop Producer Meetings to be held in Fairmont, MN

FAIRMONT, Minn (02/09/2009) – Rural Advantage will be hosting the first of four 3rd Crop Producer Meetings on Monday, February 9, 2009. To kick off the fifth annual 3rd Crop Producer Meetings, the opening session will focus on “Biomass: Production and Uses.” Presentations begin at 10:00 a.m. and adjourn at 3:00 p.m.

The morning will begin with Rural Advantage’s own Linda Meschke presenting the “Bioenergy Update” to ensure that attendees and presenters alike are on the same page regarding bioenergy in Minnesota and the world. Gary Wyatt, University of Minnesota Extension, will follow with a discussion on biomass produced from woody agriculture such as willows and hybrid poplars. The last hour before breaking for lunch will focus on native grasses and forbs. Jill Sackett, also with University of Minnesota Extension and Rural Advantage, will give a short overview of producing natives for biomass purposes.

For the entire press release, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/fifthannual3rdcropproducer.pdf>

MANKATO Area has two new CSA Farms!

Why the excitement?! Both of these fine farms are being organized by folks committed to sustainable growing practices and the local community. **What IS a CSA, you wonder?** A Community Supported Agriculture Farm (CSA) is different from a supermarket or farm stand in that people from the community directly support the CSA farm by purchasing in advance, a portion or 'share' of the farm's annual harvest. This is all to provide fresh, nutritious, locally grown food from a financially stable farm. A CSA brings together a farm and the surrounding

community. As a CSA member, you will be participating in local sustainable farming. Participating in a CSA also gives farm members the unique opportunity to see how their food is grown and to know the people who grow it.

The websites below provide all the details for each farm including cost, available produce, eggs, meat and other farm-based products.

- Visit www.pehlingbayfarm.com and click on the CSA link for details and membership forms. We have the option of choosing working and non-working shares. We hope to organize the CSA in the true spirit of Community Supported Agriculture by encouraging members to become involved with the farm.
- Check out Little Green Heron Farm <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/M26277>
- And with one year as a CSA under their belt, the Hollerich family can be reached at rachelhollerich@yahoo.com for more information about their CSA.

APPEALS COURT VOIDS PESTICIDES RULE

By Julie Ufner, NACo Associate Legislative Director

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has struck down an EPA rule which stated that pesticides were not pollutants under the Clean Water Act (CWA). This is a significant and possibly precedent-setting ruling, with huge implications to counties not only within the court's jurisdiction, but also across the country. The 6th Circuit covers the states of Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Tennessee.

The 2007 EPA rule exempted those who apply pesticides directly on or near water sources, as long as the pesticides were being applied in accordance with the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). The rationale was if pesticides were purposely applied for a specific use — e.g. killing mosquito larvae — the pesticides were not considered pollutants and were exempt from permit requirements.

The National Cotton Council of America et al vs. the U.S. EPA case revolves around the definitions of “chemical wastes” and “biological materials” as pollutants. Under the CWA, when a “pollutant” is introduced to a water source, there must be an accompanying National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit attached to the action.

The CWA is the primary method used to ensure water quality in the nation's waterways. The act states that discharge of a pollutant is not allowed without prior approval. The act goes on to state that the term “pollutant” can be: “dredged spoil, solid waste, incinerator residue, sewage, garbage, sewage sludge, munitions, chemical wastes, biological materials, radioactive materials, heat, wrecked or discarded equipment, rock, sand, cellar dirt and industrial, municipal and agricultural waste discharged into water.”

In its Jan. 7 ruling, the Court of Appeals disagreed with the EPA's reasoning. Because there are different types of pesticides — chemical versus biological — different criteria must be used for their applications.

In the case of chemical pesticides, the court said that as long as it “is intentionally applied to the water [to perform a particular useful purpose] and leaves no excess portions after performing its intended purpose ... [it] does not require a NPDES permit.”

However, in the case where the pesticide is applied either to land or from the air, it could be considered a pollutant under CWA. Biological pesticides, according to the court, should be considered a pollutant under CWA. Because biological pesticides contain concentrations of viruses, bacteria, plant materials, etc., they could alter the biological integrity of water quality. The list of activities that could, under this ruling, require a NPDES permit prior to spraying include but are not limited to:

- Spraying of pesticides for mosquito control
- Weed control in irrigation ditches
- Spraying for silvicultural pest control

- Using herbicides to kill weeds or algae in water sources, and
- Aerial spraying of insecticides.

