



# 2013

MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP

## BRIEFING BOOK



Minnesota  
Environmental  
Partnership





# MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP

is a coalition of more than 75 environmental and conservation organizations working together for clean water, clean energy and protection of our Great Outdoors. We engage state leaders, unite environmental efforts and help citizens take action for the Minnesota they love.

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## GREAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE ON THE HORIZON TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE MINNESOTA'S ENVIRONMENT.

Minnesotans want to leave a legacy of clean water, abundant wildlife, robust transportation choices and clean energy for future generations. The many new and returning leaders in the 2013 Minnesotan State Legislature have heard this message — and the Minnesota Environmental Partnership is committed to harnessing the power of our conservation community to work with state leaders and achieve results this year.

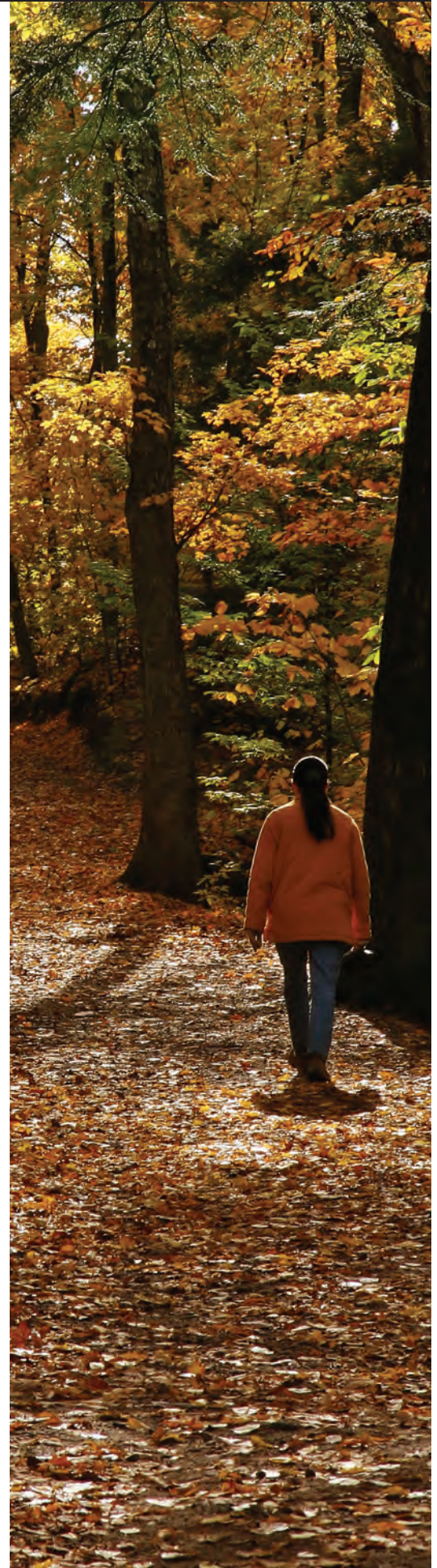
Minnesota Environmental Partnership member groups bring years of hard-won experience and passion to collectively work for a better Minnesota future. Together, our partnership has selected the most pressing environmental laws, investments and initiatives as the focus of our combined efforts in 2013.

Please join the hard working groups in Minnesota Environmental Partnership as we turn the opportunities on the horizon into a new day for our Great Outdoors by supporting the following initiatives:

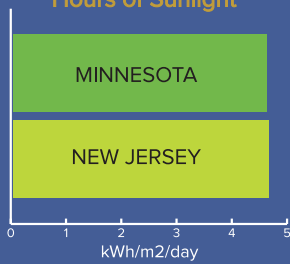
- Solar Works for Minnesota
- Clean Water Legacy Accountability Act
- Transit for a Stronger Economy
- Safeguarding Investments for Minnesota's Future

### Other ongoing MEP priorities

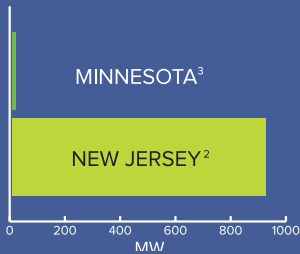
- Lake Superior and the Great Lakes – Ours to Protect
- Defending Minnesota's Environmental Policy Foundation





