



Title: MN Watersheds 2026 Submitted Resolutions

Prepared by: Name: Becky Christopher, Policy Director
Phone: 952-641-4512
bchristopher@minnehahacreek.org

Purpose:

To provide the Board of Managers with the resolutions that were submitted for consideration by the members of Minnesota (MN) Watersheds and staff's process for review.

Background:

In 2025, MN Watersheds adopted a new process for developing resolutions and legislative priorities. This new process allows for resolutions to be developed earlier in the year and for the membership to vote on the legislative priorities at the annual meeting.

Under this new process, there is a brief 10-day comment period for members to provide input on the proposed resolutions before they are reviewed by the MN Watersheds Resolutions and Legislative Committee (Committee). The Committee will meet by July 1 to review the resolutions and provide their recommendations, which will then be distributed to the members. Watershed delegates will meet in August to deliberate and act on the proposed resolutions. At the December annual meeting, the members will review and approve legislative priorities.

Staff's process for review and communication to the Board is as follows:

1. During the initial 10-day comment period in June:
 - a. Resolutions will be assessed by the Policy Director, who will determine if legal review is warranted or if any written analysis is needed for the Board
 - b. Resolutions will be included as an information item, as the Board Meeting schedule allows, unless the Policy Director, Administrator, or Board President guide for deeper Board analysis and discussion
 - c. If Managers have any comments they would like conveyed to the Committee, they can be sent to the Administrator and Policy Director
2. In July:
 - a. Staff will review the resolutions that were advanced by the Committee and provide written analysis for the Board, with input from legal counsel
 - b. The Board will appoint delegates to vote on MCWD's behalf at the August MN Watershed Meeting on Resolutions

Summary:

Nine resolutions were submitted for consideration and are attached for the Board's information (these were also sent to all managers via email from MN Watersheds on June 2). If the Managers have any comments they would like conveyed to the Committee, please provide them to the Administrator and Policy Director by June 11.

Supporting documents:

2026 MN Watersheds Submitted Resolutions

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution #1

Proposing Watershed: Wild Rice Watershed District

Name: Tara Jensen, Administrator

Phone Number: 218-784-5501

Email Address: tara@wildricewatershed.org

Resolution Title: Encouraging DNR and USFWS to Construct Retention Sites on DNR and USFWS Lands for Storing Water

Background that led to the submission of this resolution

Our Board of Managers feels that land owned by DNR and USFWS would provide opportunities for retention sites to store excess waters on wetlands owned and controlled by DNR and USFWS.

Efforts to solve the problem

Our staff has worked with DNR to construct a control structure on the Goose Prairie WMA to allow excessive flood waters to be held during an identified date range in the spring. We would like there to be more effort and communication to encourage DNR and USFWS to review other parcels in which water could be stored to alleviate downstream flooding impacts.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

Communicate the possibility to utilize public lands to store water with legislators in an effort to have them support the resolution and develop a committee to review public lands and potential storage opportunities which can occur on them.

Anticipated support or opposition:

This resolution would be of interest to other watershed districts, counties, cities and wildlife organizations.

This issue (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	x
Applies to the entire state	x	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION #1: ENCOURAGING DNR AND USFWS TO CONSTRUCT RETENTION SITES ON DNR AND USFWS LANDS FOR STORING WATER

WHEREAS, the WRWD discussed the frequent, severe floods within the State of Minnesota and further discussed ways to reduce flood impacts; and

WHEREAS, it is the WRWD's desire for watershed districts and other drainage authorities within the State of Minnesota to discuss with the DNR and the USFWS about the construction of retention sites on certain existing wetlands owned by the Minnesota DNR and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the temporary diversion and storage of excess water in times of major flood events within said retention sites as doing so would reduce flood impacts to both private and public property.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds appoint a committee to meet with the DNR and USFWS, identify existing wetlands owned by DNR and USFWS that could serve as retention sites, and discuss the potential for construction of retention sites and storage of excess waters on said existing wetlands owned and controlled by DNR and USFWS in times of major flood events.

Summary Background and Rationale for Shoreline Management Resolutions

Background that led to the submission of these resolutions

Minnesota's natural shorelines are continuing to disappear, contributing to degraded lake water quality, reduced habitat, and declining aquatic biological health. The 2023 Natural Shoreline Partnership report, *Minnesota's Vanishing Natural Shorelines: A Loss that Contributes to Degraded Lake Quality*, found that approximately 40 to 50 percent of Minnesota's natural shorelines have already been lost, and that natural shoreline loss is continuing at an estimated rate of 1 to 2 percent per decade. The report also found that mowed "lawn down to lake" shorelines allow 7 to 9 times more phosphorus to enter lakes than naturally vegetated shorelines and recommends a reasonable protection and restoration goal that 75 percent of a shoreline exist in natural vegetation at least 25 feet landward from the lake.

To explore this issue in greater depth, the statewide Natural Shoreline Partnership formed a Shoreline Protection Subcommittee to identify ways to improve how state agencies, local governments, SWCDs, watershed districts, and other partners regulate and provide technical services for shoreline property owners. The Subcommittee met several times between September 2024 and April 2025 to review challenges with existing state and local rules, DNR Public Water Restoration Rules, shoreline assessments, sand blankets, ice heaves, general permits, and DNR enforcement procedures.

A central conclusion of the Subcommittee was that Minnesota's public waters rules are not necessarily the primary barrier to natural shoreline protection. Rather, many of the most significant challenges arise from how shoreline alteration rules are explained to the public, how those rules are administered, how consistently they are applied, and how state and local governments coordinate on projects that often affect areas both above and below the ordinary high water level.

Several recurring issues were identified. Public-facing DNR guidance for riprap, sand blankets, and ice-heave repair may be outdated, misunderstood, or applied inconsistently. "No permit required" shoreline activities can be difficult to track and verify. Criteria for determining demonstrated erosion need are not always clear. Coordination among DNR, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, and townships varies across the state. Public agencies have also lost technical capacity for natural shoreline restoration, bioengineered stabilization, and field-based landowner assistance.

These issues create practical problems for landowners, contractors, local governments, and state agencies. Landowners may receive inconsistent information. Contractors may rely on long-standing practices that do not fully protect natural shoreline functions. Local governments may be asked to respond to shoreline impacts without adequate funding, training, or technical support. DNR staff may face increasing expectations without updated guidance, consistent procedures, or sufficient interagency coordination.