With this decision, virtually all commercial pesticide application to, over and around waterways will now require NPDES permits. Petitioners now have 45 days from the date of the ruling to file an appeal. (National Association of Counties; County News; January 26, 2009)

Thoughts on the Future

This link contains a video that was submitted in a contest by a 20 year old for a contest entitled "u @ 50". It won second place. When they showed it, everyone in the room was awe-struck and broke into spontaneous applause. So simple and yet so brilliant. Take a minute and watch it.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42E2fAWM6rA> (From Jeff Brand of MEP)

Getting to a New Energy Economy Presentation

Dr. J. Drake Hamilton, Science Policy Director of [Fresh Energy](#), will give a presentation, "**Getting to a New Energy Economy: Prospects in the U.S. Congress and in Minnesota**," at [Centenary United Methodist Church in Mankato](#) on **Monday, February 9, at 7:30 pm**.

Hamilton directs Fresh Energy's global warming solutions program; Fresh Energy is a private nonprofit organization working to lead the transition to a clean, efficient energy system. She was appointed by Governor Tim Pawlenty to serve on the [Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group](#), a group charged with recommending a Climate Action Plan to reduce Minnesota's greenhouse gas emissions. Her presentation is free and open to the public.

Fourth annual wetlands summit set

A diverse alliance of hunters, environmentalists, government agencies, and citizens have organized a day-long summit highlighting the importance of wetlands. Event organizers expect up to 350 people for the interactive educational event, which will be from 8 am to 4:30 pm Feb. 21 at Normandale Community College in Bloomington, Minn. "Wetlands provide many values, economic and otherwise, to our society. This summit will show how critical wetlands are and why they deserve our protection," said Wetlands Summit Co-chair Bill Henke.

Themes for the summit are the economic and non-economic values of wetlands, and the impact of dedicated funding on wetlands restoration and preservation. Morning sessions will include a presentation on the impacts of wetland loss and a talk by Mike Kilgore, interim chair of the Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council. The Council will recommend projects to be funded by the sales tax increase voters approved in the last general election.

Afternoon sessions are designed to encourage discussion among conference attendees and the invited speakers. Agencies represented include the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Advocacy groups represented include the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the Minnesota Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, Delta Waterfowl, the National Wildlife Federation, the Minnesota Conservation Federation and the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. (Submitted by Brent Schacherer)

Job Opportunities:

Grazing Land Management Specialist

Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District is hiring a Grazing Land Management Specialist at its office in Preston, MN. The Grazing Land Management Specialist position is funded for two years with a MN Clean Water Legacy grant with the possibility of additional grant funding to continue the position beyond two years. The Grazing Specialist performs a variety of specialized

and technical work functions for grazing management activities to the SWCDs located in the Root River Watershed.

Responsibilities and assignments involve providing technical assistance and education to livestock producers located in the Root River Watershed to develop and implement best management practices related to pastureland and grassland management. Technical assistance for installing conservation buffers may also be provided to landowners. This position is under the direct supervision of the District Administrator. Transportation may be provided, but in some cases may be required from the employee and will be reimbursed. This position does not require overnight travel except for occasional training or similar events.

For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/grazingspecialistfillmore.pdf>

Events:

February 7th (Saturday) is the **17th Annual Meeting of CURE** from 5 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. (meal served at 6:30 p.m.) at the Hollywood Theater on Main Street in Montevideo. Keynote speakers are Dr. Carrie Jennings & Dr. Shawn Schottler talking about “The Real Dirt on the MN River.” For more information, <http://mavdisk.mnsu.edu/kudels/cureannualmeeting.pdf>

February 9th (Monday) is a **Forum on Agricultural Practices on Shoreland Areas** from 12 noon to 5 p.m. at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls. For more information: Robert Collett, DNR Hydrologist at 320-234-2550 or Peder Otterson, Shoreland Rules Update Manager at 651-259-5697. In addition, visit the Shoreland Rules Update Project Web Site at www.mndnr.gov/water/shoreland.html

February 9th (Monday) is a **3rd Crop Producer Meeting – “Biomass: Production and Uses”** from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall, Fairmont. Discussion will include biomass, bioenergy, and bio-based products. For more information: Jill Sackett, Rural Advantage, U of M Extension at 507-238-5449 or sacke032@umn.edu

