

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

BUILDING TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE

Minnesotans care about our land, water, and air. We care about protecting the Minnesota we love for future generations. And every couple of years, we have the opportunity to choose representatives who share these Minnesota values and work to uphold them. This fall, **Minnesotans will elect a new governor, state senators, state representatives, and municipal leaders.**

Because the midterm election is around the corner, this newsletter will look a little different. We've organized it around a selection of conservation issues to keep in mind as you choose who will represent you.



Our elected officials have the power and responsibility to make decisions that impact the water we drink, the air we breathe, the energy we generate, and the land we call home. And as Minnesotans, we each have the opportunity to make our own choices about who is best suited to protect our Great Outdoors.

At Conservation Minnesota, we strive to **provide trustworthy information as you decide who shares your conservation values, then we make it easy for you to keep track of how they vote once they're in office.** Inside this issue, you'll find a rundown of our state's top conservation issues that are likely to be impacted by Minnesota's next class of legislators.

The work of Conservation Minnesota is guided by your values and priorities. We listen to Minnesotans and focus on solving the conservation problems that matter most to you.

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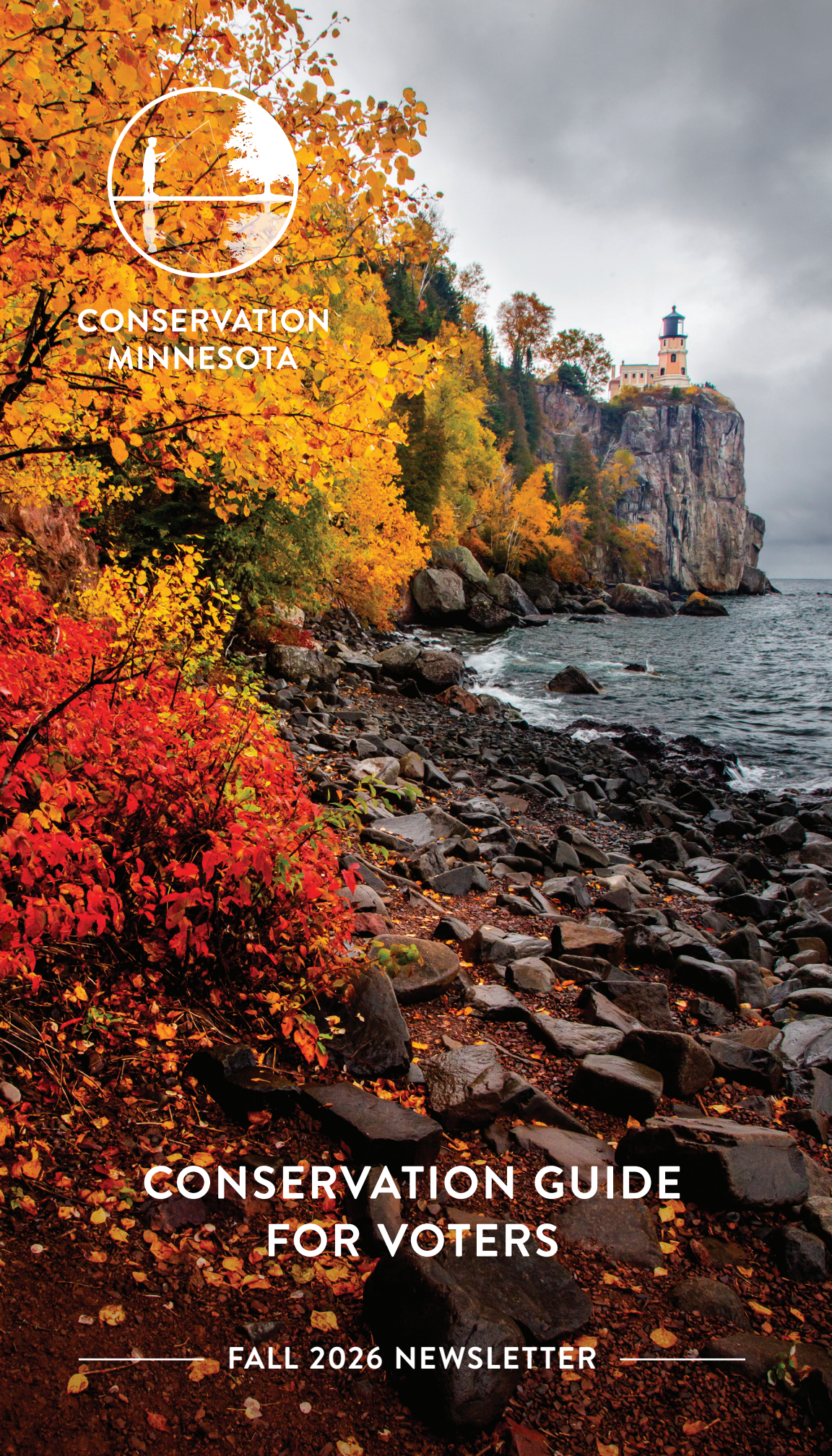


