

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# MINNESOTA'S CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

In Minnesota, we understand how important protecting our Great Outdoors is for future generations. This summer we saw firsthand how climate change is threatening our environment through drought and dangerous air quality. As we enter this new season, it's time we get serious about **elevating leaders who will tackle climate challenges.**



**Paul Austin**  
Executive Director

At Conservation Minnesota, we are launching our new program, **Conservation Crew**, to make sure the students of today have the opportunity to become the leaders of tomorrow. By connecting young Minnesotans to conservation, we are cultivating a diverse group of future leaders from communities across our state.

On a state level, the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board is reviewing a proposal to **add climate change to their environmental review process**—an initiative Conservation Minnesota strongly supports. Through Governor Walz's direction, the board would consider the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the need for climate adaptation, and the growing effects of climate change during its review process.

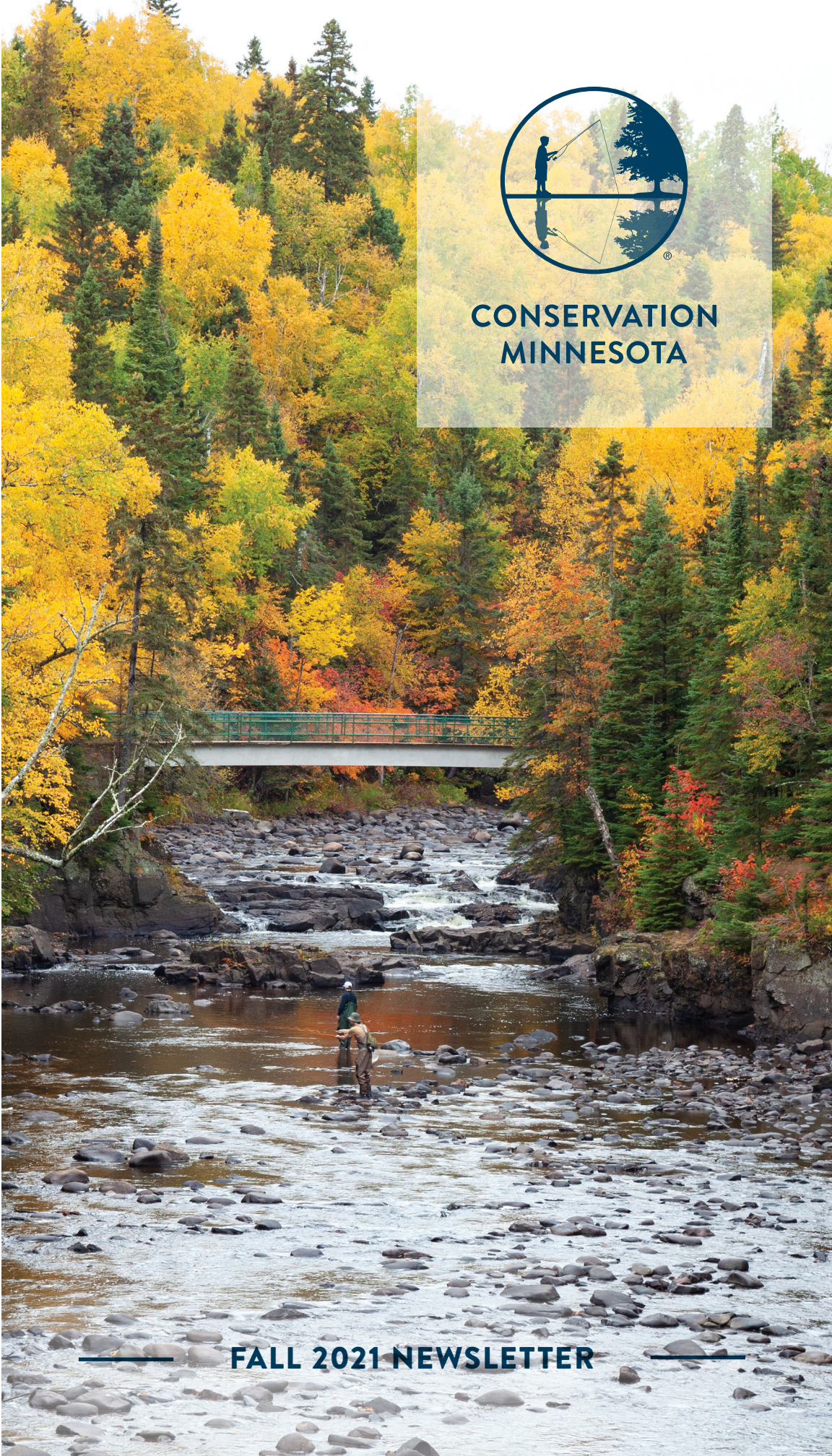
At a national level, **Senator Tina Smith is advocating for climate and clean energy in DC** by leading the push for the Clean Electricity Payment Program. Her plan would create jobs and help achieve an 80% clean electricity average across the nation by 2030. Our senator's commitment to this bold action is the kind of leadership Minnesota needs.