The following four resolutions are intended to address these related but distinct needs:

1. **Dedicated State Funding for Local Shoreline Management Assistance** — to build local capacity for landowner assistance, site evaluations, project review, restoration support, and permit coordination.
2. **Statewide Shoreline Management Training and Certification Program** — to improve consistency and technical understanding among state and local staff involved in shoreline evaluation, restoration, permitting, compliance, and landowner assistance.
3. **Updated Public Shoreline Guidance and Education** — to replace outdated public-facing shoreline alteration guidance and improve statewide communication about natural shoreline protection, bioengineering, riprap, sand blankets, ice-heave repair, permits, and alternatives to hard armoring.
4. **Public Waters Rule and Process Improvements for Shoreline Alterations** — to improve consistency in DNR implementation, develop clearer shoreline evaluation procedures, strengthen coordination among agencies and local governments, address recurring contractor violations, and improve rule and process clarity.

Together, these resolutions request that Minnesota Watersheds support state agency advocacy and, where necessary, legislative action to improve natural shoreline protection and restoration. The intent is not to create unnecessary regulation, but to make shoreline management more consistent, practical, understandable, and effective for landowners, contractors, local governments, and state agencies while better protecting Minnesota's public waters and natural shoreline functions.

This issue applies statewide and affects watershed districts, watershed management organizations, SWCDs, counties, cities, townships, lake associations, landowners, contractors, DNR, BWSR, MPCA, and other partners involved in shoreline management and public waters protection.

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution #2

Proposing Watershed: Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District

Contact Name: Mike Isensee

Phone Number: 612-839-6492

Email Address: mike.isensee@cmsc wd.org

Resolution Title: Supporting Dedicated State Funding for SWCD and Watershed District Shoreline Management Assistance

Background that led to the submission of this resolution

Minnesota's natural shorelines continue to be lost or degraded through cumulative shoreline alterations, vegetation removal, hard armoring, grading, sand blankets, and other activities that reduce water quality, habitat, and lake resilience. Local governments, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, counties, cities, and townships, are often the first point of contact for landowners seeking help with shoreline stabilization, restoration, permitting, and natural shoreline alternatives.

As the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and other partners improve shoreline evaluation, guidance, and implementation of public waters restoration and shoreline management requirements, additional workload will likely fall on local partners. Many SWCDs and watershed districts do not currently have dedicated funding or staff capacity to provide consistent technical assistance, site visits, project review, landowner support, monitoring, and follow-through for shoreline management.

Successful shoreline protection depends on timely, locally available assistance that helps landowners understand and implement natural shoreline practices before hard armoring or other damaging alterations occur.

Efforts to solve the problem

The statewide Natural Shoreline Partnership has documented the continuing loss of natural shoreline and the need for stronger coordination, education, technical assistance, incentives, and restoration support. A Shoreline Protection Subcommittee later examined shoreline alteration management in more detail and identified a need to rebuild local and state technical capacity for natural shoreline restoration, bioengineering, landowner assistance, and coordinated review.

Local governments, SWCDs, watershed districts, and lake associations already provide outreach and technical support where capacity exists. However, this assistance is inconsistent statewide because it often depends on local funding, grants, or limited staff availability.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

Yes. Legislative action is likely needed to establish dedicated and ongoing state funding for local shoreline management assistance.

The purpose of legislative action would be to create a stable state funding source that supports SWCDs, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, and other local partners in providing shoreline technical assistance, landowner site visits, project design support, permit coordination, monitoring, and implementation assistance.

If legislative action is not immediately pursued, Minnesota Watersheds should advocate with DNR, BWSR, MPCA, and legislative committees to recognize shoreline management as a shared state-local responsibility and to include shoreline technical assistance in future state funding programs.

Anticipated support or opposition

Support is anticipated from watershed districts, watershed management organizations, SWCDs, lake associations, local governments, fisheries and habitat advocates, and organizations working to protect water quality and aquatic life.

Opposition or concern may come from parties concerned about new state spending or increased local government involvement in shoreline projects. These concerns can be addressed by emphasizing that the funding is intended to provide practical landowner assistance, improve consistency, reduce confusion, and support voluntary natural shoreline restoration before enforcement or regulatory conflicts occur.

This issue: (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	x
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	x
Applies to the entire state	x	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION #2: SUPPORTING STATE FUNDING FOR SWCD AND WATERSHED DISTRICT SHORELINE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE

WHEREAS, Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and public waters provide substantial public benefits, including water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, flood resilience, recreation, and property value protection; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota's natural shorelines continue to be lost or degraded through cumulative shoreline alterations, vegetation removal, hard armoring, grading, and other activities that reduce habitat and water quality benefits; and

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is working to improve shoreline evaluation, guidance, and implementation of public waters restoration and shoreline management requirements; and

WHEREAS, improved shoreline evaluation and implementation will likely create additional workload for local governments, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, counties, and other local partners; and

WHEREAS, local governments are often the first point of contact for landowners seeking assistance with shoreline stabilization, restoration, permitting, and natural shoreline alternatives; and

WHEREAS, many SWCDs and watershed districts do not currently have adequate dedicated funding or staff capacity to provide consistent technical assistance, site evaluations, landowner support, and project follow-through for shoreline management; and

WHEREAS, successful shoreline protection and restoration depends on timely, practical, and locally available technical assistance that helps landowners understand and implement natural shoreline practices before hard-armoring or other damaging alterations occur;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports the creation of dedicated state funding to assist Soil and Water Conservation Districts, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, and other local government partners with shoreline management technical assistance, project review, landowner support, and implementation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this funding should support local staff time, technical evaluations, landowner site visits, project design assistance, permit coordination, monitoring, and follow-up needed to advance natural shoreline protection and restoration.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports state funding that recognizes shoreline management as a shared state-local responsibility requiring adequate and ongoing local capacity.

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution #3

Proposing Watershed: Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District

Contact Name: Mike Isensee

Phone Number: 612-839-6492

Email Address: mike.isensee@cmsc wd.org

Resolution Title: Supporting Statewide Training and Certification for Shoreline Management Staff

Background that led to the submission of this resolution

Shoreline management decisions often require technical evaluation of erosion causes, shoreline condition, vegetation, soils, slopes, wave energy, ice action, habitat impacts, water quality impacts, and the suitability of proposed stabilization or restoration methods. Inconsistent understanding and application of shoreline standards can result in inconsistent permitting decisions, landowner confusion, unnecessary hard armoring, and continued loss of natural shoreline functions.

