



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 23, 2025:

Important Dates:

- February 17, 2026: First day of the 2026 Legislative Session.

Legislature — with budget incomplete — gavels out, prepares for special session: Some years, state legislative sessions surge to a climax on their final day, a flurry of activity providing a sustained adrenaline rush, culminating in smiles of satisfaction as a midnight deadline is met for completing the people's business.

Such could be said of 2025's constitutionally prescribed final day of Minnesota's legislative session. On Monday, some completed conference committee reports were passed by the House and sent to the Senate, but several more [including the Environment and Natural Resources budget bill] lay dormant, the committee co-chairs from the two chambers unable to reach agreement. [Read more.](#)

The Minnesota Legislature's 2025 session sputtered to an uneventful end Monday night as lawmakers spent little time passing budget bills and blamed each other for not finishing their work. There was scant activity in the tied House and DFL-controlled Senate on the Legislature's final day, and both chambers adjourned ahead of their 11:59 p.m. deadline with many budget bills still unpassed. After lauding each other days earlier for [striking a budget deal](#), GOP and DFL legislative leaders held separate news conferences Monday accusing each other of slowing things down. [Read more.](#)

Lawmakers [did approve] several budget bills, including Legacy, housing, agriculture, veterans and judiciary and public safety.

Special Session: In an update Thursday, [House Speaker Lisa Demuth](#) (R-Cold Spring) and [Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Park) said they've been meeting with working groups to receive updates on agreements on bills. House and Senate members are working to get everything wrapped up as soon as possible . . . Earlier Thursday, [Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy](#) (DFL-St. Paul) said she hopes the working groups can wrap up their work before the weekend. [Read more.](#) Legislative leaders and Gov. Tim Walz met with working groups Wednesday evening to start expediting budget bills that got stuck. With a narrowly DFL-led Senate and tied House, each working group faced challenges ironing out compromise deals

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that could satisfy members from each chamber and each political party. Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy, DFL-St. Paul, said the tied House created an especially unique dynamic in negotiations . . . All three leaders said they canceled holiday weekend plans to finish outstanding budget bills. They said they expected key lawmakers would do the same . . . On Wednesday, Walz said the soonest he'd be able to call a special session is early next week. He said lawmakers seemed eager to complete their bills and return to take votes. [Read more.](#)

Unusual Dynamics in the 2025 Legislative Session: The bumpy ending is a fitting bookend to a session where little has gone smoothly this year. From a tied Senate at the beginning due to a senator's death, to a tied House now that got down to business many weeks into the year, it's been rocky throughout. A senator also resigned this year after being arrested and charged in a prostitution sting. The overall 101 Democrats and 100 Republicans now in place make it the tightest split on record. Murphy, the Senate leader, has her work cut out for her to get to the end. She faces a revolt in her caucus over a deal she signed her name to . . . By nature of the House tie, bipartisan backing is needed for anything and everything to pass . . . The Legislature is scheduled to convene again for its next regular run on Feb. 17. [Read more.](#)

Potential Summer/Fall Special Session: Once lawmakers do conclude [the session], some expect they'll be called back for another special session this summer or fall. They're anticipating fallout from federal actions around Medicaid and other spending that could poke holes in the state's newly enacted budget. There could be conditions placed on federal aid for the health programs that don't match up to state law, or there could be outright spending cuts. But Congress hasn't shown it's close to wrapping up work on its budget plans either...as conservative holdouts are demanding quicker cuts to Medicaid and green energy programs before giving their full support. [Read more.](#)

House, Senate pass Legacy Bill: [Rep. Samantha Vang](#) (DFL-Brooklyn Center) sponsors [HF2563](#), and the bill was passed 113-21 by the House and 37-30 by the Senate last Sunday. "Not everyone is going to be happy," said [Rep. Joe McDonald](#) (R-Delano), who co-chairs the House Legacy Finance Committee with Vang. "Unfortunately, not everybody got everything that they wanted. There were winners and losers and that's what happens in the Legislature. Compromise, especially with the tie that we have." [Sen. Found Hawj](#) (DFL-St. Paul), the Senate sponsor, agrees "The bill, as I see now, is better than how it left the Senate floor. I know it's not a perfect bill to individual liking."