February 19th (Thursday) is the **Chaska to York Factory in 49 Days presentation** at 7:00 p.m. in the meeting room of the New Ulm Public Library (17 N. Broadway St.). Sean Bloomfield and Colton Witte will talk about their adventure last summer paddling the entire Minnesota and Red rivers all the way to the Hudson Bay. For more information, <http://mrdbc.mnsu.edu/calendar/pdfs/hudsonbay%20flyer.pdf>

February 23rd (Monday) is a **3rd Crop Producer Meeting – “Getting Fruity”** from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Knights of Columbus Hall in Fairmont. Discussion will include aronia, grape, Saskatoon, and apple production as well as starting a winery, bee keeping, and using high tunnels. For more information: Jill Sackett, Rural Advantage, U of M Extension at 507-238-5449 or sacke032@umn.edu

Check out additional upcoming events and workshops on the Minnesota River Calendar at: <http://mrdbc.mnsu.edu/calendar/index.html>

Water Quality Articles

[NPPC files lawsuit over EPA livestock emissions reporting rule](#) (Agri News). Leaders of the pork industry say they're committed to compliance with a rule announced in December by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, but need time to help producers comply.

[Allocation of new sales tax for outdoors, environment unclear](#) (Pioneer Press). State environmental and outdoors budgets were recommended for general fund cuts, but it was unclear

Tuesday what, if any, portion is intended to be offset by additional money from a constitutional amendment approved in November.

[EPA Files Objections To Coal-Fired Power Plant](#) (Associated Press). South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairman Dusty Johnson says the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has filed objections to an air quality permit a state agency had granted for the proposed coal-fired Big Stone II power plant.

[Saving energy and money in a harsh climate](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Last winter we brought you the story of a Duluth family who had designed and built a highly energy-efficient house to save energy AND money. We found that the investment in design is paying off in lower gas and electric bills that are a fraction of what other Minnesotans pay.

[Eric Utne: It's now easy being green, and yet ...](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Truly clean energy and green-collar jobs are hardly a forgone conclusion.

[Snowy owls swoop southward, delighting birders](#) (Associated Press). Biologists say an increase in snowy owl sightings in the South suggests that the arctic species did so well in its northern breeding grounds last year that competition is driving the young ones to warmer climates.

[Scott County will talk to railroad about old corridor](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Board decides it can later look at how to pay the cost of converting the old rail line over the Minnesota River into a bike and hiking trail.

[Pollution agency veteran Eger to become chief](#) (Pioneer Press). Gov. Tim Pawlenty on Monday appointed Paul Eger as commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Eger, 35, replaces Brad Moore, who left the agency last fall to take a job in the private sector.

[Stay current on conservation, energy programs in 2008 Farm Bill](#) (Hutchinson Leader). Details on the new 2008 Farm Bill are being developed, but you can follow the latest changes on its conservation and energy programs on a University of Minnesota Extension website.

[Obama's environmental-policy reversal will have immediate impact in Minnesota](#) (MinnPost). President Barack Obama left no doubt Monday that his administration will move aggressively to address "long overdue" energy and environment issues and, in a pointed reversal of U.S. policy under George W. Bush, he said that "ideology will no longer trump sound science."

[Mpls. U seek to save cash through energy efficiency](#) (MN Daily). Tough economic times are forcing local governments and institutions to cut costs in any way they can, and many are looking toward energy efficiency to save some cash.

[Minn. utility joins national 'carbon capture' testing](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). Great River Energy will study the feasibility of adding carbon capture to its Coal Creek Station in Underwood North Dakota.

[Website grows green tourism in Minnesota](#) (Hutchinson Leader). A new Travel Green Minnesota website has launched to provide information and best practices for Minnesota's tourism and hospitality industry.

[GAC excited about RecycleMania](#) (Mankato Free Press). During the RecycleMania competition, it's not whether Gustavus wins or loses. It's how they play the game.

[Recycling law may stem 'tsunami' of discarded TV sets](#) (Minnesota Independent). House Republicans kill bill at delay digital-TV conversion. What'll that mean for the environment?

[Minnesota slated to get \\$477 million for bridges](#) (Associated Press). Minnesota could get more than \$477 million of the economic stimulus moving through Congress to upgrade its highways and bridges, a welcome boost for the state after a deadly bridge collapse in Minneapolis gave the entire nation a wake-up call about the condition of its infrastructure.

