



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***

May 2, 2025

Important Dates:

- May 8, 2024 from 3-5 PM: [Rally for Public Lands](#)
- May 9-10: 77th Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener in Crosslake
- May 19: Constitutional deadline for adjournment for the 2025 Legislative Session

As time runs short for Minnesota's legislature, good relations remain key to a timely finish: There's a palpable air of both urgency and focus in Saint Paul right now. Much like any other legislative session, lawmakers are spending the final weeks of the legislative session working to achieve compromises in hopes of passing a budget. With the May 19th adjournment deadline now less than three weeks away, there remains a large amount to do. The house, senate and governor have all proposed vastly different approaches to winnowing down the state budget, all in hopes of preparing the state for a forecasted \$6 billion deficit in FY 2028 and 2029. Several sticking points seem to be arising at the state capitol . . . lawmakers seem split on things like summer unemployment insurance for hourly school workers and healthcare for undocumented immigrants. More broadly, the state's education and health budgets could be the source of several sticking points . . . The DFL-controlled senate and the tied Minnesota House have taken vastly different approaches to their budgeting, and will need to compromise before sending a final product to the Governor. Much of that work is likely to take place in conference committees . . . Leadership has been clear that conversations are already happening to compromise on key issues . . . Legislative floor sessions are taking place daily at this stage of the session, as both chambers look to move a high volume of bills in a short amount of time. [Read more.](#)

Senate passes Environment Budget Bill: The bill authorizes continued funding for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), introduces a series of user fee adjustments, and includes new environmental enforcement measures. In an effort to ensure a budget gets passed, the bill was amended on Thursday in Senate Finance to remove all policy provisions. Those provisions are included in [S.F. 2781 \(Hawi\)](#): the [Environment Policy Omnibus bill](#), which was heard on Thursday in Senate Environment.

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Key provisions in the budget bill include:

- State Park and Trail License Plate Fee Increases: The bill increases fees associated with specialty license plates that fund Minnesota's parks and trails.
- Updated Watercraft Surcharges: A flat surcharge is replaced with a tiered system based on watercraft type and length, aligning fees with usage impact. The aquatic invasive species (AIS) surcharge is also increased.
- Creation of a Foraging Task Force: This group will study and make recommendations on sustainable foraging practices and public land access. In the meantime, the DNR would be prohibited from making rules on foraging.
- Enhanced Watercraft Abandonment Penalties: Owners will now face both civil and criminal liability for abandoning boats and other watercraft.
- Inclusion of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund appropriations.

See how your legislators voted (at this stage, most votes will be along party lines, except the minority lead may vote for the bill in an effort to gain a spot on the conference committee):

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N ANDERSON	Y	GREEN	Y	LATZ	Y	PORT
N BAHR	N	GRUENHAGEN	N	LIESKE	N	PRATT
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Y CARLSON	Y	HAUSCHILD	N	LUCERO	N	RARICK
Y CHAMPION	Y	HAWJ	Y	MANN	N	RASMUSSEN
Y CLARK	Y	HOFFMAN	Y	MARTY	Y	REST
N COLEMAN	N	HOUSLEY	N	MATHEWS	Y	SEEBERGER
Y CWODZINSKI	N	HOWE	Y	MAYE QUADE	N	UTKE
N DAHMS	N	JASINSKI	Y	MCEWEN	N	WEBER
Y DIBBLE	N	JOHNSON	N	MILLER	N	WESENBERG
N DORNINK	Y	JOHNSON STEWART	Y	MITCHELL	Y	WESTLIN
N DRAHEIM	Y	KLEIN	Y	MOHAMED	N	WESTROM
N DRAZKOWSKI	N	KORAN	Y	MURPHY	Y	WIKLUND
N DUCKWORTH	N	KREUN	N	NELSON	Y	XIONG
N FARNSWORTH	Y	KUNESH	Y	OUMOU VERBETEN		
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SF 2077	HAWJ					
FINAL PASSAGE			YEA 35			NAY 30

Legacy Bill Temporarily Tabled on Senate floor: The Senate took up the Legacy finance bill on the floor Wednesday; however, the bill was ultimately tabled. While this does not end the bill's progress, it does delay any immediate action; the bill can be brought back at any time, but for now, it remains on hold. The primary reason for this delay was the inclusion of two amendments to the Arts and Cultural Heritage section of the bill that proved controversial among members. One proposed funding to commemorate the 50th anniversary of

Southeast Asian participation in the Vietnam War, and the other sought funding for the Taste of Minnesota festival; both raising concerns that could not be resolved in the course of the floor debate. Additionally, an amendment offered by Senator Drazkowski was adopted that would require Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF) recipients to notify adjacent landowners of any work being conducted and explain how access would be requested if needed. This amendment would add considerable costs to projects while issues around access are already covered by existing trespass laws. Discussions are underway with Senate leadership regarding a plan to bring the Legacy bill back for consideration.

