



JOURNAL

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Common ground. Common good.

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Minnesota's water environment in the 21st century

Citizens League study committee on water policy convenes next month

by Larry Baker

On the cover of the August 12, 1973 issue of *Time* magazine, Minnesota Governor Wendell Anderson proudly displayed a northern pike he had just caught under the headline, "The Good Life in Minnesota." The story noted that "the lake up north" and the "21 lovely quiet lakes" within Minneapolis are part of that good life.

They still are, but we have reasons to be concerned about our water environment; we also have new opportunities to do better.

Some statistics of concern:

- The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has now listed 2,570 legal water quality impairments on more than 800 separate water bodies, mostly from mercury, nutrients, and coliform contamination. Only two have been corrected. And only a small percentage of Minnesota's waters have been assessed, so the number of listed impaired waters will likely increase over time.
- The Metropolitan Council estimates that parts of the seven-county metropolitan region will have "uncertain" water supplies by 2050.
- Even as early as 1999 (the most recent survey of this type), just 56 percent in statewide survey rated the condition of their lakes "excellent" or "good"; 41 percent rated their lakes "fair" or "poor". More than twice as many respondents felt the overall condition of their lakes had deteriorated rather than improved.
- According to the MCPA, 39 percent of Minnesota's 535,000 septic systems are "failing" or pose "imminent threats to public health and safety."



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- Although point sources of pollution (such as municipal sewage) have been reasonably controlled, we have made limited progress toward reducing non-point sources of pollution, such as urban and agricultural runoff.
- Minnesota's population is expected to grow 24 percent by 2035, with most of the fastest growth occurring in lake counties.

Furthermore, many of Minnesota's water policies are outdated and based on the social and economic conditions of an earlier era and do not reflect today's needs. Others are technically obsolete. Improved information technologies, new scientific knowledge and new data have created opportunities for us to develop policies that will avert crisis and allow us to move beyond crisis management. Finally, because most of our existing water policies were developed to address

narrow problems, there is considerable fragmentation, overlap, and conflict among policies.

The Citizens League study of Minnesota's water policies is timely. In fact, the Citizens League's Policy Advisory Committee gave the proposal unanimous approval after reviewing a dozen proposals on other topics.

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Building a League of Citizens



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July 10: The Minnesota-China Connection

September 2: Youth and Politics

November 4: Election Night Policy and a Pint

For more information go to www.citizensleague.org.

The Policy and a Pint 2008 Election Year Series is sponsored by Best Buy.

Policy Project Updates

Study committee on water policy

The upcoming study committee on water policy will begin in early summer. The committee will attempt to answer the questions:

1. What are the appropriate roles and responsibilities of individuals, communities, businesses, nonprofits, and the various units of government that manage water in Minnesota?
2. Based on those roles and responsibilities, what core principles should guide collaborative water use and management in Minnesota?

For up-to-date information on the Water Policy Study Committee, visit the policy section of www.citizensleague.org.

Poverty project

This summer, the Citizens League will convene a number of conversations on poverty. We are looking for a variety of hosts: individuals, businesses, congregations, neighborhoods, nonprofits and more. If you are interested in hosting a conversation contact Victoria Ford at vford@citizensleague.org. (Want to serve on the poverty study committee? Recruitment for committee members will begin in June or July.)

Regional policy conference

The Citizens League is organizing the fourth annual Regional Policy Conference, tentatively scheduled for September 24, 2008. Join us as we reframe the discussion of what makes a region.

Transportation advancement

A variety of measures in line with Citizens League transportation policy recommendations moved forward in 2008. To learn more, check out the policy advancement section of our website and the Citizens League policy blog at www.citizensleague.org

Fiscal disparities for Mall of America subsidy

The Citizens League helped lead the effort to oppose the use of fiscal disparities to fund a parking ramp for the proposed Mall of America Phase II. Check our website to find out how things ended up this legislative session.

New members, recruiters, and volunteers

New & Rejoining Members

Ian Alexander

Sandy Corbett

Michael Darger

Sarah Ford and Kimberly Klose

Lacey Hartman

Margaret Hennen

Annette Jacobs

Leah Klimoski

Mike Logan

Migdalia Loyola-Melendez

Deborah Montgomery

Alex Neuman

Barbara Renshaw

Katie Rodriguez

Brian Shekleton

Joel Swanson

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Hennepin Medical Society

League of Minnesota Cities

Lifeworks Services

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota

Marshall and Ilsley Bank

Martin Marketing

Mayo Clinic

Medtronic Foundation

Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce

RBC Foundation - USA

Recruiters

Nate Garvis

Scott McMahon

Nena Street

Volunteer

Cal Clark



Water has defined us—and now must redefine us

Water policy flows from the shores of Gitche Gumee to our board rooms and back yards

by Sean Kershaw

Exactly five years ago, in the introduction to our “Doing the Common Good Better” report, we proposed two potential scenarios for the headlines in our morning papers on May 11, 2008—Minnesota’s 150th anniversary of statehood.