The Wetland Conservation Act provides a useful model for structured training, certification, and interagency review that helps support consistent implementation across jurisdictions. Shoreline management would benefit from a similar statewide training and certification program for state and local staff involved in shoreline evaluation, permitting, restoration, compliance, and technical assistance.

Efforts to solve the problem

The Natural Shoreline Partnership's Shoreline Protection Subcommittee reviewed DNR Public Waters Rules, riprap, sand blankets, ice heaves, general permits, enforcement procedures, and local shoreline assessment work. The Subcommittee identified the need for shared training standards, consistent terminology, common evaluation methods, and improved understanding of natural shoreline restoration and bioengineering alternatives.

Local staff, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, townships, and DNR staff currently work on shoreline issues, but training and technical capacity vary significantly across the state. This creates inconsistent outcomes for landowners and natural resource protection.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

Legislative action may be needed if a formal statewide certification program requires statutory authority, dedicated funding, or direction to state agencies.

The purpose of legislative action would be to direct or fund the development of a statewide shoreline management training and certification program, modeled in part on the structured training and certification approach used for Wetland Conservation Act implementation. The program should include shoreline condition evaluation, erosion drivers, natural shoreline design, bioengineering methods, public waters permitting requirements, restoration standards, vegetation protection, habitat impacts, enforcement considerations, and long-term maintenance.

If legislation is not required, Minnesota Watersheds should advocate for DNR, BWSR, MPCA, SWCDs, watershed districts, and other partners to develop and implement the training program administratively.

Anticipated support or opposition

Support is anticipated from watershed districts, SWCDs, local governments, state agency staff, lake

associations, and professional organizations seeking more consistent shoreline evaluation and permitting.

Opposition or concern may come from those concerned about additional certification requirements, cost, or administrative burden. These concerns can be addressed by designing the program to improve consistency, provide practical field-based training, and support better landowner service rather than simply adding new requirements.

This issue: (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	x
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	x
Applies to the entire state	x	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION #3: SUPPORTING STATEWIDE TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION FOR SHORELINE MANAGEMENT STAFF

WHEREAS, shoreline management decisions often require technical evaluation of erosion causes, shoreline condition, vegetation, soils, slopes, wave energy, ice action, habitat impacts, water quality impacts, and the suitability of proposed stabilization or restoration methods; and

WHEREAS, inconsistent understanding and application of shoreline standards can result in inconsistent permitting decisions, landowner confusion, unnecessary hard armoring, and continued loss of natural shoreline functions; and

WHEREAS, the Wetland Conservation Act provides a useful model for technical training, certification, and interagency review that helps support more consistent implementation across jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, shoreline management would benefit from a similar structured training and certification program for state and local staff involved in shoreline evaluation, permitting, restoration, compliance, and technical assistance; and

WHEREAS, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, SWCDs, counties, cities, townships, and DNR staff would benefit from shared training standards, consistent terminology, and common evaluation methods; and

WHEREAS, certification-based training would help ensure that shoreline evaluations consider the cause and degree of shoreline change, the impacts of proposed alterations, and the availability of natural or bioengineering alternatives before structural hard armoring is authorized;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports development of a statewide shoreline management training and certification program for state and local staff, modeled in part on the structured training and certification approach used for Wetland Conservation Act implementation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the training program should include evaluation of shoreline condition, erosion drivers, natural shoreline design, bioengineering methods, public waters permitting requirements, restoration standards, vegetation protection, habitat impacts, enforcement considerations, and long-term maintenance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports development of a consistent shoreline evaluation framework that can be used by DNR staff, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, townships, and other local partners.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports the use of technical evaluation panels or similar interagency review processes for complex shoreline alteration proposals, similar in concept to technical review processes used under the Wetland Conservation Act.

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution #4

Proposing Watershed: Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District

Contact Name: Mike Isensee

Phone Number: 612-839-6492

Email Address: mike.isensee@cmsc wd.org

Resolution Title: Supporting Improved Public Education and Updated Shoreline Management Guidance

Background that led to the submission of this resolution

Landowners, contractors, consultants, local officials, and local government staff rely on public-facing information from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources when evaluating shoreline stabilization, restoration, and alteration options.

The Natural Shoreline Subcommittee identified several recurring issues with DNR guidance for riprap, sand blanket, and ice-heave “no permit required” documents. Requirements are often unmet, misunderstood or ignored; “no permit required” shoreline alterations are difficult to track and verify; criteria for determining a demonstrated need for riprap are ambiguous or inconsistently applied;

The outdated or incomplete shoreline alteration guidance documents can create confusion and may encourage practices that are not aligned with current natural shoreline science, restoration standards, state statute, or the protection of public waters.

Older riprap guidance and similar materials contribute to misunderstanding about when riprap is appropriate, what alternatives should be considered, and how natural shoreline functions should be protected. Public education materials should clearly identify the limited circumstances in which riprap, sand blankets, and ice-ridge repair are appropriate, explain the benefits of natural shorelines, including water quality protection, fish and wildlife habitat, slope stability, wave energy dissipation, climate resilience, and long-term property protection.

Efforts to solve the problem

The Natural Shoreline Partnership developed Minnesota’s Vanishing Natural Shorelines, which documented the scale of natural shoreline loss and the connection between shoreline alteration and degraded lake quality. The Shoreline Protection Subcommittee then identified the need to update public-facing shoreline materials, improve consistency in messaging, and better explain the difference between natural shoreline restoration, bioengineered stabilization, riprap, retaining walls, beach creation, vegetation removal, grading, and other shoreline alterations.

Local governments, SWCDs, watershed districts, lake associations, and state agencies already provide public education, but messaging is not always consistent and may be undermined by older or outdated state guidance still available to the public.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

Legislative action is not necessarily required if DNR can update all public-facing guidance, webpages, fact sheets, and permit materials administratively.

However, legislative action may be appropriate if agency direction or funding is needed to ensure outdated materials are replaced and updated guidance is developed in coordination with local governments, SWCDs, watershed districts, BWSR, MPCA, lake associations, and other partners.