Peak Solar Generating Hours of Sunlight<sup>1</sup>

## Solar Power Installed



<sup>1</sup> [http://gisatnrel.nrel.gov/PVWatts\\_Viewer/index.html](http://gisatnrel.nrel.gov/PVWatts_Viewer/index.html)

<sup>2</sup> New Jersey's Clean Energy Program, NJ Board of Public Utilities presentation by Charlie Garrison at Renewable Energy Committee public meeting held on 1/7/2013. [www.njcleanenergy.com/renewable-energy/project-activity-reports/installation-summary-by-technology/solar-installation-projects](http://www.njcleanenergy.com/renewable-energy/project-activity-reports/installation-summary-by-technology/solar-installation-projects)

<sup>3</sup> email dated 1/29/2013 from Stacy A. Miller, Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources, Office of Renewable Energy and Advanced Technologies

## OVERVIEW

Minnesota led the nation in establishing laws that help put our state on the path to a clean energy future. In 2007, the Next Generation Energy Act passed with bipartisan support and was signed into law by Governor Pawlenty. It included the 25% by 2025 Renewable Energy Standard (primarily wind). This propelled Minnesota forward in installation of clean, sustainable energy, which protects our land, air, water and public health. However, since 2007 other states have passed stronger policies that have pushed them into leadership roles in renewable energy development, especially solar energy.

Now is the time for Minnesota to assume the leadership role again in renewable energy and reduce our energy dependency on fossil fuels like coal and oil. That's why MEP has joined with the Solar Works for Minnesota Coalition to support a 10 percent solar standard that will produce more renewable energy, generate good-paying jobs and help keep our air clean.

## SOLAR WORKS FOR MINNESOTA





## PROBLEM

In today's uncertain global political and economic environments, it is vitally important to Minnesota voters that the U.S. move away from drilling and digging and shift towards clean, renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar. Each year Minnesota imports more than \$20 billion dollars in polluting energy from other states that harms our environment and our economy. While Minnesota does not have any coal, natural gas or oil, we do have an abundance of renewable energy resources that have been left untapped. It is time we move forward with the clean energy future that allows our homes, businesses and communities to take advantage of solar energy.

## POSITION STATEMENT

To achieve a clean, renewable energy future for our state, Minnesota voters want to see changes. Nearly three-quarters of Minnesotans support a requirement that 10 percent of the state's electricity come from solar power.\* With more solar power, we can take the next step to a cleaner energy economy, continuing our transition away from coal and gas.

**We support a Solar Energy Standard (SES) – a policy that will ensure Minnesota gets 10 percent of its electricity from solar by the year 2030.** The policy needs to include a rational approach that will allow solar energy to flourish in our state, including:

- a reliable funding mechanism for solar system owners with a simple contract that pays out over a period of time; and
- a firm solar standard with benchmarks that creates certainty for the solar industry, creating good jobs and reducing our dependency on coal and oil.

Passing an SES will produce the following results:

- create thousands of good jobs in the state's solar industry;
- put solar on thousands of Minnesota rooftops, from residential to small businesses to big businesses; and
- provide millions of dollars in energy savings and billions of dollars in economic activity.

By investing in solar in Minnesota today, our children and grandchildren will enjoy more and better jobs, cleaner air and stable, cheaper electrical rates. It's clear: solar energy works for Minnesota.

\* See endnote on back cover.



## COMMITTEES | CONTACTS

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SENATE: Environment & Energy

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# CLEAN WATER LEGACY

## ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

### OVERVIEW

In 2006, the Minnesota Legislature enacted the Clean Water Legacy Act to create an effective system to identify sources of pollution in Minnesota's waters and restore their quality. This law accelerated completion of clean-up plans (a.k.a. TMDLs) required by the federal Clean Water Act for each waterbody and each problem pollutant in our state. These plans identify the pollution sources and assign pollution reduction targets needed to reach water quality standards. Clean-up "Action Plans" then lay out the steps to achieve clean water.

The single largest source of water pollution in Minnesota currently is nonpoint pollution, primarily runoff from agricultural fields. Action Plans must address agricultural runoff efficiently and effectively if future generations in Minnesota are to enjoy clean and healthy waters. Our legislation creates fair and common sense accountability for public funds used to clean up our water.