The Legacy Finance Bill proposes to allocate approximately \$776.9 million across four major funds established by the Legacy Amendment: the Outdoor Heritage Fund, Clean Water Fund, Parks and Trails Fund, and Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. The bill includes about \$162 million from the Outdoor Heritage Fund to protect key habitats, and roughly \$303 million from the Clean Water Fund, including funding directed toward addressing nitrate contamination in southern Minnesota, expanded water monitoring, private well testing, and long-term protection strategies. Around \$100 million is dedicated to the Parks and Trails Fund to support maintenance, accessibility, and enhancement of recreational areas throughout the state.

Senate passes Agriculture omnibus bill: The Minnesota Senate passed a bipartisan Agriculture budget bill late Wednesday afternoon with a vote of 43-23. The legislation, authored by Aric Putnam (DFL-St. Cloud), addresses challenges facing the agricultural community through investments in food security, farm health, and avian influenza response. [Read more.](#)

Republican Keri Heintzeman wins special election for Minnesota Senate seat left open by Eichorn: Heintzeman defeated Democrat Denise Slipy by [nearly 21 percentage points](#) in Minnesota Senate District 6, which covers portions of Crow Wing, Cass and Itasca counties. The Nisswa Republican will fill the seat left open by Eichorn, who [resigned last month](#) following his arrest in an underage prostitution sting. Heintzeman's margin of victory was smaller than Eichorn had in 2022, when he defeated his DFL challenger by 27 percentage points . . . A victory by Heintzeman narrowed the DFL's majority in the Senate back to one vote. [Read more.](#) Full election results can be found at the [Secretary of State's website](#).

Audit finds 55-year lapse in DNR's reporting of land inventory: The Department of Natural Resources does a good job selecting land to acquire, but the process takes too long and the agency has gone 55 years without the legislatively required reporting of an inventory of DNR-managed land, according to the Office of the Legislative Auditor. The agency's failure to publicly report its land holdings, as required under a law passed in the 1970s, garnered the most attention from lawmakers Friday when the office presented an evaluation of how well the agency complies with land acquisition processes and reporting requirements. As part of the biennial inventory, the DNR is supposed to report on additional property the department wishes to acquire. . . Auditors surveyed various stakeholders in DNR land deals, including staff members, to collect their opinions on the DNR's handling of the transactions. Asked if the DNR does a good job selecting land to acquire, 63% of landowners said they agree or strongly agree. Partner organizations, including nonprofits that help convey some of the land, answered the question similarly. Eighty percent of DNR staff agreed or strongly agreed that the agency does a good job selecting land to acquire. But when stakeholders were surveyed for their opinions

on the duration for making land deals, the majority of all respondents said they disagree or strongly disagree that DNR's process for acquiring land concludes within a reasonable time frame. [Read more](#).

Minnesota has already sold over 220,000 fishing licenses - including one to Governor Tim Walz: The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources says more than 221,000 fishing licenses have been sold already ahead of next week's fishing opener, with that number growing by one more Thursday thanks to Governor Tim Walz. With a swipe of a card, Governor Walz officially purchased his fishing license ahead of the Governor's Fishing Opener in Cross Lake . . . The Cross Lake area is hosting the fishing opener for the first time ever. [Read more](#).

Bird flu reported again in central Minnesota: Officials say bird flu has shown up again in Minnesota. The Minnesota Board of Animal Health says H5N1 High Pathogenic Avian Influenza was detected in four birds in Stearns County back on April 23rd. The birds were reportedly classified as Non-Poultry, which would be a bird that does not enter the food stream. It was the first detection of bird flu in Minnesota since it was detected in a similar flock in Crow Wing County February 12th. Producers have been bracing for the return of avian influenza this spring as wild birds return from their winter homes down south. The Minnesota Legislature is appropriating more money in this year's agriculture bill to prepare for, monitor and treat bird flu. [Read more](#).

Select DNR News releases

- [DNR seeks public comments on proposed OHV grant-in-aid trails](#): The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is accepting public comments on proposed off-highway vehicle trail projects submitted through the state's grant-in-aid program.