One was a list of our successes: tackling congestion; innovations in healthcare and long-term care; and a surge in entrepreneurship and corporate citizenship. The other set of headlines was a list of continued frustrations: troubles at the Mall of America; deepening education disparities; and an on-going crisis in health care and politics.

I give credit to Jean King, my co-chair for the study committee that produced this report, and to Lyle Wray, then Citizens League executive director, for their foresight in proposing these scenarios. The real headlines this month—in so much as we’re reading newspapers anymore—show that course of Minnesota’s future is still a toss-up.

The Citizens League’s new vision of civic policy-making, and our upcoming study committee on water policy, offer the opportunity for us to set a better course. Water stewardship defines us as Minnesotans. It defies old ways of problem solving, and it can redefine our future civic, political, and economic success.

Defining us

Is any state, certainly any *inland* state, more defined by water than Minnesota? Longfellow’s “shining Big-Sea-Water” and his epic poem about Hiawatha and Nokomis captured the country’s imagination even before we were a state. Judging from the picture on Minnesota’s new sesquicentennial stamp—the Mississippi River lit by the morning sun—we’re still captivated by the power of this shimmering image. We should be.

Our lakes and rivers transported the native peoples and pioneers, powered the mills and mines that built the economy, and carried our iron and agricultural products to the rest of the world. Beyond the symbolic power of water in this land of lakes

and rivers, Minnesota’s identity, our economy, our institutions, even our politics—the infrastructure of our existence and our success for more than 150 years—all have their true source, their “Itasca,” in water.

But as Janna Caywood’s article, (page 6) points out, we are now living up to the Dakota origins of the word Minnesota, which, roughly translated, means “clouded water.” Our public policies on water are murky at best.

Defying us

It’s not just that 40 percent of our tested waterways are now “impaired,” unable to support economic and recreational uses. It’s that we appear to lack the policy capacity and infrastructure to address these challenges: the ability for citizens to govern for the common good on this issue from within a broad range of institutions.

From 2005 to 2007, poor water quality in Lake Pepin halted a new treatment facility for residential development 100 miles away in Annandale and Maple Lake because developments there would have added pollution to that already impaired waterway. A new report by the Brookings Institute estimates that pollution in Lake Superior costs Duluth and North Shore communities more than \$300 million in revenue from lost tourism and development. We’re pouring public subsidies into ethanol production without full consideration of how increasing production impacts our water use and supply.

Our past policy solutions have relied primarily on regulation and government. These strategies worked well a generation ago when pollution came primarily from big single sources. Certainly government has an enormous role in water quality regulation and enforcement now and well into the future (witness subsidies for ethanol). But these regulatory and hierarchical solutions aren’t sufficient when more than 80 percent of water pollution now is caused by diffuse non-point sources. Strategically, it’s like attacking a swarm of mosquitoes with a shotgun.

At the same time, it is not enough to suggest we will solve this crisis solely by turning off the tap when we brush our teeth. Our water policies need to expand beyond government, to engage Minnesotans meaningfully in addressing this issue within a wide range of institutions, from businesses to homes and neighborhoods. We need policies and practices that incent all of these institutions to work together and to contribute their significant resources on this critical issue.

Redefining us

The Citizens League’s new civic approach to policy-making provides an opportunity for us to find better policy strategies that meet this need. This approach assumes that it isn’t enough to come up a new white paper or isolated mandates for government, businesses, or households.

Much like the tributaries that flow into the Mississippi, strengthening and broadening the river with each new flow, we need all of our citizens and all of our institutions, from governments and schools to businesses large and small, to contribute their ideas, their enthusiasm, and their resources to help develop sustainable and effective policies and practices that will strengthen the health of all Minnesota waters.

