

# Minnesota Environmental Partnership Collaborative Priorities 2025



## Ensuring a Just Transition to a Sustainable & Clean Energy Future Climate Action • Healthy Ecosystems • Environmental Justice

### Facilitating: Supporting Narrative and Shared Messaging

The MEP coalition will support proactive and defensive message development and campaigns that are both public facing and behind-the-scenes:

- Hold **state leaders and legislators accountable** for real climate and ecosystem progress.
- Apply **science and law** in agency decision-making to meet their mission.
- Ensure **environmental and racial justice** is centered in policy solutions and appropriations.

### Co-Leading: Areas of Significant Engagement

#### **Fighting for a healthy climate**

Climate change affects everything and everyone, especially the most vulnerable communities. That is why, in 2019, the MEP Coalition adopted the climate crisis as an overarching critical challenge we must tackle collectively for the common good. MEP supports a comprehensive multi-sectoral approach to addressing climate change that protects our clean air and water, advances a just transition to a clean energy economy and ensures a healthy environment for all Minnesotans. MEP will work to make the goals laid out in the Minnesota Climate Action Framework a reality - to achieve a clean energy, resilient, and equitable future for our state and people. MEP will devote significant resources to:

- Ensure **successful implementation of the 100% Law** that establishes a goal to achieve a transition to 100% carbon-free electricity in Minnesota by 2040 in a way that avoids extraction or incentives that create rural, Indigenous, or environmental justice community sacrifice zones.
- Secure **state matching funds** that foster just environmental and climate solutions to maximize use of complementary federal climate resources.
- Champion significant broad state investments in equitable climate solutions at the speed and scale needed to ensure a **Just Transition** to a clean energy future.
- Invest in **natural climate solutions**: forests, prairies, native perennials, and established and emerging regenerative agriculture practices that provide multiple and measurable ecological and societal benefits.

## People and planet-centered public institutions

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Our public institutions were created to serve people and our environment – but increasingly, the public good takes a back seat. Too often, public institutions put profit over people in decision-making and treat industry as their primary clients, overlooking sound science, public health, and the clean water, air, and lands that sustain life. MEP will call on state, county and local governments to address regulatory neglect and exercise transparency (including creating, retaining and providing timely access to public records), accountability, and to meaningfully engage with communities about policies and projects that affect the environment and their well-being. MEP will work to:

- Call for state leaders to press for state agencies to use their authority to address threats to our air, land and water and the communities which rely on these resources for their health and wellbeing at the scale and speed required to address the challenge.

## Advancing environmental justice

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Minnesota's communities of color and low-income communities are especially vulnerable to pollution and environmental catastrophes and are often excluded from the corridors of power where environmental and economic decisions are made. A just response to climate change and pollution requires listening to and learning from the communities who directly experience the effects of pollution and climate disruption where they live, work and play. MEP will actively partner with environmental justice leaders, communities, organizations and Indigenous Tribes to ensure that environmental and racial justice is centered in policy solutions. This includes protecting the right to clean air and safe and affordable drinking water.

MEP will:

- Seek to **strengthen its relationships with Indigenous Tribes and leaders** and make good faith efforts to obtain their input when developing or supporting policies that affect tribal lands, waters, airsheds, or treaty-reserved rights.
- Collaborate with DNR and community allies to enhance community outreach and support implementation of the new **ENRTF Community Grants Program** that will support community based projects with the priority to respond to environmental degradation and related health concerns of communities historically overburdened by pollution.
- Call for a community-centered rulemaking process and strong implementation of the **Cumulative Impacts Law** that shifts regulatory power to our most overburdened communities and addresses the disproportionate burden of pollution in frontline communities.
- Call for the **collection of 100% of Minnesota's electronic waste stream** by making manufacturers responsible for paying the costs of sorting and collection. In the US, pollution from waste and incinerators and landfills across the country are disproportionately located near communities of color and low-income communities.
- **Get the Lead out.** Lead exposure is a threat to public health and wildlife. It disproportionately impacts Black, brown, and Indigenous Minnesotans, children, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes. MEP will continue to identify and bring awareness to lead levels in drinking water and the environment.
- Advocate for completion of the **St. Louis River Total Maximum Daily Load study** to protect surrounding communities from mercury exposure exacerbated by sulfate releases and by local and regional sources of mercury air emissions.

## Coordinating: Defense to protect our Environment

We must defend our bedrock laws, rules and funding that protect our people and planet. As a coalition, MEP will work to help coordinate defense strategies and tactics, protecting, for example:

- Appropriations of constitutionally dedicated environment and conservation funds
- Definition of Public Waters.
- State budget appropriations.
- Free speech, especially in the face of harmful social and environmental impacts of extractive projects.