Photo: Darrell Spencer



## PROBLEM

Six out of seven – 86% – of water quality impairments in Minnesota are caused by nonpoint sources, mainly agricultural operations that discharge sediments, fertilizers, pesticides and bacteria into our rivers, lakes, wetlands and streams. Despite substantial investments, Minnesota lacks an effective mechanism to track and address nonpoint pollution. The following weaknesses in the present system have been identified:

- vague clean-up plans – many clean-up plans fail to include a complete analysis of the pollution sources;
- uncertain timelines – clean-up plans lack clear targets, timelines and benchmarks for restoration of our waters; and
- lack of clear nonpoint priorities – the most effective actions to reduce nonpoint pollution are not clearly prioritized.

## POSITION STATEMENT

The Legislature should direct the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to:

- improve clean-up and Action Plans by requiring:
  - > clear identification of nonpoint pollution sources;
  - > specific goals, firm timelines, and criteria for on-the-ground projects;
  - > approval of Action Plans within one year of clean-up plan approval; and
- develop a priority list of most effective actions for allocating clean-up funds.



## COMMITTEES | CONTACTS

### Bill authors:

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# INVESTING IN MINNESOTA'S FUTURE

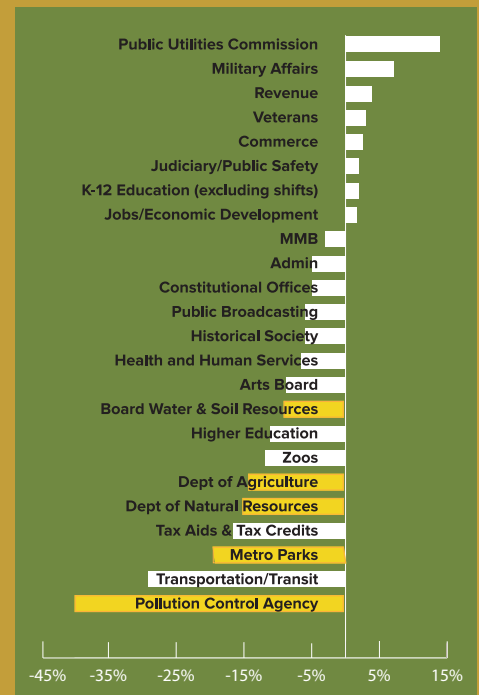
Minnesotans want strong state investment in our Great Outdoors. This desire has come through loud and clear in public opinion polls and in the voting booth, where citizens passed the landmark Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment that established dedicated funding to supplement traditional spending on the environment.

With budget battles and economic uncertainty dominating decision-making, our challenge is to make sure state leaders:

- direct Clean Water, Land and Legacy funds to the most vital projects — and don't allow funds dedicated to the environment to be raided for other uses;
- funding decisions for Minnesota's Great Outdoors must be fair and proportionate to the overall state budget. We must reverse the disproportionate cuts to environmental and conservation programs in recent years, and renew the state's commitment to *regaining the traditional one percent share of the total state general fund budget* for our Great Outdoors;
- capital investments for Minnesota's Great Outdoors *must be maintained at a level at least equal to the 10-year average of 22 percent* of the total general obligation bonding proposed or authorized. In addition, we must invest in our transit system to expand our transportation options; and
- new revenue, fairly raised, must be part of the solution to balancing the state budget.

## 2011 Special Session Enacted Budget

General Fund Increase/Decrease by Agency  
FY 2012-2013



Source: Minnesota Legislature, Session Tracking Sheets; analysis by Conservation Minnesota

## TRANSIT FOR A STRONGER ECONOMY

### OVERVIEW

Expanded light rail, bus rapid transit and regular bus service, along with improved access for pedestrians and people using wheelchairs and bicycles, will create 30,000 jobs\*, help keep our air clean, and make the daily commute for millions of Minnesotans faster, cheaper, and more fair.

Building out Minnesota's transit system is a good investment for our state, expanding transportation options for families, seniors, students and people with disabilities; reducing traffic congestion; and helping attract employers and a broader, younger professional labor pool to our state.

\* The Itasca project. November 30, 2012. Regional Transit System Return on Investment Assessment. p.7





## PROBLEM

Minnesota's current transportation system offers few choices. Families today struggle with long commutes and rising gas prices. Only 25% of metro households have access to convenient transit.<sup>†</sup>

Despite nearly 90 million rides on metro area public transit in 2012, the Twin Cities is falling behind peer cities in transit options, making this region less appealing to corporations and young professionals. Transit use and demand also are growing in Greater Minnesota, where fewer families have access to transit, and two counties have no transit service at all.

