



Meeting Minutes: Attorney General's Advisory Task Force on Future of Minnesota's Water

Meeting Date and Time: October 7th, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Minutes Prepared By: Abdulaziz Mohamed
Location: Bemidji State University, and Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Members Present

Representative Kristi Pursell (Ex-Officio)
Representative Isaac Schultz (Ex-Officio)
Senator Ann Johnson Stewart (Ex-Officio)
Senator Keri Heintzeman (Ex-Officio)
Assistant Commissioner Jess Richards (Ex-Officio)
Brad Jordahl Redlin (Ex-Officio)
Assistant Commissioner Myra Kunas (Ex-Officio)
Assistant Commissioner Dana Vanderbosch (Ex-Officio)
Kelly Applegate
Will Bement
Darin Broton
Erick Francis
Peg Furshong
Caroline Griffith
David Leuthe
Angela M. Lipelt
Julie Lucas
Neva Maxwell
Jeff Pagel
Tessa Parks
Nancy Schuldt
Lienne Sethna
Harvey Thorleifson

Attorney General's Office (AGO) Staff Present

Attorney General Keith Ellison
Carin Mrotz
Abdulaziz Mohamed



Agenda Items

1. Call to order and roll call

Attorney General Keith Ellison called the meeting to order at 1:10 pm, welcoming task force members to Bemidji, and praising the morning farm visit. A quorum was present.

2. Approval of meeting agenda

A motion was made and seconded to approve the agenda as presented. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

3. Approval of August 13th minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the August 13th minutes, as amended. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

4. White Earth Natural Resources Presentation

A presentation on White Earth Natural Resources was provided by Renee Keezer, Water Resources Manager for White Earth Nation. The presentation slides are available at: https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Taskforce/Water/Meetings/20251007/WhiteEarthNaturalResources_Presentation.pdf.

A discussion after Renee's presentation took place as follows:

- Lienne Sethne identified the ability to keep water and promote groundwater recharge as a fundamental water management challenge for Minnesota.
- Neva Maxwell mentioned that she thinks frequently about the vegetated buffer having inadequate runoff control in the land management context, citing the vanishing natural shorelines report.
- Will Bement shared that many of the presentation slides correlated with challenges found in the fishery field, such as groundwater overdraw and the resulting harm to walleye and trout populations.
- Peg Furshong pondered the state's methods for tracking water usage related to new energy projects, like data centers, and water-related practices that cause health concerns, like increased cancer rates.
- Kelly Applegate thanked Renee for aspects of her presentation, highlighting the need to preserve Minnesota's waters for future generations, and the problem of municipal discharge and contamination of the Mississippi River.
- David Leuthe shared that the central obstacle faced is cumulative impacts and state's ability to manage land and water resources more sustainably.
- Darin Broton sought clarification on the overdrawing of water appropriations. Assistant Commissioner Jess Richards raised the challenge of water scarcity and



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appropriation distribution to high-capacity users, discussing the DNR regulatory program that conducts monitoring and permitting, and areas during times of drought. Referring to Peg Furshong's initial commentary, he stated that the quality of data is an issue that needs to continue to be improved.

- Peg Furshong asked whether water usage is measured by meters or estimate by landowners and permit folks, and if there are plans to institute a universal metering system. Assistant Commissioner Jess Richards explained that while some of the larger water users do have meters, they are not universally used, and he couldn't confirm if the state is moving towards a universal meter system.
- Darin Broton shared that having the DNR present on water quantity would be to the benefit of the task force.

5. Mining Minnesota Presentation

A presentation on Mining was provided by Julie Lucas, Executive Director of Mining Minnesota.

The Mining Minnesota presentation was followed by a task force discussion:

- Nancy Schuldt shared that the tribe she works with, which examines the impacts of mining on treaty and reservation resources, approaches the issue not with a flat rejection of mining, but with a desire for everyone to adhere to the rules and engage in open dialogue. She hopes the task force can focus on the mining impacts that Minnesota has already experienced to allow the state to better prepare for the type of mining that is currently on the horizon.
- Attorney General Keith Ellison asked what newer methods are available for sustainable mining. Julie Lucas noted that the most significant change she has observed is an increased focus on proactively preventing water from reaching a source, as well as developing better strategies for capturing water that has already interacted with rock formation.
- Lienne Sethne asked about the mining industry's liability, citing the BP oil incident. Julie Lucas mentioned that the 1980 iron regulations didn't have financial insurance, meaning there wasn't coverage if a mining company goes bankrupt. The DNR has since required financial insurance for new permit amendments on mine permitting. Financial assurance came thereafter, meaning funds would be available for environmental cleanup.
- Senator Ann Johnson Stewart feels that financial insurance and assurance should be examined by the task force, believing they don't cover the true cost of a significant accident or exposure, especially regarding copper sulfide mining.
- Drawing on her experience of being born in Anaconda, Montana, and having lost community members to cancer caused by arsenic, Peg Furshong asked the task force to consider what evolving mining practices look like, focusing on methods that prioritize the human cost, and balance the various interests involved.



