

Statements of Support for Governor Dayton's Buffer Proposal

March 13, 2015

Broad coalition of Minnesotans support Governor's effort to improve water quality, habitat

ST. PAUL, MN – This afternoon, [Governor Mark Dayton laid out his proposal](#) to improve water quality across Minnesota. The proposal, which would establish an additional 125,000 acres of water quality buffer strips statewide, is supported by a broad coalition of Minnesotans. Here is what Minnesotans are saying about the Governor's proposal.

“The state's existing rules on buffer strips are inconsistent, and they are enforced inconsistently – which almost always guarantees failure. The strengths of my proposal are its simplicity and common sense. People have the right to do follow lawful practices on their private properties; however, they should not have the right to contaminate waters that all of us depend upon.”

Mark Dayton, Governor of Minnesota

“Minnesotans can think of water quality buffer strips as water filters for the landscape. Protecting this relatively small amount of acreage, lying along our waterways, has the potential to significantly improve water quality for drinking, fishing, swimming and other everyday uses. It is our best and simplest strategy to protect our waters for this generation, and the generations of Minnesotans who come after us.”

Tom Landwehr, Commissioner of Natural Resources

“We have already seen very successful buffer establishment efforts in several Minnesota counties. We know this approach can work.”

John Jaschke, Executive Director of the Board of Water and Soil Resources

“Implementing buffer strips will help prevent the continued degradation of our waterways. This proposal is good for Minnesota and it also sends the right message to our neighboring states in the Mississippi River basin that are looking to us for leadership.”

Dave Frederickson, Commissioner of Agriculture

“As the agency responsible for monitoring the condition of our water quality statewide, I'd like to think that this buffer proposal is, in fact, a watershed moment for our state. It represents an opportunity to make serious improvements in water quality.”

John Linc Stine, Commissioner of Pollution Control

“The administration put together a bill that is flexible and easy to understand. Minnesotans pride ourselves on our waters, we pride ourselves on our habitat – and this bill is a solid step forward in the right direction.

John Marty, State Senator

“I want to thank the Governor for putting his creative prestige behind this piece of legislation. Water quality is one of the major environmental issues of our time. This is one way we can assure water quality, and get it done in a timely manner. We in the Legislature are going to do all we can to see this legislation move forward.”

Lyndon Carlson, State Representative

“This is an important water quality initiative. It's backed up by good science, it's got the right mix of local responsibility and state oversight, and it is both flexible and enforceable. I hope the legislature gets behind this.”

Scott Strand, Executive Director, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

“Better lake and stream buffers are urgently needed to protect and restore water quality and wildlife habitat. This is an important step for water quality and we firmly support these initiative and other steps forward for protecting clean water.”

Cora Ellenson-Myers, Environment Minnesota

“Buffers will help with soil bank erosion, stability and filtering water off the land. They provide valuable habitat to ground nesting birds, think of them as wildlife corridors for mother hen and her chicks to move about from area to area. These are valuable assets to anyone's property.”

Lance Ness, President, Anglers for Habitat and Fish & Wildlife Legislative Alliance

“Stewardship of our lakes, rivers and streams is a value that unites Minnesotans. The importance of this proposal is surpassed only by its bipartisan public support.”

Paul Austin, Executive Director, Conservation Minnesota

“More than half of the state drains to the Mississippi River so the importance of this proposal to the health of the Mississippi is very significant. This legislation is fair, flexible and much needed.”

Whitney Clark, Executive Director, Friends of the Mississippi River

“The Governor’s buffer Initiative is the most significant first step, in the broadest public interest that we can take in pursuit of clean water. Izaak Walton League members across the state are mobilizing to support this critical initiative.”

Mark Owens, Vice President, Izaak Walton League of America - Minnesota Division

“The St. Croix River is proof positive that buffers work. The thin, quarter-mile ribbon of protection along the St. Croix has helped to maintain its high water quality. We applaud this effort, and hope the state will invest the time and resources needed to make this proposal a reality.”

Deb Ryun, Executive Director, St. Croix River Association

“The buffer initiative would be one of the most significant clean water and habitat measures in years. Minnesota has a unique opportunity to do something that’s good for our birds, our water, and our communities – a triple bottom-line win. Throughout our state, this would represent a major conservation milestone that will pay dividends year in and year out for decades to come.”

Matthew Anderson, Executive Director, Audubon Minnesota

“This initiative is a game changer for water quality and wildlife production.”