Yet funding for public transit is a recurring battle at the legislature. Regional and statewide plans for transit investments lack secure funding. More people are incorporating bicycling and walking into their transportation patterns, but funding for these options is scarce.

## POSITION STATEMENT

The Minnesota legislature should solve these problems and ensure a stronger Minnesota economy by providing funding to build out and operate a transit system including, bus, rail and safe connections by walking and bicycling and for people with disabilities. An additional \$300 million in the Twin Cities metro and an additional \$32 million in Greater Minnesota, per year, is required to build out our transportation system.

New funding would yield:

- three additional light rail lines, including Southwest, Bottineau and a Light Rail Transit line in the east metro;
- four new highway bus rapid transit (BRT) lines;
- twelve new arterial rapid bus lines on current routes;
- more extensive and frequent local bus service;
- in Greater Minnesota, 250 new bus routes across 64 operating systems, including evening and weekend service; and
- funding for local governments to build proper facilities for pedestrians and people who use bicycles and wheelchairs.

### Where Are Our Peers?‡



## COMMITTEES | CONTACTS

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and Means

SENATE: Transportation and Public  
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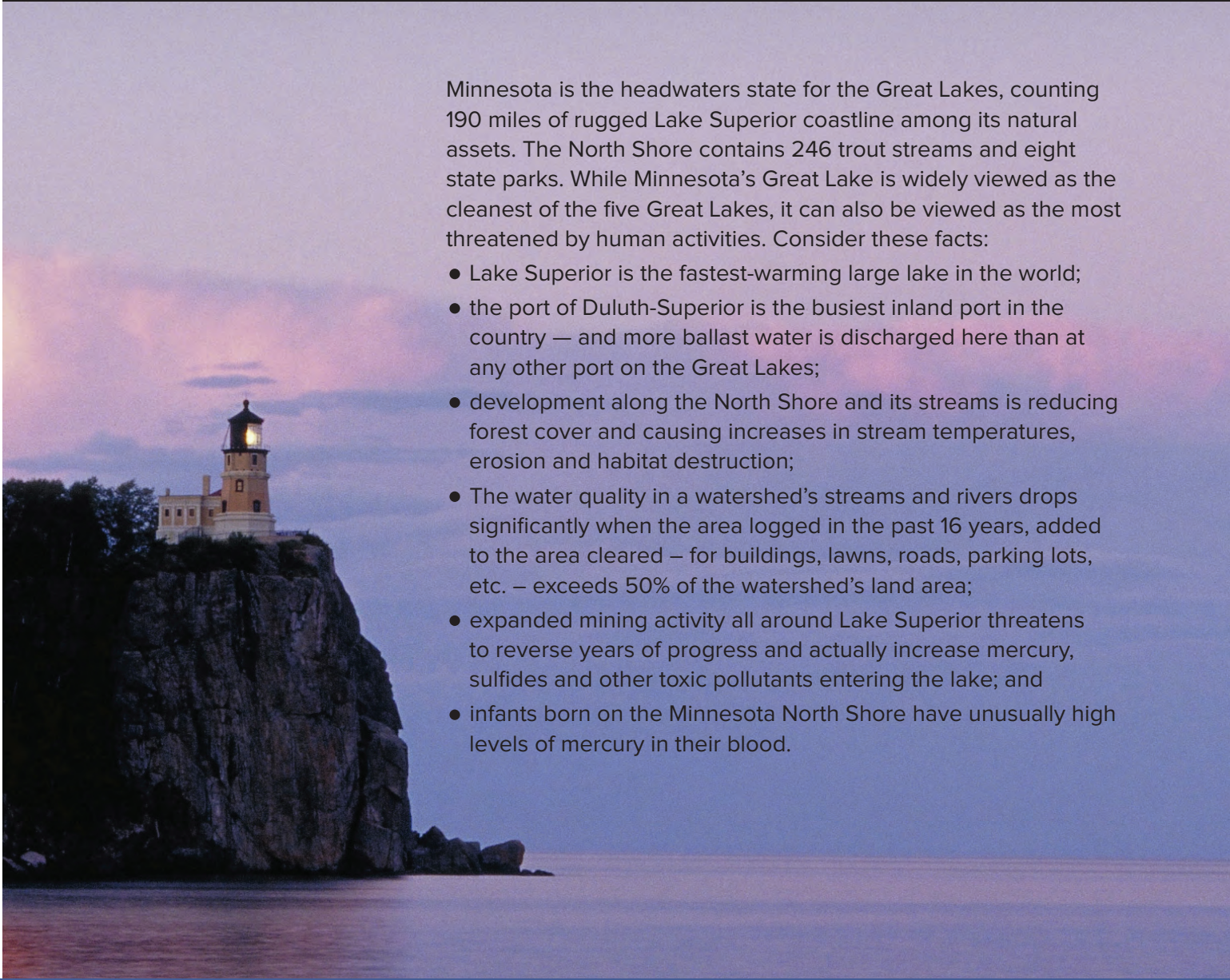
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<sup>†</sup> Transportation Performance in the Twin Cities Region, 2008, a report by Transit for Livable Communities, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, and Surface Transportation Policy Partnership. <http://www.tlcminnesota.org/pdf/Transportation%20Performance%20Report%202009%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>‡</sup> Twin Cities: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation>; Dallas: <http://www.dart.org/about/dartfacts.asp>, <http://www.dart.org/news/news.asp?ID=1045> and <http://www.dart.org/news/news.asp?ID=1044>; Salt Lake City: <http://www.rideuta.com/mc/?page=Projects-Frontlines2015>, <http://www.rideuta.com/mc/?page=Projects-BusRapidTransit-5600WestBRT>, and Transport Politic: <http://www.thetransportpolitic.com/2010/04/06/salt-lake-city-opens-first-separated-lane-brt-corridor-plans-for-more/>; Denver: [http://www.rtd-fastracks.com/main\\_6](http://www.rtd-fastracks.com/main_6) and <http://www.rtd-denver.com/factsAndFigures.shtml>



