



2012 CGMC Policy Positions: Environment & Energy

Water Standards, Regulations and Permitting

1. The CGMC supports cleaning up polluted waters and preventing further impairment. Cities' limited financial resources must, however, be spent wisely on those projects leading to the greatest environmental benefits. Therefore, CGMC opposes legislation and rules that would impose unnecessary and unfunded mandates on cities.
2. Pollutants will have different impacts depending on the local conditions. Nutrient and pollutant standards, particularly phosphorus and nitrogen standards, should take into account site specific conditions. The CGMC supports legal and legislative action to prevent implementation of rules that lack scientific support or that do not include site specific analysis. The CGMC also opposes numeric nutrient standards for water bodies and believes that any such standard must link nutrient and response variables.
3. The CGMC believes that the MPCA should revise its sulfate and chloride standards to reflect current science and that it should establish long term (20 year) compliance schedules in NPDES permits where chloride limits are required so that local governments can adequately address implementation issues.
4. To ensure that cities' limited financial resources are spent wisely, regulations and standards must reflect the latest science. Therefore, the CGMC opposes nitrogen or phosphorus effluent limits in NPDES permits based upon alleged impairment in the Gulf of Mexico, until the Gulf of Mexico Total Maximum Daily Load plan has been developed and implementation has begun unless a multi-state trading program is initiated.
5. The CGMC opposes the MPCA adopting a nitrate toxicity standard until the EPA has completed additional research and the EPA has developed a nitrate criteria document as required under § 304(a) of the Clean Water Act.
6. Assuring that the state's water bodies meet their designated uses and the attainment of water quality standards is the responsibility of all who contribute to stream degradation, not just of regulated point sources. Thus, CGMC advocates the development of pollution control measures that require the participation of all contributors to the degradation of water bodies, including non-point pollution sources.
7. CGMC supports reasonable anti-degradation policies that comply with the Clean Water Act, recognize the need for communities to grow, and include site specific analysis and reasonable trading and banking policies for pollutants.
8. The CGMC supports the authority of cities to regulate or prohibit private wells within municipal service boundaries and opposes any attempt to restrict or remove that authority.

9. Minnesota's state regulatory environment often fails to respond and process permit applications by local businesses, individuals, and other entities in a timely manner. The CGMC supports efforts to improve the existing state regulatory approval process. These efforts should emphasize improving coordination between agencies, enhancing transparency and access to information, strengthening accountability and fostering greater communication between local businesses and state regulatory agencies.

To aid in these efforts, the CGMC encourages state lawmakers and the governor to implement regulatory reform measures that maximize existing resources while utilizing new and existing technologies.

Funding Issues

10. The CGMC supports using the state general fund to support the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency water program and opposes increasing MPCA's use of fees to fund its operations. Using the general fund, rather than relying heavily on fees, promotes legislative oversight and spreads the cost of regulation to everyone who benefits.
11. CGMC supports legislation creating a competitive grant program to fund the construction, reconstruction and improvement of municipal wastewater and sewer facilities in greater Minnesota. The purpose of the program is to address wastewater treatment facility improvement funding shortfalls and incentivize project development. The program should operate through the existing Wastewater Infrastructure Fund (WIF) process, with additional flexibility provided to allow for expanded grantees and the quick delivery of grant awards. Projects that have a demonstrated history of local funding support should be prioritized.

Additionally, the CGMC supports broadening the criteria for WIF grants in general to increase the number of eligible grant recipients.

12. Minnesota's Legacy Amendment dedicates a portion of the sales and use tax to the clean water fund. When appropriating money from this fund, the legislature and any implementing agency or council should give highest priority to the development of TMDLs and providing assistance for their implementation. These funds should not be used to cover budget cuts or supplant other normal state spending on water programs.
13. Minnesota's Legacy Amendment dedicates a portion of the sales and use tax to funding parks and trails. Regional parks play an important role in improving the quality of life throughout Minnesota. CGMC supports distributing these funds in an equitable manner between Greater Minnesota and the Metropolitan area and dedicating a specific amount for Greater Minnesota parks and trails.

General Environmental Policies

14. Aquatic, plant and other invasive species threaten the lakes, rivers, and parks of greater Minnesota. The advance of these species threatens the enjoyment of these resources by residents and may impede tourism in many areas. The CGMC supports legislation

targeted at slowing or stopping the spread of these species, including dedicating funding from the legacy amendment and other sources to address this issue.

15. CGMC opposes requiring that municipalities use the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program and supports legislation or regulatory action allowing municipalities to pursue alternative certification mechanisms.
16. Problem materials entering municipal waste streams can cause detrimental environmental effects and damage to municipal treatment and other water systems. CGMC supports legislation and regulations that place responsibility for these materials with the manufacturers and consumers of these products, not just at the treatment and infrastructure maintenance levels.
17. CGMC supports requiring townships to meet the same environmental protections and regulatory requirements as cities.
18. CGMC supports a statewide initiative to inspect all on-site sewage treatment equipment and ban new ISTS for developments with greater density than 1 per 40 acres.

Energy Policies

19. CGMC supports renewable energy and the transmission infrastructure necessary to develop these resources. In addition to supporting state programs for wind and solar energy, CGMC recognizes the need to invest in other alternative energy technologies such as those that recover methane and use waste products to create energy.
20. CGMC supports tax credits and other incentive programs to assist municipalities and their residents in developing and using alternative and renewable fuels. CGMC also supports state programs to assist municipalities in adopting energy conservation measures.