



Conservation Connection



A Minnesota Legislative Outdoor Newsletter: Created by Kim Scott and Alexandra David

**Sponsored by: Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club,
Fish Lake Conservation Club, Izaak Walton League, MN Musky and Pike Alliance,
MN Sharptail Grouse Society, Outdoor News, Pheasants Forever, Sportsmen for the BWCA***

April 11, 2025

Important Dates:

- April 11, 2025 at 12:00 PM: third legislative deadline: committees must act favorably on major appropriation and finance bills
- April 11, 2025 at 12:00 PM - April 21, 2025 at 12:00 PM: Legislative break for Easter and Passover
- April 23, 2025 at 7:00 PM: State of the State
- April 29, 2025: Special Election, Senate District 6
- May 9-10: 77th Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener in Crosslake
- May 19: Constitutional deadline for adjournment for the 2025 Legislative Session

Closed-door budget negotiations are ongoing – and, in some cases, that means committee meetings are on hold for now. A variety of committees cancelled their meetings [this week] as co-chairs [continued] negotiating what will end up in their areas of the budget . . . Negotiations over a budget blueprint between the House, Senate and governor are also in process. [Read more.](#)

\$2.3 billion Environment and Natural Resources Finance bill approved as co-chairs signal work will continue: The House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee unveiled [and approved] its 2026-27 omnibus finance bill Thursday, but committee co-chairs emphasized it is just a starting point. That much was clear by the approved [delete-all amendment](#) to [HF2439](#), which is a \$2.28 billion omnibus finance bill that contains no policy provisions. And it includes none of [Gov. Tim Walz's recommended operating adjustments](#) to the Pollution Control Agency, the Department of Natural Resources, Board of Water and Soil Resources, and other agencies and boards the committee funds. Both committee co-chairs, [Rep. Josh Heintzeman](#) (R-Nisswa) and [Rep. Peter Fischer](#) (DFL-Maplewood), called it a “bare bones” bill that would meet the House deadline for committees to approve finance bills, but each also pledged they would continue to work to finalize the budget numbers and to agree on which policy bills heard earlier by the committee would eventually go into the bill . . . House leadership gave the committee a negative \$10 million [budget target](#) compared to the February base. [T]he committee has made some financial decisions, namely that the overall

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\$10 million reduction would come in the form of:

- \$5 million cut from a 2024 appropriation to the DNR for enhancing prairies and grasslands and restoring wetlands on state-owned wildlife management areas;
- \$3 million cut from a 2025 appropriation to the PCA for a local government climate resiliency and water infrastructure grant program; and
- \$2 million cut from a 2025 appropriation to the Board of Water and Soil Resources for conservation easements and restoration and enhancement for purposes of climate resiliency, adaptation, and carbon sequestration .[Read more](#).

\$776 million Legacy finance bill heads to Ways and Means Committee: On Wednesday, the committee approved a budget proposal that would appropriate \$776.12 million during the 2026-27 biennium from funds established through the [Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment](#) . . . Sponsored by [Rep. Samantha Vang](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center), a [delete-all amendment](#) to [HF2563](#) was subsequently [amended](#) and [amended](#) again, before approval. Its next stop is the House Ways and Means Committee. “I was never a big Legacy guy to begin with,” said [Rep. Joe McDonald](#) (R-Delano), a committee co-chair with Vang. “I voted against it in 2008 and only voted for one Legacy bill of my 14 years here. I am now a believer of the great things that this Legacy money has done over the years and particularly this session.” [Among the] bill’s policy changes, [the bill] requires Clean Water Council recommendations submitted to the Legislature be broken out by fiscal year instead of a biennium total.

- **Outdoor Heritage Fund:** The [Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council](#) recommends \$162.11 million to fund 51 projects throughout the state in fiscal year 2026. Outdoor Heritage Fund dollars include: \$77.65 million for habitats, \$33.43 million for prairies, \$29.03 million for wetlands, \$19.96 million for forests and \$2.04 million for administration.
- **Clean Water Fund:** The Clean Water Fund would receive \$144.63 million in fiscal year 2026 and \$159.3 million in fiscal year 2027. Allocations include \$139.34 million to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, \$49.2 million to the Pollution Control Agency; \$33.35 million to the Department of Agriculture, \$30.14 million to the Department of Health, \$28.8 million to the Department of Natural Resources, \$16.54 million to the Public Facilities Authority, \$4.15 million to the Metropolitan Council, and \$2.4 million to the University of Minnesota.
- **Parks and Trails Fund:** The Parks and Trails Fund would receive \$130.17 million for fiscal years 2026-27. The DNR would receive \$78.59 million and \$51.32 million would go to the Met Council. [Read more](#).