The purpose or intent would be to ensure that Minnesota’s public shoreline guidance reflects current natural shoreline science, state statute, best available restoration practices, and clear permitting expectations.

If legislation is not pursued, Minnesota Watersheds should advocate directly with DNR and partner agencies to replace outdated shoreline alteration guidance, including older “Shoreline Alterations: Riprap” materials, and to coordinate statewide public education on natural shoreline protection and restoration.

Anticipated support or opposition

Support is anticipated from watershed districts, SWCDs, lake associations, local governments, habitat advocates, and organizations working to improve water quality and shoreline stewardship.

Opposition or concern may come from various divisions or regional offices within the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources that have relied on existing shoreline alteration guidance, fact sheets, and implementation practices for decades. Concerns may include staff capacity to update guidance, uncertainty about changing long-standing interpretations, the need for internal consistency across DNR programs and regions, concern that revised materials could increase review workload, and reluctance to create expectations that existing past practices were inadequate or inconsistent.

This issue: (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	x
Applies to the entire state	x	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION #4: SUPPORTING IMPROVED PUBLIC EDUCATION AND UPDATED SHORELINE MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE

WHEREAS, landowners, contractors, consultants, local officials, and local government staff rely on public-facing information from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources when evaluating shoreline stabilization, restoration, and alteration options; and

WHEREAS, outdated shoreline alteration guidance can create confusion and may encourage practices that are not fully aligned with current natural shoreline science, restoration standards, state statute, or the protection of public waters; and

WHEREAS, the continued public availability of older shoreline riprap guidance may contribute to misunderstanding about when riprap is appropriate, what alternatives should be considered, and how natural shoreline functions should be protected; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota’s public education materials should clearly explain the benefits of natural shorelines, including water quality protection, fish and wildlife habitat, slope stability, wave energy dissipation, climate resilience, and long-term property protection; and

WHEREAS, effective public education should help landowners understand the difference between natural shoreline restoration, bioengineered stabilization, riprap, retaining walls, beach creation, vegetation removal, grading, and other shoreline alterations; and

WHEREAS, updated public education materials should support consistent messaging by DNR, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, townships, lake associations, contractors, consultants, and other partners;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources updating its public-facing shoreline management webpages, guidance documents, permit materials, and educational resources to reflect current natural shoreline science, state statute, and best available restoration practices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports replacing outdated “Shoreline Alterations: Riprap” guidance and similar materials with updated guidance that more clearly prioritizes avoidance, minimization, natural shoreline restoration, bioengineering, vegetation protection, and long-term shoreline function.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that updated public education materials should clearly identify when permits or notifications are required, what activities may violate public waters rules, and what alternatives are available to landowners before hard armoring is pursued.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports coordinated public education among DNR, BWSR, SWCDs, watershed districts, counties, cities, townships, lake associations, and other partners to promote consistent shoreline management information statewide.

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution #5

Proposing Watershed: Carnelian Marine St. Croix Watershed District

Contact Name: Mike Isensee

Phone Number: 612-839-6492

Email Address: mike.isensee@cmsc wd.org

Resolution Title: Supporting Rule and Process Improvements for Public Waters Shoreline Alteration Management

Background that led to the submission of this resolution

Minnesota Rules part 6115.0215 establishes requirements for restoration and alteration of public waters, including activities that affect shorelines, beds, banks, and public water resources. Consistent implementation of Minnesota's public waters rules is necessary to protect natural shorelines, water quality, aquatic habitat, and the public interest in lakes, rivers, and streams.

Watershed districts and other local government partners have identified discrepancies and inconsistencies in the implementation of shoreline alteration rules, guidance, permitting, notification, and enforcement. These inconsistencies can result in landowner confusion, uneven regulatory outcomes, continued shoreline degradation, and reduced confidence in state and local shoreline management programs.

Shoreline alteration decisions should include a clear evaluation of existing shoreline condition, the cause and degree of shoreline change, the proposed alteration, less-impactful alternatives, and cumulative impacts to public waters. Contractors who repeatedly conduct shoreline alterations without required notice, permits, or approvals can create significant damage to public waters and place landowners and local governments in difficult compliance situations.

Efforts to solve the problem

The Natural Shoreline Partnership's Shoreline Protection Subcommittee reviewed challenges with existing state and local shoreline rules, DNR Public Waters Restoration Rules, shoreline assessments, sand blankets, ice heaves, general permits, and DNR enforcement procedures. The Subcommittee concluded that DNR Public Waters Rules are not necessarily the primary barrier to natural shoreline protection. Rather, the more significant problems are how shoreline alteration rules are expressed to the public, how those rules are administered, and how governments coordinate with each other on projects that span jurisdictional boundaries.

The Subcommittee developed recommendations to update DNR guidance, improve coordination among DNR and local governments, develop administrative procedures for "no permit required" shoreline work, create tools to determine demonstrated erosion need, strengthen training, clarify grading and filling requirements, encourage contractor training or certification, review General Permit barriers, and rebuild technical capacity for natural shoreline restoration and bioengineered shoreline design.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

Legislative action may be needed if rule changes, agency direction, funding, or statutory clarification are necessary to ensure consistent statewide implementation of public waters shoreline alteration requirements.

The purpose or intent of legislative action would be to support clearer, more consistent, and more

coordinated implementation of Minnesota Rules part 6115.0215 and related public waters shoreline alteration requirements. This may include direction or support for DNR to:

1. Develop a consistent shoreline evaluation process;
2. Clarify how demonstrated erosion need is evaluated before riprap or other hard armoring is authorized;
3. Establish administrative procedures for “no permit required” shoreline work;
4. Improve coordination between DNR, local governments, SWCDs, and watershed districts;
5. Create a technical evaluation panel or similar interagency review process for complex or sensitive shoreline alteration proposals;
6. Ensure consistent DNR processes and determinations across regions and area offices;
7. Strengthen procedures for recurring contractor violations involving shoreline modifications completed without required notification, permits, or approvals; and
8. Review General Permit processes that may discourage natural or bioengineered shoreline alternatives.

If legislative action is not immediately pursued, Minnesota Watersheds should advocate directly with DNR, MPCA, BWSR, counties, SWCDs, watershed districts, and other partners to implement these process improvements administratively.