I’m not naïve about the complications of this issue. But all policy strategies ultimately depend on finding common ground, on finding an identity that unites the various stakeholders. We already have that. It flows through each of us, from Longfellow’s shining sea to our sesquicentennial stamp. And with hard work, and a commitment to work together differently with this new civic vision of policy-making, Minnesota’s legacy of lakes, streams, and mighty rivers will continue to illuminate our shared identity well into the future. ●

Sean Kershaw is the Executive Director of the Citizens League. He can be reached at skershaw@citizensleague.org. You can comment on this Viewpoint at www.citizensleague.org/blogs/sean



Reflections on our water future

Decisions we make today will affect Minnesota's water resources for generations to come

by John Wells

A friend of mine recently asked me, with all the changes going on in Minnesota today, what I think are the greatest threats to Minnesota's waters. Before you read my answer, think about what yours would be. Would you say impaired waters, given their implications for quality of the state's surface waters? Or ethanol production facilities, given the demands they place on the state's water supplies?

Doesn't it seem like the world has gotten a lot more complicated in recent years? We used to think, quite simply, in terms of protecting lake quality or improving watershed management. And who wouldn't agree that these issues are important? But it strikes me that to answer my friend's question requires us to dig a little deeper, to unearth those underlying factors likely to affect everything we want our waters to be and everything we must do to ensure that they are—or become—what we want them to be.

Given all of this, I would argue that there is no single or correct answer. Mine has three parts.

Climate change, land use, and chemistry

First, as much for the gravity of its future effects on Minnesota's water resources as

its effect today, I put global climate change (i.e., global warming) at the top of the list. This phenomenon stands to change the very face of Minnesota and the way we think of our state's waters. Imagine summers like Kansas or Nebraska and winters like Illinois, and then think about the water resources of those states and the demands

that we can expect more such storms as climate change takes firmer hold. This is not something we should ignore, but more about that later.

Second, I also put land use on the table as a profound and pervasive influence on our waters today and, increasingly, in the future. We applaud the growth in

How we manage growth—or don't manage it—locally, regionally, and at the state level directly affects the sustainability of Minnesota's waters and everything that depends on sustainable water management.

people put on them. While climate models cannot yet tell us whether we will get more or less precipitation, they do tell us it will get a lot warmer and our rainfall events will be a lot more intense. Consider the nearly two feet of rain that blitzed southeast Minnesota last August and how it changed people's lives, not to mention local aquatic ecosystems. Scientists remind us that we cannot attribute any single storm to global warming, but they do say

Minnesota's population and economy as signals of our success in competing in the world, and we value this expansion for some very good reasons. Who doesn't want their children to get good jobs close to home? Who doesn't look forward to retiring with a nest egg grown in some part with investments in the stock market? We have come to accept that growth is good and that the alternative can only be decline in personal income, living standard, the health of our communities, and quality of life. I think we forget the "how" part of how we grow, and this can make all the difference to the quality and quantity of our lakes, wetlands, streams, and ground waters. How we manage growth—or don't manage it—locally, regionally, and at the state level directly affects the sustainability of Minnesota's waters and everything that depends on sustainable water management. This includes our fish and wildlife, the trails we hike, the birds we watch, and the lakes where we boat and swim, as well as the jobs we attract and the incomes they provide us. And with so much of what we value at stake, who would you say is in charge?

Third, I consider everything that modern society puts into the environment, with the effects mostly unknown, the unavoidable third response. Anyone watching the news this past year must be thinking about the thousands of acres of waters the state has declared impaired. In fact, about 40 percent



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of the waters we test are considered impaired for one of only a handful of reasons. The tally does not include those waters harboring traces of exotic contaminants, like PFCs, PFOAs, 'BAs and 'OSs, not to mention various volatile organic chemicals, pesticides and other "better living through chemistry" artifacts of modern society. Long term, these present a great challenge to the institutions of our society, including those in state government.

At last rough count, humans can take credit for having introduced some 90,000-plus chemicals into the environment. Today's rate of introduction is about 8,000 chemicals per year. But not to worry, you say, our federal and state governments protect us from the really bad ones, right? Well, actually, they have set standards for about 135 chemicals. So, just 89,865-plus to go! And not to depress anyone, but it normally takes about two years to adopt standards, once the science is done. And the process can be contentious. Anyone remember the emotions surrounding Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's work last fall to put streams on the impaired waters list for reasons of pesticide contamination?

It is not easy to document public health risk, or, for that matter, the threat to aquatic organisms found in our streams, lakes, and other water bodies. Sooner or later we will realize that it is all about the choices we each make every day. Sooner or later, we will realize that we will have to pay for these choices one way or another. And just maybe we will come to understand that it makes more sense to prevent problems than to continually throw scarce resources at fixes after the fact.

