



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

Meeting Date and Time: December 9th, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Minutes Prepared By: Abdulaziz Mohamed

Location: Minnesota State Capitol, 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
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
Oliver Larson
Carin Mrotz
Abdulaziz Mohamed
Christina Carolan



Agenda Items

1. Call to order and roll call

Attorney General Keith Ellison called the meeting to order at 1:00

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 October 7th minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the October 7th minutes, as amended. A vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

4. Dr. Bonnie Keeler Presentation

The presentation focuses on recent developments in federal rules and regulations related to clean water and implications for state and local policymakers, as well as insights and best practices related to the implementation of environment policy with a focus on state and local institutions. The presentation was given by Dr. Bonnie Keeler, the University of Minnesota Huber H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs' Center for Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy. The presentation slides are available at: [AG presentation Dec 2025 Keeler Water Policy - Google Slides](#).

A discussion during Dr. Bonnie Keeler's presentation took place as follows. **Please note that parts of the audio were inaudible during this part of the meeting, which impacted the completeness of the discussion minutes. While every effort was made to capture key points, some details were missing:**

- Nancy Schuldt highlighted a lack of transparency in data center projects, noting that there's a reliance on NDAs and limited technical/environmental understanding by officials that prevents a fair balance between community input and development, as referred to in the slide deck. Dr. Bonnie Keeler acknowledged that not having strong technical expertise on one side won't provide validation for the other, and that there's a general tension in energy policy where the balance of power shifts depending on the context.
- Nancy Schuldt shared an interest in consulting with Dr. Bonnie Keeler on task force recommendations when the work groups are further along. In the meantime, Nancy Schuldt asked how recommendations can be formulated to address the integration of ecosystem services valuation, cumulative effects analysis, and other types of tools into decision making. Dr. Bonnie Keeler believes an ecosystem services



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approach could help in two ways: first, by prioritizing landscape-wide investments and navigating their associated trade-offs, and second, by providing a framework to better communicate the costs, benefits, and distribution of water policies.

5. Dr. Heidi Roop Presentation

A presentation on the impacts of climate change on Minnesota's water was provided by Dr. Heidi Roop from the University of Minnesota's Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership. The presentation slides are available at: [Roop_FutureofWater_Dec2025](#).

A discussion after Dr. Heidi Roop's presentation took place as follows.

- David Leuthe asked what the threats are for a sustainable supply of good water going into the people. Dr. Heidi Roop explained that navigating extreme weather impacts is an emerging threat, requiring balancing immediate challenges with some of the longer term, intensifying risks. For example, she is examining how shifting agricultural regions and longer growing seasons affect water quality and irrigation. A key focus of her work is identifying the information needed to manage these challenges across different levels of governance. Dr. Carrie Jennings added that the map of the groundwater recharge areas are primarily sandy plains supporting irrigated agriculture, which makes them open to groundwater depletion. Furthermore, the increased April rainfall over the parts of the state that aren't sandy at the surface will mean higher tile and ditch flow, increasing bank and ravine erosion. Dr. Heidi Roop noted that the shared data of the three groundwater management areas is only a snapshot of a statewide product, in addition to soil moisture conditions that are available.
- As a resource manager, Kelly Applegate mentioned seeing firsthand how climate change is disrupting local ecosystems, with many plant and tree species struggling to adapt to the shifting climate regime.

6. Dr. Carrie Jennings Presentation

A presentation on high volume water users was provided by Research and Policy Director Dr. Carrie Jennings from the Freshwater Society. The presentation slides are available at: [Jennings_DataCenters.pdf](#).

A discussion after Dr. Carrie Jennings's presentation occurred as follows:

- Caroline Griffith asked if the mobilization of geogenic contaminants and movement of other pollutants could cause changes to the DWSMA. Dr. Carrie Jennings answered yes, as the well is on a ten-year full-field, and increasing the flow rate will cause an expansion.
- Caroline Griffith questioned whether the ten-year local water review process is responsive or fast enough to manage potential water shortages in cities. Dr. Carrie



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Jenning's agreed that the current pace must be too slow, as cities she knows of are requesting increased allocations to accommodate industrial users.

- Senator Ann Johnson Stewart emphasized the importance of sharing the presentation's finding; The focus isn't just water usage, but also regional and geophysical implications. As a side note, she shouted out the Minnesota Geological Survey's important work.
- Regarding Caroline Griffith's question on the ten-year local water review process, David Leuthe, drawing from his previous experience at the DNR, noted that water shortages trigger a prioritization process for water supply. Priority cutbacks are implemented when supply runs low, making the high demand from data centers a management challenge. Senator Ann Johnson Stewart agreed that the state needs to be tracking water consumption and the impacts of water depletion by data centers.
- Assistant Commissioner Jess Richards offered to have a DNR expert present to the task force on state-level water management, covering issues like evaluation methods for new users, scarcity, depletion, and mitigation strategies. Dr. Carrie Jennings mentioned Brent Beste, a DNR Water Resources Planner, as a potential presenter for the task force.
- Representative Isaac Schultz appreciated Dr. Carrie Jennings's presentation highlighting water demands in Eastern Minnesota and mentioned needing to make the public aware of that.
- Darin Broton agreed with Assistant Commissioner Jess Richard's suggestion to have an agency presentation on this topic.

