

Sustainable Diversion Limits



Related Facts

75% of Minnesotans rely on groundwater for their drinking water

There are more than 1,000 high volume appropriation permits within 1 ½ miles of a trout stream, which are particularly sensitive to groundwater changes.

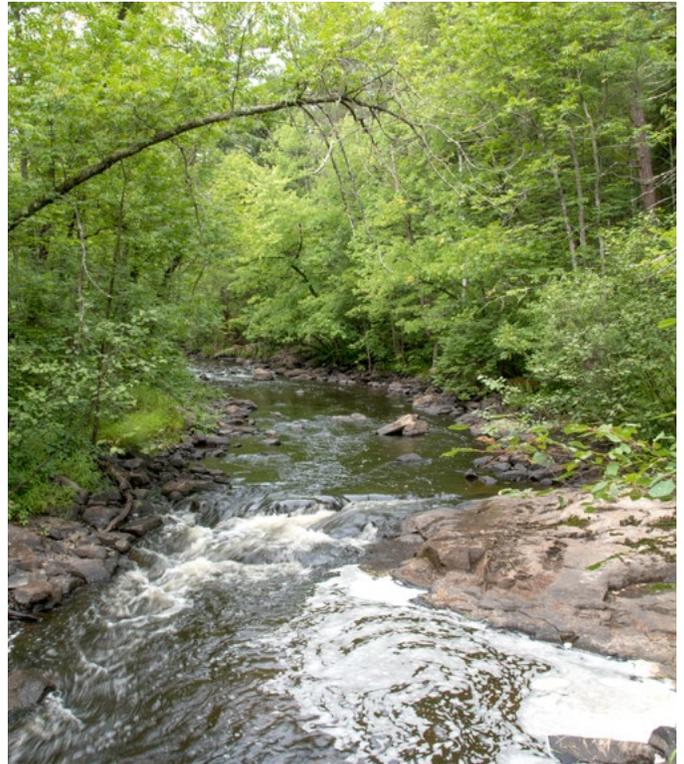
Summary

Lake, wetland and stream ecosystems are important to Minnesotans' way of life and to our recreational economy. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) works to maintain these ecosystems while also providing reliable and sustainable water supplies to domestic and commercial water users. Many of Minnesota's surface waters are hydraulically connected to groundwater resources and have the potential to be negatively impacted by groundwater use. Current statutory language requires the Minnesota DNR to consider whether groundwater use would cause a negative impact to surface waters, and links to the surface water protection provisions of Minnesota Statute 103G. The current statutory language lacks a clear definition for the terms "ecosystem harm" or "negative impact", which has created challenges for the DNR in applying requirements for surface water protection consistently to both surface and groundwater use. The current surface water provisions in statute are related to the direct appropriation of surface water and do not translate well to the assessment of diffuse and distributed impacts of groundwater use.



Proposal

The intent of this proposed policy is to ensure Minnesota's water resources are protected and available for current and future generations of Minnesotans. Long-term overuse of groundwater can significantly affect our wetlands, lakes and streams. The proposal defines ecosystem harm, negative impact to surface water, and sustainable diversion limits in the context of water use and current Minnesota water laws. The proposed definitions are based on the DNR's Definitions and Thresholds for Negative Impacts to Surface Waters report* to the legislature in 2016. The proposal also clarifies that groundwater appropriation permits may only be issued if they avoid known negative impacts to surface waters and provides the DNR authority to establish sustainable diversion limits to avoid negative surface water impacts. A handful of other states in the eastern half of the US have implemented similar approaches to setting diversion limits to protect surface waters and aquatic ecosystems. The proposal will ensure that state statutes provide a clear and transparent framework that balances reasonable use with long-term sustainability.



*The Definitions and Thresholds for Negative Impacts to Surface Waters report is available on the DNR's website at mndnr.gov/gwmp/gw_thresholds/index.html

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