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1101 West River Parkway, Suite 250
Minneapolis, MN 55415

CONSERVATION
MINNESOTA



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VOTERS' GUIDE

CONSERVATION QUESTIONS TO ASK CANDIDATES

FALL 2020

Building Resilient Communities

Minnesota is at a moment that requires us to come together to address important challenges. We must protect and improve health and make investments to rebuild our economy. And we must create an equitable future, where each person's health, potential, and opportunity is not determined by their zip code or skin color.

The good news is that conservation and protecting our environment are effective strategies for achieving these interconnected goals while building stronger and more resilient communities. Investing in natural resources will make our communities and economy stronger. Transitioning to clean energy solutions, addressing inequitable access to natural resources, and protecting people from the negative impacts of pollution will make our communities healthier.

This fall, we will vote for a slate of state senators, state representatives, and municipal leaders. We hope voters will take the time to learn where their candidates stand on conservation issues before casting their vote. This guide provides questions to help you better understand your candidates' views on building resilient communities.

Together, we can protect the places and people that make Minnesota special.

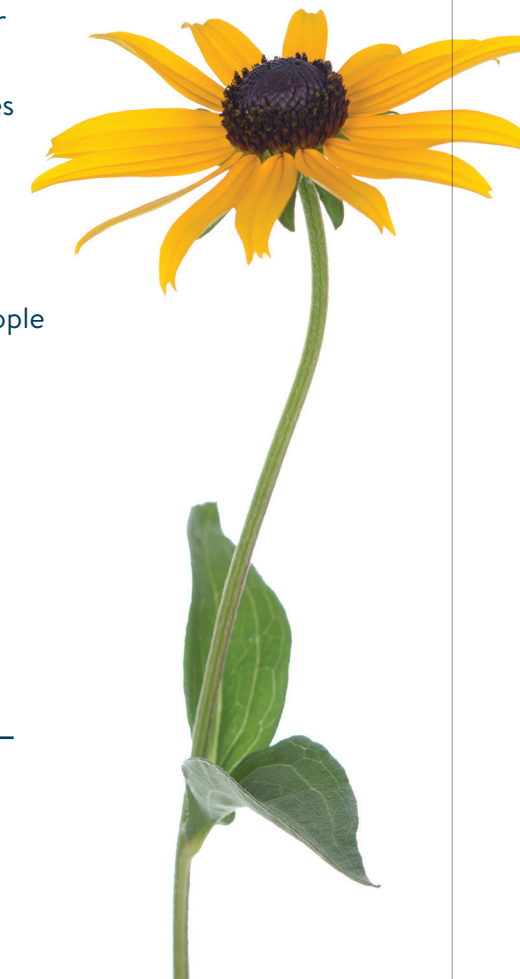
Sincerely,

Paul Austin
Executive Director

cover image: Oberg Mountain Trail,
Superior National Forest, Minnesota



Paul Austin
Executive Director



How You Can Use This Guide

We created this document to provide background information and questions you can ask candidates running for local offices in your communities. Occasions to connect with your local candidates will look different this year, but we encourage you to seek opportunities to determine if your candidates share your conservation values.

To find out who's running for local offices in your community, enter your voting address at the secretary of state's website: myballotmn.sos.state.mn.us

How We Work With Candidates

Our team is working with local candidates to make sure they understand the conservation values that matter to Minnesotans. Candidates running for city, county, and state offices received a similar guide, and we've extended an open invitation to work with each of them.

Our team of regional managers will help host candidate forums in communities across Minnesota. And our policy team is meeting individually with candidates to discuss conservation issues.

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.

conservationminnesota.org | 612.767.2444

Clean Energy—Jobs & Cleaner Air

While Minnesota’s clean energy revolution is already underway, we need to improve policies to capture all the benefits the transition to 100% clean energy will bring. Minnesota’s economy currently supports over 61,000 clean energy jobs, and the sector has huge growth potential. Yet more needs to be done to protect air quality for all, including addressing those disproportionately affected by unclean air. **Ask candidates where they stand on clean energy:**

- Will you support policies and investments that keep Minnesota on track to achieve 100% clean, reliable, and affordable energy?
- Do you support improving energy conservation and efficiency policies?
- Do you approve of Xcel Energy and other utilities’ economic stimulus plans to frontload clean energy and infrastructure investments?
- Do you support implementing Clean Cars MN and a Clean Fuels Standard?



Clean Water 2050

Today, 56% of Minnesota’s lakes and streams don’t meet water quality standards. Drinking water polluted with nitrogen and other contaminants impacts a growing number of communities. Minnesota should set a clear goal to have all of our waters meet quality standards by the year 2050. **To learn more about candidates’ views on water, you might ask:**

- Will you fully implement plans to protect drinking water sources?
- Will you fund water infrastructure improvement projects?
- Do you support expanding participation in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program?
- Do you support the innovation of new water treatment technologies and cropping systems that prevent pollution?



Protect & Expand Natural Resources

The Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) and the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Amendment are constitutionally dedicated funding sources that should be used, in addition to traditional funding sources, to support natural resources. Unfortunately, the legislature has attempted to raid these funds. **Ask candidates about funding natural resources:**

- Will you permanently protect ENRTF proceeds from future raids?
- Do you support restructuring lottery funding to provide additional resources that address historic inequities in access to safe drinking water, pollution prevention, and parks and natural areas?
- How will you broaden the stakeholders who benefit from and care about constitutionally dedicated funding?

Equitable Communities & Healthy Families

In a state with some of the worst racial disparities in the country, some residents are disparately impacted by pollution and do not have the same opportunities to benefit from time in nature. Communities of color, indigenous communities, and under-resourced communities often bear the most impacts from air and water pollution. **Ask candidates about their commitment to equity and health, such as:**

- Will you work to remove remaining lead drinking water pipes? No level of lead exposure is safe.
- How will you protect lower income communities from paying higher prices for safe drinking water and wastewater treatment?
- Do you support preventing pollution from mining and agriculture operations that make local sources of drinking water unsafe?
- Will you work to ensure equal, safe access to enjoy open spaces and nature in all communities and throughout our park systems?



Less Waste, More Jobs

Recycling and waste reduction conserve energy, save money, prevent pollution, and support over 37,000 Minnesota jobs. Innovative businesses in Minnesota are doing more to create a circular economy—reusing existing products for new purposes to keep them out of our waste stream. **Ask candidates about waste policies:**

- Do you support creating recyclable and compostable packaging from agriculture and forest products?
- Will you work to incentivize compostable packaging and the collection of on-the-go containers?
- Do you support turning remaining waste into energy with a goal of phasing out costly and polluting landfills?
- Will you vote to direct all proceeds of our solid waste tax to support local waste reduction and recycling programs?

Learn More About the Is:

For more on these conservation issues, visit our website at [conservationminnesota.org](https://www.conservationminnesota.org)

