

2006 Environmental Proposals

Issue	Description	Need For	Cost	Status
Clean Water Legacy	Multi-million dollar ongoing program aimed at cleaning up the state's lakes, rivers and streams over the next decade.	About 40% of the state's waters that have been tested have been found to be polluted. Minnesota does not meet federal standards for clean water, and without cleanup, the state could face serious federal sanctions and limits on economic development.	<p>Senate: '06 Senate Appropriations Bill: \$20 million; '06 Senate Bonding Bill: \$5 million.</p> <p>House: '06 House Appropriations Bill: \$20 million; '06 House Bonding Bill: \$5 million.</p>	<p>Senate: Policy provisions: passed the Senate ('05); Bonding Bill ('06) passed the Senate; Appropriations Bill ('06) pending on the Senate floor.</p> <p>House: Policy provisions: in committee; Appropriations bill: in committee; Bonding Bill: passed the House.</p>
3/8ths Constitutional Amendment Dedicated Funding	Asks voters in the 2006 November election to dedicate 3/8ths of one percent of the state's sales tax to fish and wildlife, parks, trails, zoos, clean water, the arts and cultural priorities.	Funding for outdoor priorities has dropped substantially in recent years, to its lowest level in thirty years. Arts and cultural priorities have suffered significant cutbacks as well. Without investment in these areas, Minnesota will lose key "quality of life" characteristics.	<p>Senate: An additional 3/8ths of one percent of the sales raises \$277 million a year, distributed to: fish and wildlife; parks, trails and zoos; clean water; and to arts and cultural priorities.</p> <p>House: An amount equal to 1/8th of one percent of the sales tax (\$92 million a year) is dedicated from existing state funds for land conservation and a hunter access program.</p>	<p>Senate: Passed.</p> <p>House: On House floor.</p>
Mercury Reduction	Requires the state's coal-fired electric generating plants to reduce mercury emissions by 90 percent by 2011.	All Minnesota rivers and lakes have advisories that warn pregnant and nursing mothers and children to limit their fish intake, as birth defects have been linked to mercury exposure sustained by mothers who eat contaminated fish. Each year, Minnesota's coal-burning power plants produce nearly half of all the mercury generated in the state.	If existing technology can be used to reduce emissions, the cost is estimated between \$2 million and \$3 million for average-sized plants. If new technology is required, the cost increases to as much as \$30 million. Utilities argue that the new requirements will increase costs of generating electricity, which could be passed onto ratepayers. Some argue this would have a negative impact on the business climate and ratepayers.	<p>Senate: Passed the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development; awaiting a full Senate vote.</p> <p>House: A weaker House bill extending the deadline to 2015 was pulled from a floor vote-future is uncertain.</p>
Renewable Energy Standard	Creates a Renewable Energy Standard that would require the state's electric utilities to increase the amount of new, renewable energy in their mix to 20 percent by 2020.	Double-digit natural gas spikes and transportation costs continue to drive up the price of burning coal for electricity. The price of renewable energy like wind and solar will be the same 100 years from now: free. Minnesota imports more electricity than any other state, yet we are sitting on a gold mine of natural energy resources. Minnesota has an opportunity to become a leader in the renewable market and move toward energy independence.	Most utility companies, particularly in the rural areas, oppose the bill because they believe it will increase operational costs and consumer costs, and they fear it could stifle business. Supporters say renewable energy, especially wind, costs no more than fossil fuels and is a hedge against future coal and natural gas price-hikes. Utilities admit that renewable energy requirements already passed have not cost ratepayers an extra dime.	<p>Senate: Passed the Senate Jobs, Energy and Community Development ('05); motion to take a floor vote was rejected on April 12.</p> <p>House: No House action has been taken.</p>