Whose job is it to fix things?

How differently each of us might respond to my friend's question highlights the complicated job our water management agencies face, but let's start with my "big" three. So, who at the state level has a stake in managing the water resource aspects of climate change, land use, and anthropogenic chemicals?

Let's start with Minnesota's natural resources agency. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) engages people in matters of flood mitigation and flood plain



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management. They work to reduce people and business located within the 100-year floodway, that part of the floodplain where most of the water rushes. The trick comes in when climate change changes the floodplain and its floodways. We are ill-equipped as a society to keep moving people off of a changing flood target. This issue is illustrated in the stormwater management arena where agencies as diverse as transportation and pollution control have sought funds for updating the 40-year-old rainfall-runoff statistic used to design stormwater systems. They know the statistics are off the mark and that designs based on them likely won't do the job.

We also look to the DNR to help us manage the flip side of the equation: the management of water during drought. The legislature has established a system for allocating the use and appropriation of water resources, including a set of use priorities. These guide the DNR in deciding who has priority during water use conflicts, such as when the pumping from one well depletes a neighbor's well. State law also directs the DNR to develop a state water conservation plan and to permit the allocation of water in such a way as to meet long-range

seasonal requirements for people and ecosystems. Occasionally the DNR has had to suspend irrigation permits when streams can't afford the loss of water.

Lawmakers also want to know when trouble is on the horizon, and have directed agencies to work together with the Environmental Quality Board to report on water trends. The board led the most recent analysis of the availability question with its 2007 report, "Use of Minnesota's Renewable Water Resources: Moving toward Sustainability." It concluded that we have significant water sustainability issues in highly urbanized areas, but we also need to be careful with high intensity water use throughout the state. "The label of Minnesota as water rich does not fit as well as once believed," the report notes. As one of my cohorts argued, "Minnesota designed its water laws with the assumption that we were a water rich state." Now we might ask, would we have done it another way had we known what we know today? And the picture will only get worse as the warming environment triggers more uncaptured runoff and greater demand for water.

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Can the water people triumph?

To treat non-point pollution in our waters we need to rebuild social and civic capacity in our communities and our neighborhoods

by Janna Caywood

Minnesotans are a water people. We live in a watery world of great rushing rivers, quiet meandering streams, sparkling glacial lakes, and a vast inland sea. Even our name, *Minne-sota*, from the Dakota language, roughly translates to “water clouded like the sky.”

Our waters have deep, personal meaning for us, and we relish the opportunity to be near them. One can see this during the summer months when Minnesotans head by the thousands to “the lake”: fishing buddies off for a weekend of male bonding; family vacations by the lake where parents and kids get reacquainted; couples getting away from it all canoeing on a romantic, secluded stream. These excursions to water are not only personal and sometimes deeply spiritual, they serve an important social function in our lives. Our waters connect us to one another.

Yet in the midst of all of this shared, idyllic love of water lies a terrible irony: our Minnesota waters are in trouble. What’s worse, a good deal of this trouble comes from us—from our collective behaviors in our everyday lives.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), as required by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is currently assessing the state of our state’s waters. So far, the MPCA has assessed just



has been reduced significantly since the enactment of the 1972 Federal Clean Water Act, largely because of strong regulation and available grant money for technology upgrades. But today, a more pervasive problem is rising. The MPCA has determined that 86 percent of our water impairments come from non-point source pollution—a

increase in impervious surfaces (streets, roofs, and parking lots) means some runoff that normally would be filtered by plants and soil before entering our ground waters is instead channeled directly into storm sewers and into our surface waters, bringing the pollutants with it. The increased volume of water entering our rivers and streams also causes bank erosion and increases the risk of flooding.

Agricultural areas are the biggest contributors to non-point source pollution—as much as 60 percent nationally, according to the EPA. However, with urban and suburban development on the rise (68 percent of Minnesota’s growth by 2020 is expected to occur in cities), the impact on our waters from urban non-point source pollution will increase dramatically. Unfortunately, given its diffuse sources, non-point source pollution cannot easily be controlled through regulation, so another approach is necessary: we need to change the human behaviors that create the problem.

As landowners, business owners, and homeowners, we all contribute to non-point source pollution. We over fertilize our lawns, hose oil and chemicals off our driveways, leave bare dirt exposed during construction projects, fail to clean up after our pets, or allow leaves and other debris to

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15 percent of our lakes and rivers, but they have declared nearly 40 percent of those waters impaired—not fit for their intended uses, be that boating, swimming, or fishing. The fish aren’t fit to eat, the water not fit to drink, or, in some cases, even to support aquatic life.