Paul Austin
Executive Director



YOUR VOTE
SHAPES
MINNESOTA'S
GREAT
OUTDOORS

Split Rock Lighthouse
overlooking Lake Superior



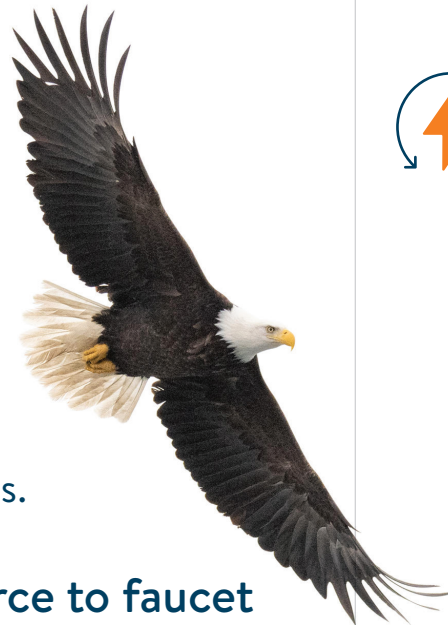
CONSERVATION
MINNESOTA

CONSERVATION GUIDE
FOR VOTERS

FALL 2026 NEWSLETTER

VOTE YOUR CONSERVATION VALUES

These are the top conservation issues in our state to remember as you decide which candidates best match your values.



Improving water quality—source to faucet

- **Replacing lead water lines**
Minnesota has an estimated 100,000+ lead service lines, exposing residents to dangerous lead contamination. The Lead Service Line Replacement bill passed in 2023 set a **10 year goal for 100% replacement**. The work is underway, but last year the program received only a fraction of the funds needed to stay on track.
- **Protecting Minnesotans from forever chemicals**
Minnesota has a **nation-leading ban on PFAS** known as Amara's Law. Since its passage, Amara's Law has been threatened with industry lawsuits and legislation designed to weaken it. For the law to keep protecting Minnesotans, it will need to be continually defended and upheld.
- **Keeping nitrate pollution out of drinking water**
Wetlands make wonderful water filters, but with more than half of Minnesota's original wetlands lost to agriculture and development—and over 70% of nitrate pollution in Minnesota's waterways coming from agricultural runoff—we need both **wetland restoration** and **updated agricultural initiatives** to protect Minnesotans.

◀ New England Asters provide food for pollinators as late as November.



Delivering affordable clean energy

- **Defending the 100% Clean Energy Standard**
Minnesota's 100% Clean Energy Standard requires all electric utilities in Minnesota to produce **only carbon-free energy by 2040**. We're partway there, and we can't slow down now—especially since clean energy is the cheapest energy available. We'll need to defend the 100% law against proposed carveouts and exemptions.
- **Decarbonizing buildings & industry**
Buildings and industry are a major source of Minnesota's climate pollution, mostly from burning natural gas for heat. **Thermal energy networks**—underground systems that share heating and cooling between buildings using heat pumps—**can cut that pollution and lower energy bills**. We have the framework—we just need to keep pushing forward.
- **Addressing data center concerns**
In 2025, Minnesota passed legislation putting **guardrails around data centers**—requiring them to pay the full cost of their energy use, cover the costs of new infrastructure built to serve them, and comply with Minnesota's 100% Clean Energy Standard. But questions remain while demand grows.



Building healthy, vibrant communities

- **Phasing out dangerous chemicals**
A bipartisan **bill to ban paraquat**—a toxic pesticide linked to an increased risk of Parkinson's disease—was proposed last session but failed to make it to a final vote. Minnesotans deserve to be protected from dangerous pesticides like this.
- **Advancing cleaner, more efficient fuels**
Minnesota is emerging as a leader in **sustainable aviation fuel** made from "clean water cash crops" like camelina, a winter cover crop that soaks up excess soil nitrogen before it reaches our waterways. Growing this industry means cleaner air and water, and a stronger rural economy. And adopting a **clean fuel standard** could speed the shift to lower-carbon fuels for planes and trucks.

- **Green Fertilizer**
Most nitrogen fertilizer is imported and producing it is energy intensive. **Locally produced "green fertilizer," made with renewable energy**, could cut emissions while keeping dollars and jobs in rural Minnesota. Early grant programs are underway, but scaling up will take sustained investment and commitment.



Protecting the Great Outdoors for future generations

- **Dedicating funds for conservation**
In 2008, Minnesota voters passed the **Clean Water, Land, & Legacy Amendment**—the largest state conservation measure in US history. It has since funded more than 40,000 projects protecting our water, wildlife, and outdoor spaces. **But the amendment is set to expire in less than 10 years**. Planning for its renewal starts now.
- **Protecting Minnesota's irreplaceable wonders**
The Boundary Waters Canoe Area is the most visited wilderness area in the US. After the US Congress voted to overturn the 20-year mining ban in the Boundary Waters watershed, Governor Walz issued a landmark executive order this summer to protect it from sulfide-ore copper mining. Now, it's time to pass legislation to **permanently protect and prioritize this Minnesota treasure**.



▲ Mic Mac Lake in Tettegouche State Park



Your vote, our Great Outdoors

This November, Minnesotans will elect leaders who decide the future of our water, air, energy, and land. **Look up where candidates stand, ask questions, and make a plan to vote.** 