

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MINNESOTA JUST GOT BETTER

We just wrapped up a historic legislative session working with the most diverse legislature to ever represent Minnesota. **Legislators passed landmark policies to address our state's most important conservation issues** and provide lasting benefits to every community.



Paul Austin
Executive Director

You and I know that success like this doesn't happen overnight. It takes the work we've been doing together for nearly two decades: building trust and relationships in every part of the state, turning adversaries into unlikely partners, connecting tens of thousands of Minnesotans to their legislators, and giving everyone easy access to their legislators' voting records. This is what common ground and conservation victories are built on.

These victories are only possible thanks to members like you. Every petition signed, every postcard mailed, and every donation given has led us to this moment of incredible progress.

This year alone, **our members sent nearly 17,000 messages to their legislators.** And during a critical moment leading up to the passage of the 100% Clean Energy bill, our partner organization, **CM Voter Center, reached over 1.2 million Minnesotans,** generating over 3,000 calls and emails to legislators in support of this Midwest-leading policy. That's the strength of the Conservation Minnesota network—and we're just getting started!

Let's continue this crucial work together and create a future that protects all the people and places that make Minnesota so special.

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.

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SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER

YOUR PRIORITIES BECOME LAW

Legislators got right to work this session, quickly passing key impactful policies and introducing a record number of bills. The historic state surplus allowed for the largest-ever environment budgeting bill. In addition to this one-time influx of conservation funds, we helped pass several stand-alone bills designed to protect the health of all people living in Minnesota.

Almost all of the policies Conservation Minnesota worked on during this session became law!

Here are a few highlights.

Protecting Our Air & Our Climate

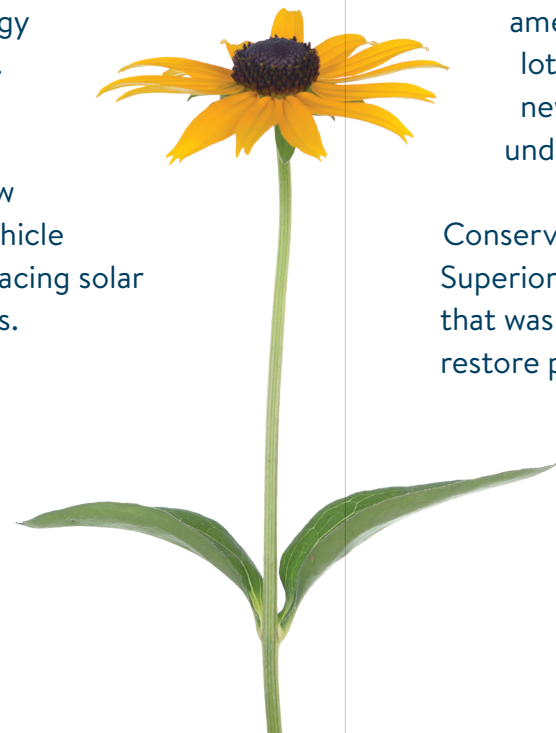


On the heels of the federal government's historic action to address climate change, the state Legislature took responsibility for our climate future. It invested in policies needed to improve the quality of the air we breathe and curb the worst impacts of climate change.

Passed early in session, the landmark **100% Clean Energy Bill** requires Minnesota electric utilities to use only carbon-free energy by 2040. And legislators ensured Minnesota receives its fair share of federal dollars available for local energy projects through the **State Competitiveness Fund**.

Legislators also passed a long, exciting list of provisions to reach meaningful climate goals—a few highlights include providing rebates for electric vehicle purchases, weatherizing low-income properties, placing solar panels on schools, and buying electric school buses.

cover: Speaking of high points in Minnesota, here's a view of Eagle Mountain, our state's loftiest elevation. From this vantage point across Whale Lake, the 2301-foot peak may look modest, but it becomes more impressive the closer you get!



Eliminating Toxic Chemicals & Waste



Keeping our communities healthy requires removing toxic chemicals from consumer products, reducing waste, and reusing resources. Too often, we don't realize the chemicals we're exposed to.

PFAS, or "forever chemicals," are found in everyday consumer products and are linked to dangerous health impacts, including increased cancer risk. The Legislature passed a suite of bills to ban non-essential uses and require reporting of PFAS in products—even in agricultural fertilizers. Collectively the **PFAS Bills** mean Minnesota now has the strongest PFAS restrictions in the country. We hope our state victory will pave the way for the nationwide elimination of these chemicals.

For many years, Conservation Minnesota has advocated for returning recycling and waste prevention funds to county programs. This session, we succeeded with the passage of additional **SCORE Funds**. Now counties can do more to reduce landfills and properly dispose of toxic waste.

Protecting Land, Wildlife, & Expanding Access to Nature



With bipartisan support and with significant stakeholder involvement, the Legislature passed the **Lottery Renewal Bill**, which places an amendment on the ballot in 2024 to renew the dedication of lottery proceeds to the environment. The renewal includes a new community grants program to expand access to smaller and underserved groups.

Conservation Minnesota worked with the Fond Du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa to develop an **appropriation to reintroduce elk** that was approved this year. Soon, this majestic species will help restore part of a Native community's cultural heritage.

We also helped pass **responsible fee increases** so that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) can continue to maintain our natural resources.

Improving Water Quality



We Minnesotans pride ourselves on our lakes and water quality, but for too long, lead water pipes have caused dangerous lead exposure. The passage of the new **Lead Service Line Replacement Bill** promises to change that by ensuring safe drinking water in all Minnesota homes. Receiving nearly unanimous, bipartisan support, the bill sets a goal to replace all lead water lines in the next 10 years and dedicates \$240 million to begin the work.

The **Clean Water by 2050 Goal** will prioritize swimmable, fishable, and drinkable standards for all water bodies. And the **Duty to Notify** provision requires wastewater treatment facilities to adequately report pollution discharges and publicly notify residents and downstream drinking water facilities.



left: Governor Walz signed the **Lead Pipe Bill** on May 16, 2023.

right: Paul Austin, Executive Director, presented the governor with a Conservation Minnesota lead pipe award.

By addressing climate change, water quality, inequity, and many other key issues, together we took important steps toward making Minnesota the best place to live. **This session has shown what we can accomplish when we bring people together to find solutions.** 