A photograph of a lighthouse perched on a rocky cliff overlooking Lake Superior at dusk. The lighthouse is illuminated, and the sky is a mix of purple and blue. The water is calm and reflects the light from the lighthouse.

Minnesota is the headwaters state for the Great Lakes, counting 190 miles of rugged Lake Superior coastline among its natural assets. The North Shore contains 246 trout streams and eight state parks. While Minnesota's Great Lake is widely viewed as the cleanest of the five Great Lakes, it can also be viewed as the most threatened by human activities. Consider these facts:

- Lake Superior is the fastest-warming large lake in the world;
- the port of Duluth-Superior is the busiest inland port in the country — and more ballast water is discharged here than at any other port on the Great Lakes;
- development along the North Shore and its streams is reducing forest cover and causing increases in stream temperatures, erosion and habitat destruction;
- The water quality in a watershed's streams and rivers drops significantly when the area logged in the past 16 years, added to the area cleared — for buildings, lawns, roads, parking lots, etc. — exceeds 50% of the watershed's land area;
- expanded mining activity all around Lake Superior threatens to reverse years of progress and actually increase mercury, sulfides and other toxic pollutants entering the lake; and
- infants born on the Minnesota North Shore have unusually high levels of mercury in their blood.

LAKE SUPERIOR AND THE GREAT LAKES:

OURS TO PROTECT

A photograph of a rocky island in Lake Superior at dusk. The island is dark and silhouetted against the light sky. The water is calm and reflects the light from the sky.



## A PERFECT MATCH FOR LAKE SUPERIOR CLEAN-UP

The Great Lakes region's business leaders, mayors, governors, tribes and conservation and environmental communities have worked together since 2005 to implement a science-based plan of action known as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The GLRI is a five-year plan (2010-2014) to protect and restore the Great Lakes while stimulating the region's economy. The first three years of funding provided Great Lakes projects in Minnesota with an estimated \$10 million in grants, with an emphasis on the Saint Louis River Area of Concern. The GLRI has also funded North Shore trout stream restoration, education about aquatic invasive species and support for tribal engagement.

The GLRI is a powerful one-time opportunity to address our state's restoration needs. Solutions will only become more expensive the longer we wait. We must take advantage of the federal funding that is available now by leveraging state dollars, including funds from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. We can make great progress addressing problems that have been awaiting action for decades.