Last Week at the Legislature:

On Monday at 8:30 AM, Senate [Finance](#) discussed, among other bills: [S.F. 2077 \(Hawj\)](#): Omnibus Environment and Natural Resources policy and appropriations. See also: [Spreadsheet](#), [Summary](#), and testimony from: [MPCA](#), [DNR](#), [BWSR-Letter](#), [Forager-Chef](#), [Friends-of-MN-SNAs](#), [Minnesota-Foraging-Alliance](#), [Minnesota-Mycological-Society](#), [MNCF](#), [MN-Zoo](#), [NATIFS](#), and [PSI](#).

At 9:00 AM, the [Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources](#) convened for a hearing. The agenda is as follows: the Commission welcomed new members, heard the Director's report on: 2023 [Completed projects](#), 2024 [Completed projects](#), [Peer Review Status](#) for 2025 Recommendations, and [2026 RFP by the Numbers](#). [The Commission took action on](#): Proposal evaluation / selection process for 2026 LCCMR recommendations. The Commission also took action on the election of Executive Committee Members ([Elections and Proxy Memo](#)), and discussed LCCMR site visit options ([Site Visits](#) Overview). The Commission also heard a legislative update on 2025 LCCMR Recommendations.

On Tuesday at 9:00 AM, House [Capital Investment](#) heard a number of capital budget requests and heard a presentation on the [PFAS Removal Report](#) by the MN Pollution Control Agency. [MPCA PFAS removal report presentation.pdf](#)

At 9:00 AM, Senate [Taxes](#) heard a number of bills, including: [S.F. 2530 \(Hauschild\)](#): Orderly and environmentally responsible development of the states gas resources facilitation provision and appropriation. See also: [Bill Summary](#), [Revenue Estimate](#), and letter of support from [Lake Superior School District](#).

On Wednesday at 12:30 PM, House [Ways and Means](#) met to discuss several bills, and moved to insert the language of [HF2439](#) onto [SF2077](#): Omnibus Environment and Natural Resources Budget Bill.

On Thursday at 8:30 AM, Senate [Environment, Climate, and Legacy](#) met to discuss [S.F. 2781 \(Hawj\)](#): the [Environment Policy Omnibus bill](#). See also: [Bill Summary](#) and testimony from: [Partnership on Waste & Energy](#), [MCEA \(MCEA Factsheet: Public Waters\)](#), [Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities](#), [Association of Minnesota Counties](#), [Minnesota Chamber of Commerce](#), [MMUA](#), [Minnesota Trout Unlimited](#), [Consumer Technology Association](#), [MRES](#) and various constituent testimony from: [Braham Gadiant](#), [Brian Murphy](#), [Cindy Benson](#), [Dave Mielke](#), [Don Helmbrecht](#), [Jason Schuldt](#), [Jerry Qualley](#), [Josh Connor](#), [Kelly Dusek](#), [Kevin Christianson](#), [Lee Robert](#), [Russell Platz](#), [Sam and Diane Scott](#), [Steve Porter](#), [Steven Schneiders](#), [Tom OConnor](#), [Tyler Lighter](#).

Next Week at the Legislature:

Committee schedules may be subject to change or delayed with minimal notice, given the dynamic nature of the legislative session. The legislative body has almost completed the passage of omnibus bills through the House Ways and Means committee and the Senate Finance committee. At this point in the Legislative Session, the frequency of floor sessions will increase to facilitate the processing of the bills. Conference committees will begin to meet to reconcile differences between the House and Senate bills before a final vote in each respective body.

Bills Introductions of Interest:

Environment and Natural Resources:

Republican Legislation:

Myers introduced: [H. F. 3252](#). A bill for an act relating to environment; establishing a drinking water contaminant mitigation program; appropriating money. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

McDonald introduced: [H. F. 3265](#). A bill for an act relating to environment; requiring amendments to subsurface treatment system rules to refer to straight-pipe system statutory requirements. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

DFL Legislation:

Frederick and Hansen, R. introduced: [H. F. 3260](#). A bill for an act relating to agriculture; requiring a report on agricultural land trends; appropriating money. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Agriculture Finance and Policy.

Game and Fish:

Republican Legislation:

Nelson and Burkel introduced: [H. F. 3257](#). A bill for an act relating to agriculture; appropriating money for wolf-livestock conflict prevention grants. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Agriculture Finance and Policy.

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