Garry Leaf, Executive Director, Sportsmen For Change

“The Sierra Club believes that all people deserve a healthy planet with clean water, and we are proud to support Governor Dayton’s riparian buffer proposal. This fair and urgently-needed legislation will improve the quality of Minnesota’s water, filter pollutants from runoff, prevent erosion, and create new habitat for pollinators including monarchs, songbirds and wildlife. We urge passage of these important bills, and look forward to continued work with Governor Dayton and legislators to protect and improve Minnesota’s clean water.”

Margaret Levin, State Director, Sierra Club North Star Chapter

“We congratulate Governor Dayton for his visionary leadership and great courage in his initiative to provide buffers of natural vegetation along Minnesota waterways. It has the potential to be the most significant single contribution to improving surface water quality in state history.”

Michael McKay, Executive Director, Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance

“It’s not new and it’s based on science. Sometimes it is easier to describe what isn’t a buffer than what is--if it’s not paved or plowed there is a good chance the strip of green along the stream is going to be sufficient.”

Steve Woods, Executive Director, Freshwater Society

“Vegetative buffer strips along waterways are essential to clean water and healthy fisheries. This buffer initiative provides a solid framework for us to make real progress cleaning up our waterways. Our experience suggests that the vast majority of farmers want clean water and will ultimately support this new law.”

John Lenczewski, Executive Director, Minnesota Trout Unlimited

“This bill levels the playing field so that being a conservationist does not put a farmer at a disadvantage. We need to honor the efforts of true stewards by showing that the state backs their decision wholeheartedly. The spotty adoption of conservation practices is not fair to downstream users, and it's not fair to farmers doing the right thing.”

Ariel Herrod, Water Program Coordinator, Clean Up the River Environment (CURE)

“Future generations are depending upon our vision today for clean waters, healthy prairies and abundant wildlife in harmony with sustainable agricultural production. Governor Dayton's leadership in support of buffers provides the starting point for a future all Minnesotans can be proud of passing along to our children.”

Howard Vincent, President & CEO, Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever

“This is the most significant conservation initiative for water and wildlife proposed by a Minnesota governor in decades.”

Steve Morse, Executive Director, Minnesota Environmental Partnership

“We know that loss of forage is a major part of bee decline. There aren't enough flowers in ecosystems and bees don't have enough to eat. We need more flowers, and the Governor's buffer strip initiative would provide critical food and habitat for our hungry pollinators.”

Erin Rupp, Executive Director, Pollinate Minnesota

“The buffer program is primarily a water quality issue, and there are certainly private landowner rights issues to be figured out. Nevertheless, it is also a wildlife habitat issue as well. Honeybees though not native, are very much wild. They are not domesticated. What benefits most wildlife, will also benefit honeybees. We have a chance here to help Minnesota's ailing honeybee industry.”

Dan Whitney, President, Minnesota Honey Producers Association

“The Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance stands behind Governor Dayton's plan for establishing a buffer zone for all our riparian lands. It is the proper direction for our great State of Minnesota and we heartily endorse it.”

Roger Goeschel, President, Minnesota Outdoor Heritage Alliance

“Gov. Dayton’s proposal to better protect Minnesota’s rivers, streams and lakes will help keep our waters clean and provide wildlife habitat.”

Doug Shaw, Assistant Director, The Nature Conservancy-Minnesota

“Improving water quality through the use of buffers and other conservation practices is a top priority for the Izaak Walton League’s Agriculture Program, as well as it’s Minnesota Division. The Governor’s initiative is a major step forward in the discussion on how to reduce agriculture’s impact on water quality in the Upper Midwest and we appreciate his leadership in furthering the discussion on this issue of critical concern.”

Bill Wenzel, Agriculture Program Director, The Izaak Walton League of America

“The Minnesota Deer Hunters Association strongly supports the Governor's buffer proposal as an important habitat initiative for all wildlife. In areas where existing habitat is scarce, these buffers will provide critical habitat that will significantly benefit Minnesota's deer.”

Craig Engwall, Executive Director, Minnesota Deer Hunters Association

“Clean Water Fund dollars alone will not be able to meet Minnesota citizens’ expectations for clean water. Although the Clean Water Council has not yet been able to discuss the specific aspects of this bill, in 2014, the Clean Water Council recommended that critical water policies such as appropriate requirements for riparian buffers could accelerate our progress in restoring and protecting Minnesota waters.”

Patrick Flowers, Chair, Clean Water Council