

Balancing Water Use to Protect our Communities, Natural Resources, and Future Growth

Across the Twin Cities metropolitan region, water supports more than half of Minnesota's population^{WS-1}, a major share of the state's economy^{WS-2}, and the lakes, rivers, and wetlands that define the region's quality of life^{WS-3}. While water is plentiful, it is not unlimited. Population growth, climate change, and increasing water demands are placing greater pressure on shared water resources. Regional groundwater modeling indicates 400-500 million gallons per day is the approximate limit on the region's sustainable groundwater sources^{WS-4}.

Water use decisions in one community can affect neighboring communities, drinking water supplies, lakes, streams, wetlands, and future infrastructure costs. As demand grows, balancing water use among communities, businesses, agriculture, industry, and natural systems becomes increasingly important.

Water resources do not follow political boundaries, and communities often share the same aquifers and connected surface waters. Some communities have fewer water supply alternatives or face greater costs to develop new supplies, making regional coordination essential to protect reliable and equitable access to water for residents, businesses, and future growth.

Protecting and balancing shared water resources helps Minnesota communities, businesses, and ecosystems thrive.

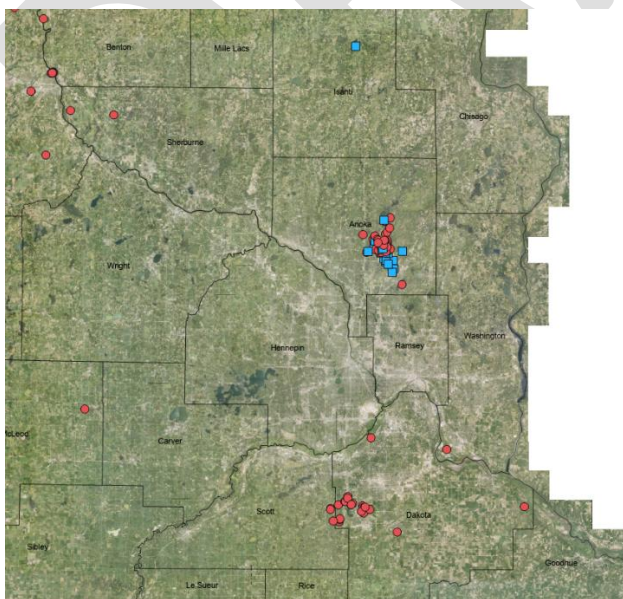


FIGURE 1. MAP OF REPORTED WELL INTERFERENCES (DNR^{WS-5})

CURRENT CONTEXT

Water sources include:

- 4 extensive underground layers of rock, gravel and sand (aquifers), which hold and transport billions of gallons of water for over two million people
- The Mississippi, Minnesota, and St. Croix rivers, which supply huge volumes of water and support transportation and recreation
- Reclaimed stormwater and potentially wastewater for non-potable uses such as irrigation.

Major water uses that need to be balanced:

- Public water supplies
- Domestic water use
- Power generation
- Agricultural irrigation
- Non-crop irrigation
- Industrial processing
- Water level maintenance
- Heating/cooling
- Other special categories

Legislative opportunities:

Support regional and subregional water planning

Provide funding and incentives for regional collaboration, shared groundwater modeling, and coordinated planning so communities can address water challenges that extend beyond local boundaries.

Promote sustainable water use and conservation

Strengthen support for water conservation, water reuse, green infrastructure, and other proven strategies that reduce long-term demand while supporting continued economic growth. Consider establishing regional water-use targets that help accommodate future growth without increasing overall water use.

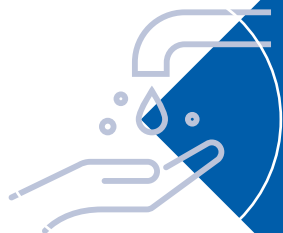
Improve information for long-term decision making

Invest in source water monitoring, regional modeling, and evaluation of changing water demands, including large-volume users and climate impacts, to improve planning and protect water supplies before problems become more costly.

Communities and agencies are already working together to improve water conservation, regional planning, and long-term water sustainability, demonstrating that collaborative solutions are possible:



Minnesota's Clean Water Fund has been used to start water efficiency programs for over 40 communities, with an estimated annual savings of 260,000,000 gallons per year.^{WS-7}



If the average municipal water use in the region was 90 gallons per person per day, the metro area could grow to its projected 2050 population with no increased water use above average 2013-2022 demand.

To see the full report: [LINK/QR code to website where full report is posted](#)