Many of us tend to think water pollution comes from point sources, such as direct discharge of effluent into rivers and lakes from industrial plants or wastewater treatment facilities. But point source pollution

more complex pollution that comes from our collective activities on land.

As the name suggests, non-point source pollution is diffuse and multi-sourced. The primary conduit is stormwater runoff: rain and snowmelt that flows across the surface of our landscapes, picking up a multitude of toxins, pathogens, excess nutrients, and sediment along the way and depositing them into our streams, rivers, and lakes where they wreak all kinds of havoc. This effect is amplified in urban areas. The

go down storm sewer drains. Collectively, the impact on our waters is substantial.

As a response to these threats, watershed management agencies have developed education and awareness campaigns to teach citizens about water quality in the city and how changes in behavior and habits at home can significantly reduce non-point source pollution. But the success of these education programs is mixed. According to social science researchers who study behavioral change, many of these information campaigns are missing two key ingredients: community building and civic capacity. Instead of focusing on individuals home and yard care behaviors, researchers say we should switch our focus to the community, and reframe these behaviors as neighborhood storm water management—a community task that takes place in, and needs the support of, a wider social context. After all, the community as a whole suffers when our waters are polluted. In order to have healthy water we need healthy communities.

Changing community behaviors

In her book, *The Meaning of Water*, Veronica Strang writes that control of water has always been symbolic of power (and empowerment). In centuries past, water resources were often held in common and managed collectively by whole communities. Social cooperation was necessary to properly manage and fairly distribute water. But over time, control of water has transferred to government agencies or public utility companies, leaving average citizens to suffer a kind of disenfranchisement and estrangement from the water they use in their everyday lives.

Today, residential water is managed entirely by an outside entity. We open the tap and there it is. Our relationship to this water—our domestic water—is one of passive user or consumer, quite different from our relationship to the natural waters we love so dearly. In this context, we hardly give our domestic water a second thought—where it comes from or where it goes after our use. Similarly, we hardly notice the rain or snow that falls on our properties, or the path it takes as it flows to the gutter.

Strang argues that this phenomenon of estrangement is actually a symptom not only of our losing control of our water manage-

ment, but also of the declining social interdependencies of our communities. Modern neighborhoods are far less cohesive than they once were, partly because people are much more mobile now, and partly because we simply don't need our neighbors the way we used to. We live in self-contained homes and go to work for businesses that are unconnected to where we live. Our social identity as a member of a community has

The final step is to make the leap from a strong community to one with civic capacity, creating access to and influence with political channels, policy formation, public resources, and, ultimately, the ability to achieve the goal of reducing non-point source pollution. Civic capacity requires development of external relationships between communities and those organizations and institutions that exert power over public policies, resources,

Our social identity as a member of a community has given way to an individual identity as a homeowner with sovereignty over our property.

given way to an individual identity as a homeowner with sovereignty over our property. Viewed through this lens we can see non-point source pollution as a manifestation of our social fragmentation.

The good news is it doesn't have to be this way. If we believe the best way to help our waters is to help ourselves then we begin by building the "social" back into our communities with the ultimate goal of achieving community civic capacity. This begins with individual civic engagement, an effort often spearheaded by self-organized groups of neighbors or a local watershed organization or agency. Citizens in the neighborhood learn about the issue of non-point source pollution and receive information on how to get involved with other neighbors to address it (the familiar "education and awareness" campaigns). Next comes community building, where like-minded neighbors join together with organizations skilled in community organizing to cultivate social relationships and networks between neighbors, support leadership development, learn how to access public resources (financial, technical) and develop a common agenda and action plan. Community building is localized and focused on strengthening the "internal" relationships among neighbors, development of shared goals, community identity, and increased control over the community's own destiny.

and decision-making. A community has achieved civic capacity when it can act in solidarity on behalf of all neighbors and influence the decisions that impact non-point source pollution.

The challenges of non-point source pollution have shown us that we can't rely on the old model of government solving our water quality problems through science and technology alone. By reclaiming responsibility (and authority) collectively for the health of our waters, we are also helping ourselves as citizens to develop more effective relationships with our water management institutions and to regain control over our own water future. We have to bring citizens back into water management as full partners if we are to find effective solutions that will last. By creating empowered communities and giving them a lead role in tackling this perplexing problem of non-point source pollution, our state's waters—and its water policies—may become a model for water management in the nation, maybe even the world. In fact, this could prove to be our finest hour. A triumph of the water people. ●

Janna Caywood is a Citizens League member and serves on the Water Policy Study Committee leadership team. A student at the University of Minnesota, she lives in Saint Paul and is working with her neighbors to build a rain garden in her yard.

