

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IT'S IN OUR NATURE

At the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, we are in uncharted waters as we face a historic pandemic together. We are all witnessing first-hand the importance of finding common ground and the impact of being in solidarity with our neighbors.

During this time of social distancing, I have had lots of phone and video conversations with Minnesotans. Despite different personal experiences, there is one theme that shows up in almost every conversation: **how important nature and the outdoors are to staying healthy and coping with stress.** Everyone is finding something important in the outdoors—a daily walk, a visit to a park, watching spring flowers begin to bud.



Paul Austin
Executive Director

I was so struck by this shared experience, reinforcing how important the Great Outdoors is to all of us, that we started asking our members for their stories. We have been featuring what we hear on social media.

Joe from Mankato told us being stuck in the house made him notice more of what is happening outside. He spotted a large owl in a back-yard tree. Maggie from Minnetonka is enjoying walks around the lake. And Mark from Cass County has been snowshoeing through the woods with his son to collect sap for maple syrup.

I would love to hear from you! How is nature helping you get through these difficult times? Visit [ConservationMinnesota.org/how-is-nature-helping-you](https://www.conservationsminnesota.org/how-is-nature-helping-you) to send us a note. Or to post your experience directly to social media, use the hashtag **#inmynature** and tag us **@conservationmn**. Wishing you health and wellness!

The work of Conservation Minnesota is guided by your values and priorities. We listen to Minnesotans and focus on solving the conservation problems that matter most to you.

[conservationsminnesota.org](https://www.conservationsminnesota.org) | 612.767.2444



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CONSERVATION
MINNESOTA

SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

ROSEMOUNT LEADS BY EXAMPLE

A city making conservation a priority

On December 17th, 2019 Rosemount Mayor Bill Droste and city council members voted enthusiastically to **turn their Environment & Sustainability Task Force into an official city commission.** This formalizes their role and makes it permanent.



The commission and Conservation Minnesota's Avery Hildebrand

The group, led by former Rosemount City Council Member Vanessa Demuth, initially created a task force to harness the passion of the community and tackle important conservation issues at the local level. Most notably, the task force worked diligently on **creating a community wide Energy Action Plan and organizing recycling and waste management at big community events.** Conservation Minnesota's southeast regional manager, **Avery Hildebrand**, had the privilege of working with the group during this time.

Rosemount is an inspiring example of what other cities can do to promote conservation and environmental issues. And Conservation Minnesota's team of regional managers will continue to work alongside cities looking to create their own sustainability commissions.



CARBON-FREE COMMITMENTS

18 municipal utilities across southern Minnesota will be 80% carbon-free by 2050

One of Conservation Minnesota's local strategies has been to gather community support for clean energy in areas served by municipal utilities. We then harness this support to foster strong working relationships with these local utilities.

In Greater Minnesota, **an opportunity lay with the 18 municipal communities served by Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA).** Five years ago, SMMPA was getting almost all of its power from burning coal. We used an energy survey to gain feedback from community members in Rochester, Austin, Owatonna, St. Peter, and even Grand Marais—all communities that buy power from SMMPA.

Our Southeast Regional Manager, **Anna Richey**, then began engaging with residents in SMMPA communities. Over time, she built strong relationships with Rochester Public Utilities and engaged in their plans for 100% renewable energy. In other communities she worked with residents and local utilities in support of community solar options. Anna and community leaders **encouraged the work of SMMPA's Renewable Energy task force** and publicly supported their renewable development projects.



On February 5th, **SMMPA announced a goal to be 80% carbon-free by 2030.** Joe Hoffman, SMMPA Board President, said, **"SMMPA's member communities support this strategic initiative to reduce carbon emissions."**

Thank you and congratulations to SMMPA, the local utilities it serves, the community residents, and Conservation Minnesota members who all worked together to make this bold step forward possible.



CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF CONSERVATION FUNDING

2020 is the 30th anniversary of conservation funding from the Minnesota State Lottery. This **funding has made hundreds of clean water, parks, and conservation projects possible across Minnesota.** Today, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, created by voters and built with proceeds from the lottery, provides over \$60 million each year.

There is strong support for using lottery funds for a healthy environment. In a recent poll, **75% of Minnesotans said they would vote to use lottery funds for conservation and environmental protection** for the next 30 years. We're ready to work on making this a reality!

SPRING MEMBER DRIVE

At Conservation Minnesota, we remain committed to bringing Minnesotans together to solve our most important conservation challenges. Don't miss this special opportunity to join thousands of other Minnesotans who have already committed to making this work possible.

Memberships start at just \$25. We have extended the **triple match** through the end of April. We know our members are generous and also giving what they can to groups on the front lines of COVID-19. Thank you for doing what you can during this time of uncertainty. Donate online at: **ConservationMinnesota.org/member**