Anticipated support or opposition

Support is anticipated from watershed districts, watershed management organizations, SWCDs, local governments, lake associations, fisheries and habitat advocates, and organizations working to protect water quality, aquatic life, and public waters.

Opposition or concern may come from shoreline contractors, some riparian landowners, and parties concerned about additional process requirements, delays, or limits on shoreline hardening. These concerns can be addressed through clear guidance, timely review procedures, contractor training, practical landowner assistance, and recognition that the resolution seeks consistency, coordination, and protection of public waters rather than unnecessary regulation.

This issue: (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	x
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	x
Applies to the entire state	x	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION #5: SUPPORTING RULE AND PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS FOR PUBLIC WATERS SHORELINE MANAGEMENT

WHEREAS, Minnesota Rules part 6115.0215 establishes requirements for restoration and alteration of public waters, including activities that affect shorelines, beds, banks, and public water resources; and

WHEREAS, consistent implementation of Minnesota's public waters rules is necessary to protect natural shorelines, water quality, aquatic habitat, and the public interest in lakes, rivers, and streams; and

WHEREAS, watershed districts and other local government partners have identified discrepancies and inconsistencies in the implementation of shoreline alteration rules, guidance, permitting, notification, and enforcement; and

WHEREAS, inconsistent application of public waters rules can result in landowner confusion, uneven regulatory outcomes, continued shoreline degradation, and reduced confidence in state and local shoreline management programs; and

WHEREAS, shoreline alteration decisions should include a clear evaluation of the cause, severity, and extent of shoreline change, the proposed alteration, the availability of less-impactful alternatives, and the cumulative impact to public waters; and

WHEREAS, contractors who repeatedly conduct shoreline alterations without required notice, permits, or approvals can create significant damage to public waters and place landowners and local governments in difficult compliance situations; and

WHEREAS, clearer rules, procedures, and enforcement expectations would improve consistency, fairness, and environmental outcomes for landowners, contractors, local governments, and state agencies;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports rule, guidance, and process improvements by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to ensure consistent implementation of Minnesota Rules part 6115.0215 and related public waters shoreline alteration requirements.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports development and implementation of a consistent shoreline evaluation process that considers the existing shoreline condition, the cause and degree of shoreline change, the proposed alteration, natural shoreline alternatives, and the public water impacts of the proposed work.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports creation of a technical evaluation panel or similar interagency process for complex or potentially impactful shoreline alteration proposals, similar in concept to review processes used under the Wetland Conservation Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports improved procedures to ensure consistent DNR processes and determinations across regions and area offices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports stronger and more consistent enforcement for recurring contractor violations involving shoreline modifications completed without required notification, permits, or approvals.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports rule and process changes that make shoreline management more understandable, consistent, timely, and effective for landowners, contractors, local governments, and state agencies while better protecting Minnesota's public waters and natural shorelines.

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution #6

Proposing Watershed: Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District

Contact Name: Joni Giese

Phone Number: 952-440-0067

Email Address: jgiese@plslwd.org

Resolution Title: Seeking Revision of Minnesota State 477A.19 to Preserve \$10 million of Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid

Background that led to the submission of this resolution

For over a decade \$10 million has been annually appropriated from the state general fund for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Aid pursuant Minnesota Statute 477A.19. The commissioner of revenue computes an amount of AIS prevention aid payable to each county in the state for the following year. Counties must use the proceeds solely to prevent the introduction or limit the spread of AIS at all access sites within the county. In recent years, Scott County has allocated AIS Prevention Aid to Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District (PLSLWD) to perform Curly-leaf pondweed treatments in District Lakes and to offset the cost of boat inspections at District lakes.

At part of the 2025 legislative session, Minnesota Statute 477A.19 was revised to reduce the annual appropriation by 50 percent (\$5 million) for aid payable in 2027 and thereafter. At current funding levels, the AIS Prevention Aid comprises 37 percent of PLSLWD's Aquatic vegetation management funding and comprises 50 percent of the PLSLWD's boat inspection funding.

Prior Lake is an extremely popular lake in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan area, with large numbers of boaters bringing their watercraft to the lake and thus increasing the risk of AIS spread. A 50 percent reduction in state AIS Prevention Aid will have a significant and negative impact the PLSLWD's efforts to prevent the introduction and limit the spread of AIS. This issue is not limited to PLSLWD, the reduced funding negatively impacts counties, watershed organizations, soil and water conservation districts, lake associations, and other public agencies that work to prevent the spread of AIS.

Efforts to solve the problem

In 2025, when the proposed funding reduction was first brought forward, numerous organizations lobbied to retain historic funding levels. These efforts were successful in preserving the \$10 million funding levels for 2025 and 2026 and delaying the reduced \$5 million funding level to 2027. A coalition of lake associations are currently organizing to lobby for the preservation of the \$10 million funding levels during the 2027 legislative session. Watershed organizations should join with partners to lobby for the preservation of the \$10 million funding level.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

Legislative action is the only means of addressing the matter as Minnesota

Statute 477A.19 calls for the funding level to be reduced to \$5 million in 2027. The intent of this proposal is to request that Minnesota Statute 477A.19 be revised to change 2027 funding to \$10 million and to remain at the \$10 million level thereafter.

Anticipated support or opposition

The DNR could also be a partner as they administer and support the program. Lake associations, soil and water conservation districts, lake resorts, and communities that rely on lake activities for economic development are likely partners in supporting this legislative revision. Likely detractors from this legislation may be organizations that advocate for smaller government spending.

This issue: (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	x
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	
Applies to the entire state	x	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION #6: SEEKING REVISION OF MINNESOTA STATE 477A.19 TO PRESERVE \$10 MILLION OF AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION AID

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statute 477A.19 Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid, allocates funds to counties within Minnesota for the purpose of preventing the introduction of or limiting the spread of aquatic invasive species at all access sites within counties that receive the funding; and

WHEREAS, counties may appropriate a portion of the proceeds received from the state to provide funding for a joint powers board or cooperative agreement with another political subdivision, a soil and water conservation district in the county, a watershed district in the county, or a lake association located in the county; and

WHEREAS, for over a decade, the state has annually appropriated \$10 million from the general fund for Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid to Minnesota counties; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statute 477A.19 was revised in 2025 to reduce the annual appropriation from \$10 million to \$5 million starting in 2027; AND **WHEREAS**, watershed districts, soil and water conservation districts, and lake associations in the state depend on Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid to prevent the introduction of and limit the spread of aquatic invasive species; and

WHEREAS, the reduction of Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid will result in reduced prevention efforts that will harm water resources in the state and negatively impact habitat, recreation, and economic development within the state.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds seeks to revise Minnesota State 477A.19 to preserve annual Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid at \$10 million payable in 2027 and annually thereafter.