POLICY REDUX

Sometimes it seems as if policy recommendations are made in one year and gone the next, replaced by a new set of discussions and policy priorities. But many of the reports and recommendations by Citizens League study committees have built on the work of previous committees. In this month's Policy Redux, we plum the depths of our past work on water policy.

Better ways of making environmental choices

This report deals with the process of making environmental choices: How to balance environmental quality and economic growth? How to decide, relatively, between the residents whose homes would no longer be flooded if a dam were built and the residents whose land would become flooded because of the dam? Between jobs for steelworkers and cleaner air? Between the tendency for population to concentrate in large urban areas and the need to reduce congestion?

The report makes sweeping recommendations for ways to improve the process of making environmental choices in Minnesota. Recommendations included consolidating responsibility for environmental quality in the office of the governor,

A strategy for the waterbelt (1985)

The report found that to date, groundwater problems have been seen as separate crises of limited duration and extent, each stemming from a single cause, and each having a single solution. Over time a variety of agencies and programs had been built up to address these separate crises, each relating to a single piece of the problem with no one entity charged with the overall responsibility. With this fragmentation came some difficulty in clarifying responsibility and overall direction. The report recommends better coordination of groundwater-related activities at the state level. Effective coordination requires comprehensive policies and clear management.

Recommendations

Supply

1. Minnesota state government should take a leadership role in establishing state-to-state water transfer policy.
2. The Legislature should make sure a drought water allocation plan is developed and adopted into law.
3. The state's drought allocation priorities should be revised. Only household domestic and municipal use should be given top priority.

Losing lakes: enjoyment of a unique metropolitan area

Up to now, metropolitan residents have been able to take for granted their ability to find a lake to use and enjoy. About 100 large lakes, hundreds of smaller ones, and three rivers provide tremendous opportunities for water-based recreation in the Twin Cities area. But the situation on metropolitan lakes seems to be deteriorating in several important ways:

- Surface use of the lakes continues to increase and the conflicts that have resulted lead some people to feel the lakes are becoming overcrowded and unsafe.
- The water quality of many lakes has degraded and is threatened at other lakes.
- Continuing shoreland development and redevelopment has caused concern about limits on public access to the lakes and their shoreland.

Unfortunately, lake management has been fragmented and mainly oriented towards current issues and interests rather than long-term concerns. Metropolitan lakes are managed in varying degrees by three federal and four state agencies, seven counties, seven soil and water conservation districts, 46 watershed districts, two conservation districts, and 138 municipalities. These governmental bodies sometimes have conflicting goals and activities. Conflicts between their short-term and long-term goals are also common.

This report emphasizes the importance of comprehensive, long-range planning for the lakes and stresses recognition of metropolitan lakes as an interconnected,

hoices (1971)

improving information and citizen access to government agencies that work in the environmental arena, and permitting any citizen to sue to enforce pollution control regulations (regardless of whether his or her economic interest is affected or whether he or she suffers directly from the pollution).

In addition to these broad recommendations, the report made recommendations specifically on water policy:

- Abolish the Minnesota Water Resources Board and Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation Commission and delegate responsibility for supervising watershed districts to the Department of Natural Resources.

- Increase state funding for the Department of Natural Resources to improve the process of review and action on permit requests for appropriation of waters of the state.

- Direct the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to expand its pollution control activities to develop rules and regulations covering control of underground water pollution.

- Impose fees to cover the cost of monitoring and enforcement of discharge of wastes into the air, water, and land.

4. The state should increase fees charged by the Department of Natural Resources for groundwater and surface water withdrawals and use the money to finance any new initiatives aimed at protecting groundwater.

Pollution

5. The Legislature should charge the Environmental Quality Board, the Pollution Control Agency, the Department of Natural Resources, and the Department of Health with several new responsibilities:
 - the development of health risk standards
 - the development of a list of cleanup priorities
 - the development of cleanup standards
 - a "report card" on agency performance
6. The Legislature should remove the moratorium on siting a hazardous waste disposal facility and set up a new timetable for acquiring a site.
7. New efforts to allow for the successful collection of household hazardous wastes should be undertaken.