## OTHER PRIORITY ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF LAKE SUPERIOR

- Continue to work for state and federal ballast water programs that are protective of Lake Superior and include lake carriers.
- Encourage adoption and enforcement of laws that limit the impact of development along North Shore streams, including impacts of sediment.
- Advocate for laws that improve the speed and effectiveness of clean-up of polluted North Shore streams.
- Ensure that Minnesota follows through on fully implementing the Great Lakes-Saint Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact.
- Work with our allies to prevent the spread of Asian Carp into the Great Lakes.



## MINING'S THREAT TO NORTHEAST MINNESOTA'S WATERS

Proposed sulfide mining operations in Northeast Minnesota — which are different from traditional iron ore mining — threaten our waterways and fish and wildlife habitat with acidic and toxic runoff and habitat destruction. No sulfide mine in the world has ever operated and closed without polluting nearby surface water. Additionally, pollution at these sites can persist for hundreds or even thousands of years, and local taxpayers are often stuck with the bill for clean-up.

Discharge from these proposed sulfide mine projects could pollute not only the waters immediately adjacent to the mine sites, but also watersheds of the St. Louis River, Lake Superior and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. There is no good place for these mines to dump their pollution; we need to take the steps necessary to protect our water, health and wildlife from these mines, and any permits to mine must fully comply with existing environmental standards.



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 Ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just and humane

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God's work. Our hands.

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## Clean Up the River Environment (CURE)

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## Eureka Recycling

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## Friends of the Refuge Headwaters

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## Greater Minnesota Housing Fund

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## Institute For Agriculture & Trade Policy

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## Institute for Local Self Reliance

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## International Wolf Center

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## Kids for Saving Earth

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## Land Stewardship Project

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## Minnesota Council of Nonprofits

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## Minnesota Food Association

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## Minnesota Forestry Association

[www.MinnesotaForestry.org](http://www.MinnesotaForestry.org)

## Minnesota Ground Water Association

[www.mgwa.org](http://www.mgwa.org)

## Minnesota Land Trust

[www.mnland.org](http://www.mnland.org)

## Minnesota Naturalists' Association

[www.mnnaturalists.org](http://www.mnnaturalists.org)

## Minnesota Ornithologists' Union

[www.moumn.org](http://www.moumn.org)

## Minnesota Project

[www.mnproject.org](http://www.mnproject.org)

## Minnesota Public Interest Research Group

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## Minnesota Renewable Energy Society

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## Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter

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## Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota

[www.parksandtrails.org](http://www.parksandtrails.org)

## Permaculture Research Institute Cold Climate

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## Project Get Outdoors

[www.mnprojectgo.com](http://www.mnprojectgo.com)

## Renewing the Countryside

[www.renewingthecountryside.org](http://www.renewingthecountryside.org)

## Sierra Club — North Star Chapter

[www.northstar.sierraclub.org](http://www.northstar.sierraclub.org)

## St. Croix River Association

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## St. Paul Audubon Society

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## Voyageurs National Park Association

[www.voyageurs.org](http://www.voyageurs.org)

## Will Steger Foundation

[www.willstegerfoundation.org](http://www.willstegerfoundation.org)

## Women's Environmental Institute

[www.w-e-i.org](http://www.w-e-i.org)



## DEFEND MINNESOTA'S

# ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY FOUNDATION

Minnesota's lakes, rivers, streams, forests and natural areas don't just take care of themselves. Strong, common sense environmental laws safeguard our Great Outdoors, preventing pollution, requiring cleanup where it's needed and ensuring careful review of plans that impact our air, land and water.

The past two years have seen unprecedented attacks on state environmental laws. Attempts to remove or weaken environmental policies do not reflect the values of Minnesota citizens.

**85% of Minnesota Voters believe environmental laws are at the right level or need to be tougher.\***

Minnesota Environmental Partnership is committed to watch-dogging our environmental laws, promoting rigorous enforcement and shining a light on any rollback attempts or short sighted backroom deals that undermine the policies that keep our state clean.

\* See endnote on back cover.



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**Minnesota  
Environmental  
Partnership**



\* Polling data referenced in this booklet came from a statewide telephone poll of 500 registered Minnesota voters, conducted January 6-8, 2013, for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership by the bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates and Public Opinion Strategies. The margin of sampling error for the full statewide samples is +/-4.4%; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be larger.

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