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- Harvey Thorleifson considered sulfide mining a significant water issue for the state, citing intense concerns when speaking with Boundary Water advocates.
- Kelly Applegate noted that the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe is working on creating a campaign to protect its water in response to a proposed Tamarack mining project, asking the task force to think about this issue from state and global lenses.

6. Task Force Working Discussion on Small Groups and Topics

Nancy Schuldt began structuring the discussion by explaining that she'd begun proactively organizing the task force's work into major topic areas based on task force members' stated priorities and past meeting discussions. A draft outline was included in task force members' packets, intended as a starting place for forming smaller working groups. These groups will take a deep dive into designated water issues, develop ideas, and report back at upcoming task force meetings, with the goal of creating finalized recommendations for the eventual task force report:

- Darin Broton suggested reviewing the full list first as a group and discussing which topics to keep or merge together as a way of process. Nancy Schuldt validated that approach but felt consolidation can happen later and that nothing should be cut prematurely.
- Harvey Thorleifson offered a list of major water topics that intersect with the proposed buckets. Nancy Schuldt agreed that the water issues are interconnected.
- Given the sheer number of water issues that task force will need to go through, Kelly Applegate asked how many group assignments task force members should take up. Nancy Schuldt suggested that it depends on how much time the task force members can devote, though it's too early to say since this is only the initial self-sorting phase.
- Assistant Commissioner Jess Richards asked how the state agencies should participate, namely whether they should wait to see how the groups ultimately form, choose one or two to participate in now, or be brought in and out as deemed necessary. Nancy Schuldt didn't have a hard answer but recognized that regulatory and governance issues cut across many of the buckets, which means that the task force will be relying on agency expertise to provide reality checks to make sure the recommendations line up with existing criteria.
- Darin Broton noted that it'd be helpful for the agencies to ground the task force in information, as they're the experts. Nancy Schuldt agreed with Darin's assessment.
- Regarding small group process, Nancy Schuldt suggested that the small groups should begin their work by creating executive summary-level descriptions of the topic areas, detailing what's succeeding, gaps and challenges, governance issues, regulatory structure, etc. This work would be intended to progress through the December and February meetings, leading up to drafted shared recommendations in the Spring.
- Nancy Schuldt suggested planning a shared value-style group exercise at the December meeting with word cloud.



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- Nancy Schuldt proposed the task force begin self-selecting member assignments to small groups, recognizing reorganizing can take place by reaching out to Carin Mrotz and the co-chairs.

Initial Self-Selected Water Issue Small Group Assignments:

Introduction/Executive Summary:

- Nancy Schultz
- Harvey Thorleifson
- Lienne Sethna

Pollutants/emerging contaminants

- Erick Francis

Hydrologic disruption

- David Leuthe
- Caroline Griffith
- Darin Broton

Wetlands

- Julie Lucas
- Representative Kristi Pursell

Groundwater/Drinking Water

- Peg Furshong
- David Leuthe
- Angela Lipelt
- Caroline Griffith
- Darin Broton
- Representative Kristi Pursell

Resource Extractive and Transport Industries

- Julie Lucas
- Kelly Applegate
- Peg Furshong (only as it relates to the CO2 pipelines sub category)

Landscape/Shoreland Activities

- Will Bemont
- Neva Maxwell
- Angela Lipelt

Agricultural Best Practices



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- Peg Furshong
- Darin Broton

Nutrient Management

- Lienne Sethna

Climate Change

- Kelly Applegate

Consistency in Regulation/Enforcement

- Neva Maxwell
- David Leuthe
- Angela Lipelt

7. Public Testimony

The following individuals provided public testimony:

- Lance Ness
- Louis Smith
- Megan McClanahan

Public comments can be viewed in the task force meeting recording at:

https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Taskforce/Water/Meetings/20251007/20251007_Meeting.mp4.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:59 pm.