['Water' at Science Museum on Friday](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The exhibit offers a look at the wonders of water as well as inspiration for cutting waste.

[Minnesota Farm Bureau: Farmers want clean water but not at expense of agriculture](#) (Bemidji Pioneer). Farmers want clean water, but clean-up efforts shouldn't penalize agriculture, says an advocate.

[Dennis Anderson: First the mission, then the money](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). When hands are extended for slices of cash from an amendment passed in November, the Lessard council should stay true to its conservation goals.

[Move to renewable energy offers opportunities for rural areas](#) (West Central Tribune). A week ago Lois Quam was in the United Arab Emirates, where she represented Piper Jaffray & Company of Minneapolis as oil producing states in the Middle East looked at how to invest their petroleum profits in what many see as the future: renewable energy.

[Women sentenced in case of smuggled Laos wildlife](#) (Outdoor News). Two metro-area women were sentenced earlier this month for smuggling protected wildlife into the country from Laos and selling it in St. Paul. Investigators originally confiscated more than 1,300 wildlife parts and pieces - mostly from endangered species - at the Twin Cities airport in 2005.

[Reducing carbon emissions: Legislators see lots of interest from public, special interests](#) (MinnPost). With a new state law calling for controls on greenhouse-gas emissions and the Obama administration reversing federal policy and forcefully advocating reducing carbon emissions linked to climate change, the transition from setting policy to implementing it has begun at the Capitol in St. Paul.

[Top EPA scientist describes new attitude at agency](#) (Minnesota Public Radio). President Barack Obama has said his administration will put a new emphasis on science as it takes power and begins to shape the nation's policy. The Environmental Protection Agency's top scientist was in Minnesota today to talk about that change.

[Senator plans bill to stop sales of recreation lands](#) (Outdoor News). There was little legislative activity last week in the outdoor realm as lawmakers and others waited to hear how Gov. Tim Pawlenty planned to deal with a state budget deficit that's estimated to be more than \$5 billion.

[Minneapolis trash and baseball: A stinky situation](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Hennepin County's garbage burner is looking to contain its operational odors near the new Twins ballpark -- a costly change in plans.

[Editorial: A needed push for the car industry](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). President Obama took a welcome step his first week in office to roll back an ill-advised regulatory reprieve that served no one well, least of all those who fought hardest for it -- American carmakers.

[Big Stone power plant runs into roadblock](#) (Forum Communications). Citing conflicts with the Clean Air Act, the Environmental Protection Agency has suspended plans for a South Dakota coal plant that would provide power throughout Western Minnesota, including Alexandria.

[Opinion: Big Stone II gets boost from Thune](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Was recent action by the Environmental Protection Agency a project killer for the controversial proposed [Big Stone II](#) coal plant?

[With a click, you can control number of phone books delivered to you](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). No more going from doorstep to trash can - Twin Citians now have a new tool to control the number of telephone books delivered.

[Nine Mile Creek pedestrian/bike trail takes shape in Edina](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). Each year, Edina residents pay more than \$3.5 million in taxes to Three Rivers Park District. Yet the city has no trails or other district-owned park facilities within its borders.

[Our View: Big Stone II the wrong plan at the wrong time](#) (Mankato Free Press). The proposed Big Stone II coal plant would be 150 miles from Mankato, just over the South Dakota border. But the effects would stretch to this area and beyond.

[U study: Corn ethanol no better than gas](#) (Minneapolis Star Tribune). The U research that the biofuel takes a heavy toll on the environment and health was greeted by skepticism by ethanol producers.

If all mankind were to disappear, the world would regenerate back to the rich state of equilibrium that existed ten thousand years ago. If insects were to vanish, the environment would collapse into chaos. – Edward O. Wilson

The Minnesota River Watershed Alliance (Watershed Alliance) is an organized network of citizens, public agencies, and private organizations dedicated to communicating the benefits of an ecology healthy Minnesota River Watershed to others and are actively working towards its improvement and protection. We meet four times a year and encourage landowners and recreational users of the river to be part of the effort. For more information on the Watershed Alliance: <http://www.watershedalliance.blogspot.com>

Please register at the Minnesota River Watershed Alliance's bulletin board at <http://mail.mnsu.edu/mailman/listinfo/mrwa> to receive regular updates on what is happening in the Minnesota River Watershed.

Thanks,

Scott

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