Ag panel’s \$172 million funding bill advances to Ways and Means committee: Committee Co-chairs [Rep. Paul Anderson](#) (R-Starbuck), the bill [[HF2446](#)] sponsor, and [Rep. Rick Hansen](#) (DFL-South St. Paul) expressed bittersweet feelings about the bill, saying that while it does a lot to boost agriculture throughout the state,

this difficult budget year also means that many worthy programs will have to make do with less. The omnibus finance bill calls for a \$172.29 million General Fund appropriation to fund the Agriculture Department and several other associated state agencies under the committee's purview . . . The breakdown of the \$172.29 million funding for the biennium is:

- \$147.93 million to the Department of Agriculture;
- \$13.53 million to the Board of Animal Health;
- \$8.82 million to the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute; and
- \$2 million to the [Office of Broadband Development](#) to increase high-speed Internet access across the state.

The bill calls for a \$4 million transfer from the General Fund in fiscal year 2026 to the [agricultural emergency account](#) to prevent the [spread of avian influenza](#) . . . Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen spoke of several things he liked about the bill, including \$4 million to replenish the agricultural emergency account and \$1.15 million to reimburse farmers for crop and property losses caused by [wolf](#) and [elk](#). But he also lamented the shortfall his department would likely need to deal with for the next two years [and noted that] increased wait time for permits and inspections would increase significantly. [Read more](#).

Select DNR News releases

- [Red Flag Warning issued for extreme fire risk](#): The National Weather Service has issued a Red Flag Warning for several counties in southwest Minnesota effective today from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. due to extreme fire risk conditions.
- [Minnesota DNR accepting comments on environmental documents for proposed Rock Arch Rapids Restoration Project on South Branch of Wild Rice River](#): The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is accepting comments until 4:30 p.m. May 8 on an environmental assessment worksheet related to the South Branch Wild Rice River Rock Arch Rapids Restoration Project, located in Clay County.
- [Get Out MORE project at Madison Lake public water access complete](#): The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has completed upgrades at the Madison Lake Public Water Access, located on the east side of Madison Lake, between the cities of Mankato and Owatonna in Blue Earth County.
- [Lower St. Croix River has several regulation updates ahead of 2025 fishing opener](#): As anglers prepare for the St. Croix River fishing opener on Saturday, May 3, they should be aware of several updates for the fishing season.

Last Week at the Legislature:

At 12:30 PM, Senate [Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate](#) began its roll-out of SF 2393 (Frentz) which will be the [Senate Omnibus Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate Bill](#). The committee heard a bill walk-through and heard testimony on the bill from various stakeholders. See: [Spreadsheet](#) and [Bill Summary](#).

At 1:00 PM, House [Agriculture Finance and Policy](#) began the walk-through of [Delete-All amendment to HF2446](#) (Anderson, P.H.) Agriculture Budget Bill: [HF2446](#) (Anderson): Department of Agriculture, Board of Animal Health, and Agricultural Utilization Research Institute budget established; policy and technical changes made to agriculture provisions; fees modified and established; civil penalties provided; money transferred; and money appropriated. See: [Spreadsheet](#) and [House Research Summary](#).

On Tuesday at 3:00 PM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) heard [S.F. 2077 \(Hawj\)](#): Environment and natural resources appropriations and provisions modifications (note: this is the [Senate Omnibus Environment Appropriations bill](#)). An updated DE and Spreadsheet will be posted prior to the hearing. A bill walkthrough and testimony was taken up at this hearing. (See also [Bill Summary](#), [Spreadsheet](#), and [Sources of Policy Language](#)). The committee also discussed [S.F. 1393 \(Mathews\)](#): Data center energy generation redundancy establishment ([Fiscal Note](#) and [Bill Summary](#)).

On Wednesday at 10:15 AM, House [Legacy Finance](#) met for a committee walkthrough, public testimony, mark-up, and passage of the [Omnibus Legacy Finance bill, HF2563](#) (Vang): Legacy; dedicated funding website maintenance funding provided, and money appropriated. See: [Legacy Spreadsheet](#), [House Research Summary](#), and [written testimony](#) from the following: Metropolitan Regional Parks & Trails, Wilderness Inquiry, OHF Coalition, Hastings Community TV, South Washington County Telecommunications Commission, League of Women Voters of Minnesota, Minnesota Corn Growers Association, Metro Cities, United States Department of the Interior, Park Center Senior High, Quad Cities Cable Communications, Metropolitan Council, Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails, and environmental groups coalition.

At 12:30 PM, Senate [Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate](#) convened for the markup of the Senate [Omnibus Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate Bill, S.F. 2393 \(Frentz\)](#): Commerce and energy biennial budget establishment. See: [Bill Summary](#) and [Spreadsheet](#).