## Supporting: Policy Portfolio for a Just Transition

The MEP coalition will support a dynamic slate of proactive legislation. This includes:

### Key Investments

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**Capital Investment For Climate and Equity.** Highlights include:

- Transit, equity and active transportation
- Solar, HVAC and efficiency Improvements in schools, public buildings and affordable housing
- Natural lands, prairies and forests

**Bond for Water Infrastructure.** Continue to invest in water infrastructure bonding to replace and improve aging infrastructure and upgrade water treatment facilities consistent with long-term preservation of aquifers and compliance with water quality standards. The amount should maximize our ability to take advantage of the federal match made possible by federal infrastructure legislation.

### Policy and Budget

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**Climate, Energy, Infrastructure, and Transportation**

- Stop metropolitan sprawl by reforming **land use for climate and equity** (Sierra Club North Star Chapter)
- Engage in the **100% Carbon-Free Electricity Law** implementation docket in front of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to ensure the successful implementation of the 100% Law. Successful implementation would ensure that all utilities are held to these standards, that false solutions are not adopted under the guise of being “carbon-free,” and that there are robust means of measuring compliance with these standards. (CURE)
- Ensure that state agencies address the environmental consequences of an **unsustainable highway network**. (Izaak Walton League Minnesota Division)
- Open up constitutionally dedicated funds, currently earmarked for “highway purposes,” to other transportation uses that **support walking, biking, and transit**. (Move Minnesota)

## Environmental Justice

- Call for a community-centered rulemaking process and strong implementation of the **Cumulative Impacts Law** that shifts regulatory power to our most overburdened communities and addresses the disproportionate burden of pollution in frontline communities. (Clean Water Action Minnesota, Frontline Communities Protection Coalition)
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## Agriculture and Working Lands

- Provide funding for the **Forever Green Initiative** (Friends of the Mississippi River)
  - Provide funding to develop markets for **continuous living cover** (CLC) crops (Friends of the Mississippi River)
  - Fully fund **Farm-to-School** so every school district could source directly from farmers. (Land Stewardship Project)
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## Pollinators and Wildlife

- Improve the pollinator plant diversity of **agricultural buffers** (Wild Ones)
  - Ban **lead ammunition** and **lead fishing tackle** (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
  - Provide General Fund support for the **Scientific and Natural Areas Program** (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
  - **Protect Minnesota's state-listed endangered plants** within 135,000 + miles of Minnesota rights-of-way (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
  - Expand **Highways for Habitat** program (Pollinator Friendly Alliance, Izaak Walton League Minnesota Division)
  - Reduce impacts from **Off Highway Vehicles**, helping to protect forest biodiversity and providing better protection to critical environmental habitats, waters and wildlife. (Izaak Walton League Minnesota Division)
  - Reduce **SNA acquisition** shortfall via bonding (Friends of Minnesota SNAs)
  - Fund the **retrofitting of U.S. Bank Stadium** glass to prevent migratory bird mortality from collisions (Saint Paul Bird Alliance)
  - Prohibit most non-agricultural (lawn and garden) uses of **neonic insecticides**. (Natural Resources Defense Council, Pollinator Friendly Alliance)
  - Prohibit unnecessary uses of **neonic-treated seeds**. (Natural Resources Defense Council, Pollinator Friendly Alliance)
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## Agency Accountability

- Update **Minnesota Government Data Practices Act** for greater transparency and accountability and public participation. (League of Women Voters Minnesota)

## Waste and Pollution

- Repeal the state ban on **local plastic bag bans** (Clean Water Action MN)
  - Enable the **collection of 100% of Minnesota's electronic waste stream** by making manufacturers responsible for paying the costs of sorting and collection (Eureka Recycling, League of Women Voters Minnesota)
  - Ban **lead and arsenic** in period products (Clean Water Action)
  - Prevent the state from purchasing **single-use plastic** water bottles and food service ware. (Eureka Recycling)
  - Prohibit hotels and health club facilities from offering guests **single-use personal care products** (Eureka Recycling)
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## Mining and Clean Water

- Protect the **Boundary Waters/Quetico/Voyageurs National Park** from sulfide-ore copper mining pollution by banning these practices from being established in the Rainy River Watershed. (Save the Boundary Waters)
- Enact a **“Prove it First”** policy for sulfide mines, requiring independent scientific proof that a copper-sulfide mine has operated elsewhere in the United States for at least ten years without causing pollution and that the mine has been closed for at least ten years without causing pollution before a copper-sulfide mine in Minnesota could be permitted. (Friends of the Boundary Waters)
- Prohibit **bad-actor corporations** with histories of environmental violations, corruption, child labor, and other legal abuses from operating a sulfide mine in Minnesota. (Friends of the Boundary Waters)
- Require sulfide mining companies to put **cash upfront to cover the liability** for this type of toxic mining. (Friends of the Boundary Waters)