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution #7

Proposing Watershed: Two Rivers Watershed District

Contact Name: Dan Money

Phone Number: 218-843-3333

Email Address: dan.money@tworiverswd.com

Resolution Title: Seeking Establishment of Hazard Mitigation Fund

Background that led to the submission of this resolution

Watershed Districts have a long history of fighting floods and reducing flood damages. Severe and repeated flooding is documented throughout MN. Current state funding to recover from disasters is available through MN Statute 12A, and funding to prevent/mitigate flooding is available through DNR's Flood Hazard Mitigation Grant Program under MN Statute 103F. According to DNR, the current known funding needs total \$2.13 million, however in the 2026 session the legislature only approved \$9 million in the bonding bill to address the problem. In fact, since 2010 there has been a steady decline in the funding of this program, and no funding was approved in 2016, 2019, 2021, 2022, and 2024. Therefore, it is apparent that other sources of funding are needed to meet the significant need.

Efforts to solve the problem

Over the past 5 years, meetings have been held with MN DNR to streamline their grant program and bring attention to the needs. This resulted in DNR overhauling the application process and this past session DNR asked for \$45 million to fund the program.

In addition, several meetings were held with various Senators and Representatives. While this was mildly effective, the result was still a significant under-funding of the program. However, HF 4581 and SF 5002 were introduced in 2026 to establish an additional program through the MN Department of Homeland Security Emergency Management that would provide an additional resource to provide funding for prevention / mitigation of natural disasters, including flooding. Although introduced, these bills were not heard in committee.

This resolution seeks to build upon Minnesota Watersheds 22-05 resolution that seeks stable funding for this issue. It is suggested that this issue should be considered one of the highest legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

YES. In order to provide a more stable, reliable source of funding that will help to mitigate the effects of severe and repeated flooding HF 4581/SF 5002 are proposed. These bills will create a new program and a new funding source to supplement existing sources which are dreadfully underfunded. It is proposed that the fund be used for hazard mitigation planning and projects that diminish the potential effects of emergencies through long term risk reduction. The new proposal is modelled after MN Statute 12A and therefore follows a tried and true example of success.

Anticipated support or opposition

Potential Support: MN Homeland Security Emergency Management; MN Association of Emergency Managers; Association of MN Counties; Association of Townships; League of MN Cities

Potential Opposition: unknown

This issue: (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	x
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	x
Applies to the entire state	x	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION #7: SEEKING ESTABLISHMENT OF HAZARD MITIGATION FUND

WHEREAS, Severe flooding is known to occur repeatedly within the State of Minnesota, costing both public and private entities millions of dollars for repair and replacement of infrastructure, damage to homes, erosion and sediment control, and damage to cropland, and

WHEREAS, flooding also has severe and repeated impacts to water quality and habitat from erosion, sedimentation, nutrient loading, raw sewage discharges, and chemical spillage, and

WHEREAS, economic studies have estimated that for every dollar spent on flood damage reduction there is a six dollar return on investment, and

WHEREAS, The DNR's Flood Damage Reduction grant program (FHMG) under MN Statute 103F has historically been a successful tool for local governments to utilize to design and build projects to reduce and prevent flooding, protect the environment, and prevent social and economic losses, and

WHEREAS, The DNR's FHMG has not recently been funded adequately by the Legislature, in fact annual bonding appropriations have been significantly declining over the past 10 years with no funding appropriated in 5 out of the past 11 years. Current 2026 legislative appropriations for hazard mitigation funding only amount to 4% of the documented need, and

WHEREAS, The cost of construction continues to increase as proposed shovel ready projects continue to go unfunded, and

WHEREAS, additional funding sources and programs will be necessary to keep up with the need for hazard mitigation projects. In the 2026 legislative session HF 4581 and SF 5002 were introduced to address the problem but were not passed out of committees.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts pass a resolution to make hazard mitigation funding a top 2027 legislative priority and direct its lobbyist to work on passage of HF 4581 and SF 5002 as introduced in the 2026 legislative session.

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution #8

Proposing Watershed: Capitol Region Watershed District

Contact Name: Anna Eleria

Phone Number: 651-644-8888

Email Address: aeleria@capitolregionwd.org

Resolution Title: Seeking Legislation that Allows Stormwater as an Alternative Water Source for Outdoor Uses

Background that led to the submission of this resolution

The MN Plumbing Board, a board of the MN Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), is proposing revisions to Chapter 15 of the Uniform Plumbing Code and the 2020 MN Plumbing Code that would effectively prohibit stormwater as an alternative source of water for non-potable uses. Key proposed changes include prohibiting stormwater as an allowable source of water for irrigation and other outdoor uses, expanding plumbing code jurisdiction from buildings to entire sites, and requiring installation of irrigation systems by licensed plumbers which would displace existing landscape and irrigation professionals, and requiring usage of plumbing code-certified materials.

Stormwater reuse is a proven, cost-effective practice that protects lakes and rivers, conserves groundwater, improves water quality, reduces flooding, and supports climate resilience. Eliminating or restricting reuse would remove a critical tool used by municipalities who depend on groundwater for drinking water and seek to conserve it for that use, and watershed districts and municipalities that rely on reuse projects to meet MS4 permit requirements, particularly in areas where infiltration is not feasible.

The proposed changes create significant environmental, financial, and regulatory concerns. They could render existing reuse systems non-compliant, require costly retrofits, and jeopardize millions of dollars in public investments funded through Clean Water Fund grants administered by MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and Metropolitan Council (Met Council), and local capital budgets.

Additionally, the proposal conflicts with longstanding state policies and guidance encouraging stormwater reuse, including MPCA stormwater guidance, the Metropolitan Council's 2050 Water Plan, and legislative directives to advance a framework for water reuse practices. It also conflicts with local ordinances, such as one in Lake Elmo, that require stormwater reuse to conserve groundwater. It also contradicts the purpose of the State Interagency Workgroup for Stormwater Capture and Use (SCU), of which the MN Department of Labor and Industry is a member of, for advancing the development and implementation of safe and sustainable stormwater capture and use practices. This group committed to continue active participation in the work group and support for a broad stakeholder engagement process to ensure a coordinated, collaborative and transparent approach to SCU guidance and policy in Minnesota.

