



Land and Water Shall be Preserved

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February 15, 2022

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Chair Rick Hansen
MN House of Representatives
407 State Office Building
St. Paul MN 55155

Re: Support of the Certified Salt Applicator Program and HF2908

Dear Chair Hansen:

The Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts submits this letter in support of HF2908, a bill being heard in your committee tomorrow. HF2908 establishes a voluntary certification program and limits liability for commercial salt applicators when they become certified and follow appropriate best management practices when applying deicers.

While many of our watershed districts have been working on reducing chloride pollution for many years now, this would be a welcome and important addition to our efforts. There is no easy way to remove chloride from our lakes, rivers, and wetlands once it gets there. It is considered a permanent pollutant. Prevention is our best and really our only option for limiting the negative impacts of excess chlorides in our waters. This pollutant comes from several sources, but one easily reduced source comes when applicators overapply salt hoping to reduce their risk against slip and fall lawsuits. But with proper training and limited liability protections for certified applicators, we believe we can make a difference.

Thank you for hearing this bill and considering our support for HF2908.

Sincerely,

Emily Javens, PE
Executive Director

cc: Peter Strohmeier, Committee Administrator, Environment & Natural Resources Finance and Policy Division



DEDICATED TO A STRONG GREATER MINNESOTA

February 16, 2022

RE: Support for House File 2908/Senate File 2768

Dear Chair Hansen and Committee Members:

My name is Sara Sietsema and I am the Environmental Specialist for the City of Willmar, and am submitting this letter on behalf of the City of Willmar as well as the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities, of which Willmar is a member, in support of House File 2908. The Coalition is a group of more than 100 cities throughout the state, and this bill and its companion in the Senate for the purpose of reducing salt pollution in our waters.

The City of Willmar and the other CGMC cities play an essential role in protecting Minnesota's waters through their wastewater and storm water systems. In Willmar, like many other cities across Minnesota, we deal with high levels of salty parameters in our waters and seek the opportunity to partner in efforts to reduce such pollution. High levels of chloride are harmful to aquatic plants and animals and may also impact groundwater used for drinking. Chloride and other salts can damage treatment infrastructure as well. Unlike nutrients such as phosphorus or nitrogen, chloride permanently pollutes water because there is no cost-effective or easy method to remove it.

Road salt has been identified as one of the primary causes for the increased chloride in Minnesota's waters. Because it is not feasible to remove chloride from wastewater and stormwater, the best way to address the issue is by preventing it from reaching our water in the first place. House File 2908 is an important first step that will assist in reducing the amount of road salt used on sidewalks and streets, help the businesses in our communities implement best management practices, and result in cleaner waters across Minnesota.

I thank you again for the opportunity to support this legislation. While it will not solve this issue in its entirety, we believe it is a common-sense solution that will promote immediate investment to protect Minnesota's waters in an affordable way. We ask that you adopt this legislation.

Sincerely,

Sara Sietsema
Environmental Specialist
City of Willmar, MN

Member, CGMC Environmental and Energy Committee



Support for HF2908 (Fischer)/SF 2768 (Ruud) Smart Salting Bill

House Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Finance Committee Members:

The organizations listed below support the smart salting bill - HF 2908 (Fischer) / SF 2768 (Ruud) - and encourage you to support this bipartisan bill so that it can become law during the 2022 legislative session.

Salt (chloride) pollution is a significant and growing problem in Minnesota, the land of 10,000 lakes. One teaspoon of salt can permanently pollute five gallons of water, and once chloride is in a lake, it is nearly impossible to remove. 50 Minnesota lakes and streams are already listed as impaired by chloride pollution, with another 75 water bodies nearing levels that harm aquatic life.

Frequently, salt is overapplied because visible piles of salt are thought to create safe sidewalks, parking lots and roadways. However, far less salt, applied in the right conditions, is optimal - both for our lakes and for safety. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has created a smart salting training course that has been extremely successful at educating salt applicators and informing the public about the best ways to safely and effectively apply salt while avoiding overuse.

HF 2908 (Fischer) / SF 2768 (Ruud) would establish salt best management practices in statute, a voluntary certification program, and limit the liability of certified applicators who follow these practices. With several years of experience of successfully conducting smart salting training using the Clean Water Fund and Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund grants, it's time to make the training and certification permanent, and provide certainty to applicators who follow best practices.

Thank you for your service to the people of Minnesota. Please take action so that we can protect our lakes and rivers from chloride pollution through this innovative, collaborative, and successful program.

Sincerely,
Audubon Minnesota
Conservation Minnesota
Clean River Partners
CURE (Clean Up the River Environment)
Clean Water Action Minnesota
Freshwater
Friends of the Mississippi River

Friends of Minnesota Scientific and Natural
Areas
Minnesota Ornithologists Union
Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter
Nine Mile Creek Watershed District
Pollinator Friendly Alliance
Stop Over Salting
Vote Climate



**MISSISSIPPI
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Good Afternoon, Chair and Members of the Committee. My name is Abby Moore and I'm an Outreach Specialist at the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization.

We know that a single teaspoon of salt contains enough chloride to permanently pollute five gallons of fresh water. Currently, in the Twin Cities Metro Area, we're applying around 365,000 tons of salt on our roads and paved surfaces every year. An estimated 78 percent of that salt will eventually find its way to our groundwater supplies or to our surface waters, where it is toxic to fish and other aquatic life.

Unfortunately, much of our road salt is wasted — used in greater quantities than is needed, or used in the wrong conditions. We call this over-salting, and contrary to popular belief, more salt does not equal safer roads or sidewalks. It only means an excess of harmful chemicals impacting our water quality for generations to come.

The antidote to over-salting is smart salting. At the MWMO, we work with our state and local partners to sponsor smart salting training for public and private snow removal professionals. This training not only reduces the problem of over-salting; it also helps our salt applicators to become more effective, leading to improved public safety outcomes as well as cost savings.

The availability and accessibility of this smart salting training is critical to reducing the harmful impacts of chloride while maintaining safety on our roadways. We ask for your support in providing more training opportunities to our snow plow drivers and snow removal contractors.

We also need your support in relieving the burden of liability from those who are certified smart salters using best practices. We know from experience working with public works staff, snow removal contractors, and business owners that they know what to do and want to help. But they worry about lawsuits from patrons who demand they blanket even dry pavement with salt granules, believing falsely that this increases safety.

If current trends continue, researchers have projected that some waterbodies in the metro area may no longer be able to support aquatic life by 2050. You can help reverse these trends today by supporting SF 2768/HF 2908. Thank you for your time.