The [Legacy Amendment](#) increases the state sales tax by three-eighths of 1% from July 1, 2009 until 2034. That additional revenue is dedicated to four funds: 33% for the [Clean Water Fund](#); 33% for the [Outdoor Heritage Fund](#); 19.75% for the [Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund](#); and 14.25% for the [Parks and Trails Fund](#). The package would allocate \$162.11 million to the Outdoor Heritage Fund for 51 projects in fiscal year 2026 and \$303.93 million to the Clean Water Fund, \$130.17 million to the Parks and Trails Fund and \$179.91 million to the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund for fiscal years 2026-27. 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. The Board of Water and Soil Resources would receive the biggest chunk of the Clean Water Fund allocation at \$139.34 million, including \$88.1 million for watersheds. [Read more.](#)

The Legacy bill was signed into law on May 23, 2025. See: [Chapter 36](#)

See how legislators voted:

Senate:

N ABELER	Y FRENTZ	Y KUPEC	Y PAPPAS
N ANDERSON	N GREEN	Y LANG	Y PHA
N BAHR	N GRUENHAGEN	Y LATZ	Y PORT
Y BOLDON	Y GUSTAFSON	N LIESKE	N PRATT
Y CARLSON	Y HAUSCHILD	N LIMMER	Y PUTNAM
Y CHAMPION	Y HAWJ	N LUCERO	N RARICK
Y CLARK	N HEINTZEMAN	Y MANN	N RASMUSSEN
Y COLEMAN	N HOFFMAN	Y MARTY	Y REST
Y CWODZINSKI	Y HOUSLEY	N MATHEWS	Y SEEBERGER
N DAHMS	N HOWE	Y MAYE QUADE	N UTKE
Y DIBBLE	N JASINSKI	Y MCEWEN	N WEBER
N DORNINK	N JOHNSON	N MILLER	N WESENBERG
N DRAHEIM	Y JOHNSON STEWART	Y MITCHELL	Y WESTLIN
N DRAZKOWSKI	Y KLEIN	Y MOHAMED	N WESTROM
N DUCKWORTH	N KORAN	Y MURPHY	Y WIKLUND
N FARNSWORTH	N KREUN	Y NELSON	Y XIONG
Y FATEH	Y KUNESH	Y OUMOU VERBETEN	
HF 2563 HAWJ			
FINAL PASSAGE CC REPORT		YEA 37	NAY 30

House:

ACOMB	●	FALCONER	●	HUDSON	●	MEKELAND	●	RYMER	●
AGBAJE	●	FEIST	●	HUOT	●	MOLLER	●	SCHOMACKER	●
ALLEN	●	FINKE	●	HUSSEIN	●	MOMANYI-HILTSLEY	●	SCHULTZ	●
ALTENDORF	●	FISCHER	●	IGO	●	MUELLER	●	SCHWARTZ	●
ANDERSON, P. E.	●	FOGELMAN	●	JACOB	●	MURPHY	●	SCOTT	●
ANDERSON, P. H.	●	FRANSON	●	JOHNSON, P.	●	MYERS	●	SENCER-MURA	●
BACKER	●	FRAZIER	●	JOHNSON, W.	●	NADEAU	●	SEXTON	●
BAHNER	●	FREDERICK	●	JONES	●	NASH	●	SKRABA	●
BAKEBERG	●	FREIBERG	●	JORDAN	●	NELSON	●	SMITH	●
BAKER	●	GANDER	●	JOY	●	NISKA	●	STEPHENSON	●
BENNETT	●	GILLMAN	●	KEELER	●	NOOR	●	STIER	●
BERG	●	GOMEZ	●	KLEVORN	●	NORRIS	●	SWEDZINSKI	●
BIERMAN	●	GORDON	●	KNUDSEN	●	NOVOTNY	●	TABKE	●
BLISS	●	GOTTFRIED	●	KOEGEL	●	O'DRISCOLL	●	TORKELSON	●
BURKEL	●	GREENE	●	KOTYZA-WITTHUHN	●	OLSON	●	VAN BINSBERGEN	●
CARROLL	●	GREENMAN	●	KOZLOWSKI	●	PÉREZ-VEGA	●	VANG	●
CHA	●	HANSEN, R.	●	KOZNICK	●	PERRYMAN	●	VIRNIG	●
CLARDY	●	HANSON, J.	●	KRAFT	●	PINTO	●	WARWAS	●
COULTER	●	HARDER	●	KRESHA	●	PURSELL	●	WEST	●
CURRAN	●	HEINTZEMAN	●	LAWRENCE	●	QUAM	●	WIENER	●
DAVIDS	●	HEMMINGSSEN-JAEGER	●	LEE, F.	●	RARICK	●	WITTE	●
DAVIS	●	HER	●	LEE, K.	●	REHM	●	WOLGAMOTT	●
DIPPEL	●	HICKS	●	LIEBLING	●	REHRAUER	●	XIONG	●
DOTSETH	●	HILL	●	LILLIE	●	REPINSKI	●	YOUAKIM	●
DURAN	●	HOLLINS	●	LONG	●	REYER	●	ZELEZNIKAR	●
ELKINS	●	HORTMAN	●	MAHAMOUD	●	ROACH	●	SPEAKER	●
ENGEN	●	HOWARD	●	MCDONALD	●	ROBBINS	●	DEMUTH	●