At 1:00 PM, House [Agriculture Finance and Policy](#) took public testimony on and heard amendments to [HF2446](#) (Anderson, P.H.) [Agriculture Budget Bill](#). See also: [Fiscal Spreadsheet](#), [House Research Summary](#), and [Written Testimony](#).

On Thursday at 8:30 AM, Senate [Finance](#) heard discussion on [S.F. 2458 Putnam](#) Department of Agriculture, the Board of Animal Health, and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute budget establishment (the [omnibus agriculture policy and finance bill](#)). See: [Change Items](#), [Spreadsheet](#), [Bill Summary](#), and testimony from: [MDA](#), [MFBF](#), and [MFU](#).

At 1:00 PM, House [Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy](#) began its walkthrough of the [Delete-All amendment to HF2439](#) (Heintzeman) Environment and Natural Resources Budget Bill. The

committee also heard public testimony on the bill. See also: [Fiscal Spreadsheet \(Change Items\)](#), [Fiscal Spreadsheet \(Detailed\)](#), [House Research Summary](#), and [Written Testimony](#).

At 3:00 PM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) marked up and passed the [Senate Omnibus Environment Appropriations bill, S.F. 2077 \(Hawj\)](#): Environment and natural resources appropriations and provisions modifications. See: [Bill Summary](#), [Sources of Policy Language](#) and testimony to the committee from: [MPCA](#), [DNR](#), [BWSR](#), [Senate Counsel Memo](#): Effect of Recognizing the Inherent Right of Wild Rice to Exist and Thrive.

Next Week at the Legislature:

The Legislature will be on Legislative break for Easter and Passover until April 21, 2025 at 12:00 PM.

Bills Introductions of Interest:

Environment and Natural Resources:

DFL Legislation:

Vang introduced: [H. F. 3124](#), A bill for an act relating to agriculture; appropriating money for heritage oilseeds and grains. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Agriculture Finance and Policy.

Hansen, R. introduced: [H. F. 3162](#), A bill for an act relating to economic development; appropriating money for costs related to the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative annual meeting. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Workforce, Labor, and Economic Development Finance and Policy.

Senator Johnson Stewart introduced--[S.F. No. 3320](#): A bill for an act relating to natural resources; providing for evaluation and permitting of projects requiring large water appropriations; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 103G.265, by adding a subdivision; 103G.271, by adding a subdivision; 116D.04, by adding a subdivision. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

Lee, F. and Hansen, R. introduced: [H. F. 3186](#), A bill for an act relating to environment; requiring public water supplies and publicly owned treatment works to annually report on water access policies; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 115. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Republican Legislation:

Wiener introduced: [H. F. 3142](#), A bill for an act relating to environment; appropriating money to transport wood waste for processing. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Wiener introduced: [H. F. 3143](#), A bill for an act relating to environment; appropriating money for a wood upcycling campus. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Senator Drazkowski introduced--[S.F. No. 3304](#): A bill for an act relating to clean water; appropriating money for a water treatment plant in the city of Hastings. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

Senators Drazkowski, Mathews, and Anderson introduced--[S.F. No. 3363](#): A bill for an act relating to energy; requiring spent fuel located at Prairie Island to be transferred to another site for storage; authorizing additional storage to be constructed at the Monticello nuclear generating plant; authorizing the public utility to withhold money from the renewable development account to pay for the cost to transport spent fuel; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 116C.771; 116C.777; 116C.779, subdivision 1, by adding a subdivision; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 116C.779, subdivision 2; 216C.41. Referred to the Committee on Energy, Utilities, Environment, and Climate.

Game and Fish:

Republican Legislation:

Senators Wesenberg, Green, and Bahr introduced--[S.F. No. 3195](#): A bill for an act relating to game and fish; lowering the minimum age to take big game from ten to eight years of age; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 97A.451, subdivision 4; 97A.475, subdivisions 2, 3. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

Senators Wesenberg and Westrom introduced--[S.F. No. 3375](#): A bill for an act relating to government data practices; classifying farmed Cervidae premises location data as private; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, section 13.643, subdivision 6. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development.

Outdoor Recreation

DFL Legislation:

Senator Hawj introduced--[S.F. No. 3370](#): A bill for an act relating to transportation; establishing an outdoor recreation license plate endorsement to allow motor vehicle access to state parks and recreation areas, including use on license plates, fees, public information, and exemptions; appropriating money; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 85.053, subdivision 2; 168.002, by adding a subdivision; 168.012,

subdivision 13; 168.0135, subdivision 1; 168.09, subdivision 7; 168.12, subdivisions 1, 5; 168.27, subdivision 28; 168.29; 169.79, subdivision 8; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapters 85; 168. Referred to the Committee on Transportation.