



## Minnesota Rural Counties 2024 Legislative Priorities

Minnesota Rural Counties (MRC) priority items are actionable and have a sizable impact on rural communities. In the 2024 session, MRC has identified Solid Waste and Drainage as top priorities.

### SOLID WASTE

Minnesota's solid waste management laws mandate counties provide proper management of waste generated in their county. State funding has remained relatively flat despite increased state goals and increasing waste toxicity and volumes polluting our water, land, and air.

#### *Capital Investment*

- **CAPITAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (CAP):** MRC supports fully funding bonding requests and increasing the limit to \$10M per county project partner for solid waste management projects. Bonding dollars are only a partial match to county funds but critical for construction starts.

#### *Finance*

- **SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT TAX:** MRC supports allocating 100 percent of Solid Waste Management Tax (SWMT) revenue to state and county waste management work through SCORE recycling grants to counties. The SWMT was created in 1997 to help the state and our local governments address solid waste challenges, but 27% of the SWMT collected is diverted to the general fund for non-solid waste management purposes.
- **WOODWASTE:** MRC supports a state wood waste management policy and state funding for local governments to slow the creation of wood waste and maintain and improve critical infrastructure and markets for the state's increasing wood waste problems.

#### *Policy*

- **PRESERVE THE WASTE MANAGEMENT HIERARCHY:** MRC supports maintaining Minnesota's Waste Management Hierarchy in Minn. Stat. Sec. 115A.02 and diverting waste from landfills.
- **EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY:** MRC supports product stewardship among manufacturers, retailers, and consumers, with an emphasis on industry through an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework.

EPR must provide local governments with a voluntary role in program development and implementation, and not rely on local government financing. MRC supports the *Packaging Waste & Cost Reduction Act* to improve the recyclability of product packaging, reduce packaging waste, and encourage producers to support existing reuse and recycling infrastructure and contribute financially to displace property taxpayer funding for recycling.

MRC supports all E-Waste, packaging, plastic films (including ag and marine), mattresses, solar panels, batteries of all types, and other materials be considered for EPR programs. EPR policies should provide producer-led material and toxicity reductions, recycling programs, and reduce product impacts from design through end-of-life management.

- **CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION DEBRIS LAND DISPOSAL FACILITIES:** MRC supports construction and demolition rules that weigh economic and social impacts along with the environmental impacts. MRC supports full state funding to address any C&D management and facility transitions required by state law or rule. Rulemaking should use a comprehensive stakeholder process.

### DRAINAGE

- MRC supports adhering to the current requirements for public notice of drainage work and hearings according to Minn. Stat. 103E and the Minnesota Drainage Manual. Updates or modernization of these requirements should not create additional reporting, add to county or system costs, or impact timely maintenance and repairs.

Minnesota counties serve as drainage authorities responsible for the management and maintenance of drainage systems, which are financed by the impacted landowners. Drainage authorities follow the notice and public hearing requirements in state statute and often go beyond those obligations to be good public stewards. Minnesota’s drainage law already includes extensive process, notice, and hearing requirements that are often very costly. MRC has concerns with statutory changes that include additional, redundant requirements, prevent timely maintenance and repairs, or are designed to lengthen project timelines and costs.

### ABOUT MINNESOTA RURAL COUNTIES

Minnesota Rural Counties is a member-based organization representing the voice of rural Minnesota communities. MRC is an affiliate of the Association of Minnesota Counties.

#### **Leadership**

Chair: Commissioner Luke Johnson, Pipestone County  
Vice Chair: Commissioner Neil Peterson, Pennington County  
Secretary/Treasurer: Commissioner Sharon Bring, Marshall County

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