House, Senate pass Agriculture budget, policy bill: The last-minute rush of legislation was on full display Sunday when the House passed the [conference committee report](#) on the omnibus agriculture finance and policy bill. The 130-4 vote came a couple hours after the agreement was revealed [online](#). There had been no public meetings on [HF2446](#) since it was first [heard by the conference committee](#) May 9. The Senate passed the bill 58-8, sending the bill to the governor. In the 2026-27 biennium, it would appropriate \$115 million to the Department of Agriculture, \$13.5 million to the Board of Animal Health, \$8.7 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. Funding includes \$400,000 to combat the spread of livestock and poultry diseases . . . Provisions important to his caucus include maintaining funding to the Board of Animal Health to deal with livestock diseases, relief for farmers suffering from wolf predation and crop destruction by elk, and funding for county agriculture inspectors and the emergency agriculture account in case of a resurgence of avian influenza . . . the bill would transfer \$1.5 million from the General Fund in fiscal year 2026 to the agricultural emergency account, making up to \$750,000 available to test for avian influenza in milk, poultry, and pet foods; assist the Health Department to monitor avian flu in farmers, farm workers and people who process agricultural products; and provide funding to the University of Minnesota to develop rapid testing to detect bird flu in private wells and urban drinking water and wastewater systems. [Read more](#).

The Agriculture Finance and Policy bill was signed into law on May 23, 2025. See: [Chapter 34](#).

Select DNR News releases

- [Devil's Kettle Trail at Judge C.R. Magney State Park wins first place in national readers' choice award for best hiking trail](#): Voters nationwide chose Devil's Kettle Trail as the best among 19 hiking trail nominees in the USA Today 10 Best Readers' Choice Awards.
- [Open House: Moccasin Point Public Water Access on Lake Vermilion to receive extensive upgrades](#): The DNR invites the public to an open house to share and gather information about extensive upgrades planned for Moccasin Point Public Water Access on Lake Vermilion near Tower, Minn. Construction is slated to begin after the 2025 boating season.

Last Week at the Legislature:

Last Sunday at 3:00 PM, the [Conference Committee on HF 2563 - Legacy Finance Bill](#) met to finalize the [Legacy Conference Committee Agreement](#). See also: [Legacy CC Agreement Spreadsheet](#) and [letters submitted to the conference committee](#) from: Minnesota Historical Society, Farm Babies, Greater Minnesota Parks and Trails, Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails System, Wilderness Inquiry, Minnesota Children's Museum, Vietnamese Community of Minnesota, Southeast Asian Alliance, and the Coalition of Allied Afghan and Vietnam War Veterans. The Conferees were Representatives Vang; McDonald; Hussein; Skraba, and Senators Hawj; McEwen; Pha; Mohamed; Pratt.

With the Regular Legislative Session ending on Monday, conference committees were unable to meet this week. Chairs and Conferees, alongside House and Senate Leadership, have been convening informally through working groups to reconcile differences and negotiate a final agreement.

Bills Introductions of Interest:

Environment and Natural Resources:

Bipartisan Legislation:

Senators Abeler, Utke, Hoffman, Rarick, and Fateh introduced--[S.F. No. 3533](#): A bill for an act relating to agriculture; appropriating money for the Slow the Spread program to manage spongy moth populations. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development.

Senators Abeler, Utke, Miller, Hoffman, and Rarick introduced--[S.F. No. 3534](#): A bill for an act relating to agriculture; appropriating money for the Slow the Spread program to manage spongy moth populations. Referred to the Committee on Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband, and Rural Development.

DFL Legislation:

Pursell introduced: [H. F. 3331](#), A bill for an act relating to environment; setting a state goal for wetland restoration and protection; requiring reports; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 103G. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Pursell; Fischer; Finke; Hansen, R.; Jordan; Falconer; Kraft; Acomb; Hollins; Pérez-Vega; Tabke; Jones; Lee, K.; Sencer-Mura; Frazier; Greenman; Gottfried; Hill; Freiberg; Rehauer; Lee, F.; Carroll; Vang; Hanson, J.; Curran; Gomez; Xiong; Smith; Rehm; Liebling; Berg; Mahamoud; Howard; Reyer and Feist introduced: [H. F. 3339](#), A bill for an act relating to environment; reinstating citizen membership for Pollution Control Agency; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 116.02; 116.03, subdivisions 1, 2a. The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy.

Senator Johnson Stewart introduced--[S.F. No. 3528](#): A bill for an act relating to environment; setting a state goal for wetland restoration and protection; requiring reports; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 103G. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.

Senator McEwen introduced--[S.F. No. 3541](#): A bill for an act relating to environment; reinstating citizen membership for Pollution Control Agency; amending Minnesota Statutes 2024, sections 116.02; 116.03, subdivisions 1, 2a. Referred to the Committee on Environment, Climate, and Legacy.