Efforts to solve the problem

Minnesota Watersheds and Capitol Region Watershed District are working closely with a

large and broad coalition group who share similar concerns. Key members of the coalition so far include the League of MN Cities, MN Cities Stormwater Coalition, MN Nursery and Landscape Association, MN Farmers Union and many others. For a full list, see the information below. Efforts to address these concerns include:

- Communicating with watershed districts and watershed management organizations to raise awareness of the issue, keep them informed of how they can help, and the activities of the coalition group
- Reaching out to various state agencies and boards including the Minnesota Plumbing Board, MN Department of Labor and Industry, MN Department of Public Health, MN Pollution Control Agency, MN Board of Water and Soil Resources, and others. The outreach has included notifying them of the proposed changes and our concerns
- Initiating outreach to legislators, counties, and conservation organizations
- Developing shared messaging, talking points and response strategies with the broad coalition group
- Raising concerns about the lack of coordination with agencies responsible for water quality and stormwater management

To date, stakeholders are responding quickly and helping to get the word out to the groups and individuals listed above and in turn, they are also reaching out to State agency leaders and legislators and expressing their concerns. In addition, a request has been made for a special Plumbing Board meeting to show opposition to their proposed changes.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

Legislative actions are needed to address this issue. The intent of this resolution is to:

- Prevent adoption of plumbing code revisions that prohibit stormwater reuse
- Explicitly allow for stormwater capture and use for irrigation and other outdoor non-potable uses in State law
- Ensure coordination between the Plumbing Board, MPCA, MDH, BWSR, cities, watershed organizations, and other local governments
- Align plumbing regulations with existing state policies and guidelines supporting stormwater reuse, water conservation, groundwater protection, and climate resilience
- Protect prior public investments in stormwater reuse systems
- Maintain stormwater reuse as a viable strategy for MS4 compliance
- Ensure decisions on regulation and design for stormwater infrastructure are made by the appropriate agencies and practitioners

Recommended actions include:

- Legislation that allows stormwater reuse for irrigation and other outdoor uses. In 2025, Senate bill (S.F. No. 2442) was introduced and brought to the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee. This committee passed an amended bill and referred it to the Health and Human Services Committee in 2026. It is our understanding that it remains in the hands of the Health and Human Services Committee who has not and will not conduct a hearing in the 2026 legislative session.
- Direction to the Minnesota Plumbing Board to pause all revisions to plumbing code (including Chapter 15) until interagency coordination and alignment is achieved
- Continued coordination and advocacy with state agencies and policymakers

Anticipated support or opposition

There is a growing broad coalition of groups who are partnering in efforts to prevent changes to the Minnesota Plumbing Code that would explicitly eliminate stormwater as an alternative source of water for outdoor uses. As of May 14, 2026, the list of partners include:

- League of Minnesota Cities
- Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition
- Minnesota Nursery & Landscape Association
- Minnesota Farmers Union
- Minnesota Watersheds
- LiUNA
- Associated General Contractors
- Housing First
- Minnesota Association of Cemeteries
- Minnesota Turf and Grounds Foundation
- Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs
- Irrigators Association of Minnesota
- Hospitality Minnesota
- Minnesota Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Freshwater Society
- American Society of Landscape Architects MN Chapter
- Anoka County
- Minnesota Chapter of the American Public Works Association

Groups who are or may be opposed to our efforts include:

- Minnesota Plumbing Board
- Minnesota Pipe Trades Association
- Minnesota Plumbing, Heating, and Cooling Contractors
- Plumbing unions

This issue: (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	x
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	x
Applies to the entire state	x	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION #8: SEEKING LEGISLATION THAT ALLOWS STORMWATER AS AN ALTERNATIVE WATER SOURCE FOR OUTDOOR USES

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Plumbing Board, under the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), is proposing revisions to Chapter 15 of the Uniform Plumbing Code and related provisions of the Minnesota Plumbing Code that would prohibit stormwater as an alternate source of water for irrigation and other outdoor non-potable uses; and

WHEREAS, stormwater reuse is a proven and cost-effective practice that protects lakes and rivers, conserves groundwater, improves water quality, reduces flooding, and supports climate resilience; and

WHEREAS, restricting stormwater reuse would remove a critical compliance and water-management tool for municipalities, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, and other local governments, particularly where groundwater resources are limited, where infiltration is not feasible and where reuse projects help meet MS4 permit requirements; and

WHEREAS, the proposed code changes could render existing reuse systems non-compliant, require costly retrofits, and jeopardize significant public investments funded through local budgets and grants administered by Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and the Metropolitan Council (Met Council); and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes conflict with the directives of the MN Legislature in 2015, 2017, and 2021 to advance safe and sustainable water reuse in Minnesota, including stormwater capture and use; and

WHEREAS, the proposed changes conflict with longstanding state and local policies and guidance encouraging stormwater reuse including MPCA's Stormwater Manual and Met Council's 2025 Water Policy Plan;

WHEREAS, a broad coalition of local governments, watershed organizations, professional associations, businesses, and nonprofit partners has formed in support of preserving stormwater reuse as a lawful and practical water-management strategy; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota Senate Bill SF2442, a 2025 bill relating to the outdoor use of rainwater and stormwater, would authorize state agencies and local governments to allow untreated rainwater or stormwater for outdoor purposes when the probability of human or animal consumption or immersion is low or nonexistent, and was reported out of the Senate Environment, Climate, and Legacy Committee to the Health and Human Services Committee in March 2026.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports legislation to explicitly allow stormwater as an alternate water source for outdoor non-potable purposes, including irrigation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds supports legislation to assign MPCA as the State agency responsible for oversight of stormwater capture and use systems; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Minnesota Watersheds requests that the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry and the Minnesota Plumbing Board pause proposed

plumbing code revisions affecting stormwater reuse until interagency coordination and meaningful stakeholder engagement are completed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any future regulation of stormwater capture and use should align with existing State policy and guidelines, protect prior public investments, and preserve stormwater reuse as a viable strategy for water conservation, groundwater protection, and stormwater management.