7. Task Force Working Discussion

Task Force Working Discussion, including small group report backs and other task force business:

- A word cloud exercise was done, informing some shared language for the introduction of the task force report.
- The Introduction small group includes group convener Nancy Schuldt, Harvey Thorleifson, and Lienne Sethna. They met to discuss how to incorporate the task force's water challenges into the introduction section of the report. Harvey Thorleifson explained that because the introduction establishes the report's context, it's important to understand the progress of other small groups.
- The Groundwater small group includes group convener Caroline Griffith, David Leuthe, Peg Furshong, Representative Kristi Pursuell, Senator Ann Johnson Stewart, and Angie Lipelt. They met to break the issue into subtopics, namely 1.) water quantity (large volume water users and appropriations), 2.) water equity (water cost, private well user protection), 3.) agricultural contamination (nutrients, pesticides, and source water protection), and 4.) industrial contamination (like PFAS and chloride). Small group members are assigned to each subtopic, creating report outlines.



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- The Hydrologic Disruption small group includes convener David Leuthe. They haven't met yet, but possesses a foundational understanding of the topic, which will be further informed by the February meeting's discussion on hydrologic disruption challenges.
- The Shoreland/Landscape small group includes convener Neva Maxwell, Representative Isaac Schultz, Angie Lipelt, and Will Bement. They met to break the issue into subtopics, namely 1.) loss of natural shorelines, 2.) nonpoint source pollution, 3.) permitting and coordination challenges, 4.) aquatic recreation and use impacts, and 5.) behavior change outreach and incentives.
- The Regulatory and Enforcement Consistency small group includes convener Neva Maxwell, Nancy Schuldt, David Leuthe, Erick Francis, and Angie Lipelt. They met and loosely identified areas of focus, which will be integrated with the work done by other small groups.
- The Nutrient Management small group includes convener Lienne Sethna, Representative Isaac Schultz, and Tessa Parks. They met and started an outline, identifying nutrient challenges in the state like agricultural tile drainage. Initial recommendations were also discussed, such as having localized, community responses, paired with broad scale legislative action.
- The Agriculture small group includes convener Tessa Parks, Jeff Pagel, Darin Broton, and Peg Furshong. They held a brainstorming meeting, discussing major stressors on agriculture, cultivating best management practices for agriculture, and leveraging resources present in the state.
- The Pollutants/Emerging Contaminants of Concern small group includes convener Nancy Schuldt. They identified areas of research and potential recommendations for the report, such as mercury, PFAS, microplastics, chloride, and coal-tar sealants, which contain significant PAHs.
- The Resource Extraction/Transport small group includes convener Nancy Schuldt, Peg Furshong, Julie Lucas, and Senator Ann Johnson Stewart. The topic areas of explorations will be ferrous and non-ferrous hard rock mining, gas production, petroleum pipelines, CO2 pipelines, and data centers. Ethanol plans and Geochemical hydrogen production are also possible issue areas.
- The Wetlands small group includes convener Nancy Schuldt, Representative Kristi Pursell, Julie Lucas, and Peg Furshong. They discussed regional issues to wetlands, reduced federal protections under the Clean Water Act, and elevating the significance of Minnesota's peatlands as part of state adaptation to climate change.
- Lienne Sethne asked about establishing deliverables for the small groups, as well as recommendations on how to improve collaboration and the sequencing of outlines. Nancy Schuldt currently uses a shared document for her small groups but will work with AGO administrative staff to potentially make all the documents accessible to task force members. She advises small group members to consult supporting state agencies for guidance, clarity, and a realistic expectation of what's possible. Discussions should be grounded in what the regulatory and enforcement capacities are of state agencies at present.



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- Caroline Griffith made two observations: first, she mentioned an overlap in small group topics, which could lead to duplication, and second, she requested direction from the AGO regarding which recommendations are most actionable. Darin Broton shared a similar sentiment.
- Carin Mrotz outlined a timeline for future task force meetings, including a small group report-out on draft recommendations in February, and a final recommendation vote in April. Further information and guidelines will follow. Neva Maxwell sought clarification on small group recommendations. Carin Mrotz explained that there's two components for every small group end-product: first, a summary of findings, and second, a list of actionable recommendations covering topics like policy, regulatory frameworks, community outreach, or public engagement.
- Speaking to Caroline Griffith's observations, Nancy Schuldt acknowledged that the significant overlap between certain subject areas require editorial decisions and a fair amount of cross-walking and integration. Additionally, as the task force gets further along in narrative development, she encouraged incorporating as many references as possible, rather than building new arguments from scratch there is significant overlap between some subject areas, and that's where the magic of editorial decisions will come in.

8. Public Testimony

The following individuals provided public testimony:

- Don Arnosti
- Lori Cox
- Cathy Johnson
- Mo Feshami
- Ilena Hansel

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 pm