We're excited to see **leadership in all forms and at all levels to protect our climate** and preserve our connection to the Great Outdoors.

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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# CONNECTING STUDENTS TO CONSERVATION

This fall, Conservation Minnesota is proud to launch Conservation Crew, a **student leadership program for Minnesota middle schoolers** designed to empower youth through conservation projects. As a youth-led after school program, the Crew will research, select, and complete a conservation project that benefits its school or the surrounding community. Each Crew will be supported by a teacher and Conservation Minnesota staff.

The new program will engage students from across the state and reach communities who might not otherwise have an opportunity to learn about conservation. Individual schools will share their work with one another, enabling collaboration with students from different backgrounds. Opportunities to meet with local policymakers and conservation professionals will build students' leadership and communication skills. In the spring, three outstanding projects will be awarded prizes to fund future activities.

By investing in students, we hope to foster a lifetime connection to conservation and the Great Outdoors and equip young leaders with the skills they need to protect our environment. As students begin their projects, we will provide updates on our website at: [conservationminnesota.org/crew](https://conservationminnesota.org/crew)



# THE LEGACY AMENDMENT IN ACTION

For over 10 years, the Clean Water, Land, & Legacy Amendment has played an important role in preserving our state's natural resources. Conservation Minnesota continues to watch this funding source closely to ensure the money is used as voters intended.

One way Legacy Amendment dollars are spent is in educating the next generation of Minnesotans. Funding in this year's Legacy Bill, passed in June by the state Legislature, included several projects that will provide opportunities for kids to get involved in the Great Outdoors. Learn how all Legacy Amendment funds are spent at: [legacy.leg.mn](https://legacy.leg.mn)

Here are a few projects:

- **Minnesota Green Schoolyards, The Trust for Public Land**  
This pilot project will assess, promote, and demonstrate how schoolyards can improve water, air, and habitat quality. It will foster the next generation of stewards, while improving health, education, and community outcomes.
- **Minnesota Freshwater Quest: Environmental Education on State Waterways, Wilderness Inquiry**  
30,000 underserved Minnesota youth (grades 6–12) will explore and improve their local waterways using freshwater species as the hook for place-based, hands-on environmental education.
- **The Voyageurs Classroom Initiative, Voyageurs National Park Association**  
The Voyageurs Classroom will connect 6,000 Minnesota youth to Voyageurs National Park over three years to learn about its waters, wildlife, forests and skies, and engage in its preservation.



above Belted kingfisher | right Voyageurs National Park | cover Brule River, MN

# SOAKING UP THE SUN

New funding from state lawmakers puts solar energy on the syllabus this school year. The Omnibus Commerce & Energy Bill, passed in June and supported by Conservation Minnesota, promises \$21 million for as many as 350 K–12 schools and community colleges to install rooftop solar panels.

School solar installations get kids thinking about renewable energy, reduce energy costs, and create clean energy jobs. This new push for rooftop solar power is a great step toward a more sustainable Minnesota.