Background Information

2026 Minnesota Watersheds Resolution

Proposing Watershed: Riley-Purgatory-Bluff Creek Watershed District

Contact Name: Terry Jeffery

Phone Number: 952-687-1107

Email Address: tjeffery@rpbcwd.org

Resolution Title: Resolution to Protect Lake Ecosystems and Shoreline Integrity from Wake Boat Impacts

Background that led to the submission of this resolution:

Describe the problem you wish to solve, provide background information to understand the factors that led to the issue, and explain why the issue is important now. If relevant, attach statutory or regulatory documents.

There is increasing evidence, including recent studies by the University of MN, Saint Anthony Falls Laboratory (SAFL), that the operation of wake boats produce significant erosive forces both horizontally and vertically. This results in shoreline degradation and loss as well as suspension of sediments from the lake substrate. The vertical prop wash damages aquatic vegetation and degrades aquatic habitat. Currently, there is only voluntary guidance regarding the operation of these watercrafts in relation to shorelines and no guidance on depth of water in which operation should occur.

Any regulations on the operation of these watercraft is through locally enacted ordinances. As this is an issue with statewide implications, reliance on local ordinances is insufficient to address.

Efforts to solve the problem:

Document the efforts you have taken to try to solve the issue. For example: have you spoken to state agency staff, legislators, county commissioners, etc.? If so, what was their response?

The RPBCWD has funded the research performed by SAFL. The RPBCWD has provided education to Lake Associations and local municipalities on the impacts of wake boat operation. The RPBCWD, or any watershed district, does not have the authority to regulate surface water usage for watercraft.

Is legislative action the best means of addressing the matter? If yes, what is the purpose or intent of your proposal? If not, what advocacy steps could be taken with state or local government officials?

Describe potential solutions for the problem. Provide references to statutes or rules if applicable.

As this is a statewide issue and the Department of Natural Resources largely relies on local ordinances to implement their regulatory framework, this is an issue that is best addressed through statewide regulation on one or more of the following;

- A minimum water depth for wake-surfing operations, consistent with SAFL research on lakebed disturbance and sediment resuspension;
- A minimum setback distance from shorelines, docks, and emergent vegetation as necessary to protect shoreline stability, habitat integrity, and water quality, consistent with SAFL research; and

- Require that new and existing wake boats be equipped with ballast systems that can be fully drained and effectively decontaminated to prevent the transfer of aquatic invasive species and contaminants between water bodies;

Anticipated support or opposition:

Who would be willing to partner with your watershed or Minnesota Watersheds on the issue? Who may be opposed to our efforts? (Ex. other local units of government, special interest groups, political parties, etc.)?

Support for this will vary. Numerous lake association groups will support this while many others will oppose. The same holds true for various recreation groups. Angling associations and groups would be anticipated to support while recreational boaters may be in opposition. Municipalities that are within RPBCWD have been reticent to enacting unilateral code changes to address the operation of wake boats but may be more amenable to a statewide initiative.

This issue: (check all that apply)

Applies only to our district		Requires legislative action	X
Applies only to 1 or 2 regions		Requires state agency advocacy	X
Applies to the entire state	X	Impacts MW bylaws or MOPP	

RESOLUTION TO PROTECT LAKE ECOSYSTEMS AND SHORELINE INTEGRITY FROM WAKE BOAT IMPACTS

Whereas, in 2022, Minnesota Watersheds adopted a Resolution to Limit Wake Boat Activities, which called for the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts to work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to utilize the research findings from the St. Anthony Falls Laboratory and seek legislation to achieve one or more of the following:

- a) limit lakes and areas of lakes in which wake boats may operate;
- b) require new and existing wake boats to be able to completely drain and decontaminate their ballast tanks; and
- c) Provide funding for additional research on the effects of wake boats on aquatic systems;

Whereas, pursuant to Minnesota Watersheds Manual of Policy and Procedures, this Resolution will sunset in 2027, but the impacts from wake boat activities on lake ecosystems and shorelines have persisted and grown worse; property owners and lake users continue to report widespread damage to property, disruptions to fishing, and degradation of lake environments from wake boats;

Whereas, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has the statutory authority to adopt rules relating to the “rules of the road” for watercraft navigation, and, at the request of local government, the use of the waters of the state by watercraft; currently, the DNR’s primary approach to dealing with wake boat impacts is through review of locally enacted ordinances and an “Own Your Wake” campaign to promote voluntary compliance with general wake guidelines; these guidelines suggest staying at least 200 feet from shore or other structures to reduce the likelihood wakes will cause damage, these guidelines are silent on a minimum water depth for wake surfing;

Whereas, the University of Minnesota St. Anthony Falls Laboratory (SAFL) has published two studies of the impacts of wake boats; the first study, A Field Study of Maximum Wave Height, Total Wave Energy, and Maximum Wave Power Produced by Four Recreational Boats on a Freshwater Lake, concluded that when operating under typical wake surfing conditions, wake surf boats required distances greater than 500 ft to attenuate wake wave characteristics (height, energy, and power) to levels equivalent to non-wake surf boats operating under typical planing conditions; SAFL’s second study, A Field Study of Recreational Powerboat Hydrodynamics and their Impacts on the Water Column and Lakebed published July 2025, recommends that wake boats operate in 20 feet of water or greater when in semi-displacement mode to minimize impacts to the lake bottom;

Whereas, the SAFL studies demonstrate that the DNR’s current voluntary guidelines are insufficient to protect lake ecosystems and shorelines; only four percent (4%) of Minnesota’s lakes currently have local ordinances restricting wake boat operation;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Minnesota Watersheds supports legislation that would require the DNR to establish minimum operational and design standards for inboard motorized recreational vessels equipped with ballast or wake-enhancement systems (wake boats), including:

- A minimum water depth for wake-surfing operations, consistent with SAFL research on lakebed disturbance and sediment resuspension;
- A minimum setback distance from shorelines, docks, and emergent vegetation as necessary to protect shoreline stability, habitat integrity, and water quality, consistent with SAFL research; and

- Require that new and existing wake boats be equipped with ballast systems that can be fully drained and effectively decontaminated to prevent the transfer of aquatic invasive species and contaminants between water bodies;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Minnesota Watersheds supports funding for SAFL to pursue further research to focus on the impact of boat and wind waves on the environment close to shore, including plants.