Structure

8. The Environmental Quality Board should be reconstituted with a majority of citizen members and with strengthened ability to carry out the coordinating function needed at the state level.
9. Responsibility for regulation of agricultural chemical use should be transferred to the Pollution Control Agency.
10. The Legislature should review groundwater statutes, the groundwater responsibilities of state agencies, and the executive branch rulemaking process for groundwater.
11. Adequate financing for the development of an appropriate data collection and dissemination process should be provided.
12. New incentives for the involvement of local units of government in ground water protection should be developed by the state. These efforts should be designed as incentives for local action, not mandates.
13. A matching grant program to allow other counties to take advantage of hydrogeologic studies such as those carried out in Scott and Winona counties should be set up.

metropolitan resources is threatened (1989)

regional system. Such an approach is needed to ensure that future generations can enjoy the lakes and other surface water.

We recommend:

- Lakes in the metropolitan area should be viewed as a regional system, with regional coordination of planning and management activities.
- Local governments should develop plans for surface waters before lakes deteriorate further.

Lakes in the metropolitan area are a unique regional resource, and improved regional governance and long-term planning are needed.

We recommend:

- The Legislature should charge the Metropolitan Council with the responsibility for planning and coordinating management of metropolitan surface waters.

In partnership with local governments, the Metropolitan Council should develop a comprehensive policy framework and metropolitan guidelines for shoreland and surface water management. Local governments should be required by a fixed date to develop local surface water plans subject to approval by the Metropolitan Council. The Council should provide grants to cover part of the cost

of developing local surface water plans. It should also coordinate the plans and activities of the various agencies involved in metropolitan lake management.

Good data are essential for good planning, but there is a frustrating lack of information on the use and quality of metropolitan lakes. For example, none of the agencies involved in lake management are collecting information on the extent of conflict between different types of surface uses and different groups of users. Furthermore, while several different agencies test certain measures of water quality in certain lakes, no one is monitoring regularly the presence of pesticides.

We recommend:

- The Metropolitan Council and Department of Natural Resources should conduct more complete studies of surface use on metropolitan lakes.
- Water quality monitoring of metropolitan lakes should be more extensive and better coordinated.

The report also makes recommendations specific to lake management issues, including user conflicts and safety problems, boating access, shoreland access and development and water quality.

Reflections

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Climate change will also magnify water quality concerns. In its March 2008 public review draft, “National Water Program Strategy: Response to Climate Change,” the Environmental Protection Agency sees five new national water quality goals:

- Mitigation of greenhouse gases: Use water programs to contribute to greenhouse gas mitigation.
- Adaptation to climate change: Adapt implementation of core water programs to maintain and improve program effectiveness in the context of a changing climate.
- Research related to water: Strengthen the link between EPA water programs and climate change research.
- Education on climate change: Educate water program professionals and stakeholders on climate change impacts on water resources and programs.
- Management of climate change: Establish the management capability within the National Water Program to engage climate change challenges on a sustained basis.

In one section, the EPA even calls for “promoting ‘green buildings’ and ‘smart growth’ to reduce energy and water needs.” If the nation had a parallel advocate for water quantity management, no doubt a similar set of policy choices would be on the table today. The voices for heralding the water and climate change connection at the state level are so far silent. But the connection is significant, whether you are a business dealing with impaired waters cleanup or pumping ground water, or a family of critters in for unpleasant surprises living in streams likely to become “Kansas” creeks.

A number of state agencies have been tasked with managing water quality, but the lead is, of course, the MPCA. The agency establishes the water quality standards that determine what Minnesotans collectively agree can be placed in our waters. It also oversees the monitoring, management, and regulation intended to ensure those standards are met.

Joining MPCA in this venture are several partners. The Department of Agriculture has responsibility for regulating pesticides and fertilizers, including monitoring their presence in surface and ground waters, collecting fees from manufacturers for registering their products, and establishing voluntary best management practices and

mandatory water resources protection requirements to keep them out of, or at least reduce, their effects on our waters. The Board of Water and Soil Resources administers state cost-share funds for protecting water quality, including a new program to encourage cellulosic bio-fuel crop development on vulnerable lands. That board also administers the state’s no-net-loss wetland protection and water planning programs in cooperation with local units of government. The DNR, through its divisions of Ecological Services and Waters, also plays a significant role in state efforts to secure quality of our water resources. Their focus is twofold: to ensure that water quality meets the needs of aquatic ecosystems and that land use in shorelands protects water quality and aesthetics as it reduces the vulnerability of people to floods. These four agencies serve on the Clean Water Legacy Council, an advisory forum that makes recommendations to the governor for spending Clean Water Legacy funds.

The Minnesota Department of Health also has a profound role to play when it comes to human health issues. It watches over the state’s drinking water protection programs, which involve monitoring the

quality of Minnesota’s public water supplies and working with utilities to protect their water sources, both surface and ground, from land uses that pose contamination risks. And it is responsible for developing the health risk assessments, which form the basis of water quality regulations to protect human health. Importantly, the 2007 Legislature also charged the Department of Health with characterizing statewide and localized trends and geographic patterns of population-based measures of chronic diseases, and the occurrence of environmental hazards and exposures in communities. In other words, while the federal government must take the lead in formulating the nation’s approach to managing exotic chemicals, the state, too, has much to do when it comes to matters of public health.

Finally, there’s the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, the home of my “day” job and one of the state’s best kept secrets when it comes to water policy and coordination. Many people know of EQB for its role in overseeing the state’s environmental review program, but few know it for its strategic water planning duties. Yet it is the forum that, with a little help from the Minnesota Legislature, gave



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us the state's county comprehensive water planning law, its Ground Water Protection Act, and even its Board of Water and Soil Resources. For the last several years, it has been calling for a rethinking of the state's water and environmental priorities. And, for the next two—take note Citizens League

the Citizens League's coming water discussions. Put simply, sustainable development means:

- Thinking and acting as if the long term future mattered. How long can we keep deferring key decisions to our children and their children?

What more important job could we have than to secure a future where our kids might experience all the beauty and benefit that we have enjoyed from the environment?

water committee members—the board will be developing the next state water plan, a once-a-decade event.

In the 1990s, the EQB led the Minnesota Sustainable Development Initiative and Governor's Round Table on Sustainable Development, which helped initiate such efforts as the Sustainable Forest Resources Act, the Environmental Regulatory Innovations Act, and the Community-Based Planning Act. Still today their efforts provide a framework for thinking about the future, which might help frame

- Understanding social, economic, and environmental connections. Whether we are talking about the economy and the environment, land use and water, surface water and ground water, water quality and water quantity, or broadly, people and the earth (Thank you Gaylord Nelson for Earth Day!), our institutions must be equipped to address such key connections.
- Living within our means. This brings us back to the first item. If we take (or degrade) more than our share, what do we leave for our children?

Minnesota once led the states in thinking about the implications of sustainable development for business, communities, and the environment. Now, as in many other areas, we have lapsed into reactive management, putting aside the bigger, more troublesome questions of where we are actually heading and what we need to do to make sure the Minnesota of the future is the place we want it to be for our children and grandchildren. And, after all, what more important job could we have than to secure a future where our kids might experience all the beauty and benefit that we have enjoyed from the environment?

Citizens League members, and most particularly those of you volunteering for the water committee, suggesting how Minnesota government must adapt to do its part in all this is, I think, your greatest challenge! ●

John Wells leads the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board's strategic environmental planning program and serves as director of water planning and sustainable development. He is a member of the Citizens League.

Water

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The preliminary change to the water policy study committee raises the following questions:

- What are the demands for water in Minnesota and how are they changing?
- How does the water supply match those demands? (Do we really have surplus water?)
- What major principles should apply to all water policies?
- What is the current structure for addressing water policy in Minnesota
- To what degree is it implemented?
- What major areas are not addressed by current water policies?
- Where are there conflicting policies, and how might these be resolved?
- Where are there policies that complement one another?
- What are the appropriate responsibilities of state, county, and local units of

government and how do they support one another?

- What types of institutions can best address emerging water issues?
- How can citizens be more meaningfully involved in water policy development and implementation?
- How should implementation of solutions to water problems be funded?

The water policy study committee will convene in May. The leadership team includes co-chairs Dianne Krizan and Gene Merriam, Citizens League board members Nena Street and Tom Teigen, Janna Caywood and myself from the Policy Advisory Committee, and staff members Annie Levenson-Falk and Bob DeBoer.

The Water Policy Study Committee will not work in isolation. We have already held one water policy workshop, at

February's Policy Open House. The leadership team is currently working to focus the charge and to map out the work of the upcoming study committee.

The strength of the Citizens League is its ability to see the big picture, to develop bold new policy directions, and to strengthen the role of citizens. This year, hopefully, we can use that strength to develop ideas for a sustainable water future.

For more information on the Water Policy Study Committee, go to www.citizensleague.org. ●

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