



Clean Water Fund - Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern

Fiscal Impact (\$000s)	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017
Clean Water Fund				
Expenditures	1,170	1,170	0	0
Revenues	0	0	0	0
Net Fiscal Impact	1,170	1,170	0	0

Summary

This proposal appropriates funding for the Contaminants of Emerging Concern (CEC) program to assess, evaluate and develop health-based guidance for new and potential drinking water contaminants.

Background

Every year, studies conducted in Minnesota and across the country find unexpected contaminants in our lakes, rivers, and even drinking water. Often, these are chemicals about which little is known. The contaminants may or may not be “new,” but their presence in Minnesota’s water may be new or unexpected.

These contaminants are being found now because:

- There are better methods for finding substances at lower levels.
- Additional substances are being looked for.
- New substances are being used.
- Old substances are being used in new ways.

Most contaminants are from products that accidentally or intentionally end up in water through storm water runoff, because of how people use them, or disposal through septic systems and city sewers. These contaminants can include pesticides, pharmaceuticals, personal care products, flame retardants, and plasticizers.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Drinking Water Contaminants of Emerging Concern program investigates and communicates the exposure potential and health risk of contaminants of emerging concern in drinking water. The CEC program develops human health-based drinking water guidance values (how much of a substance is safe to drink). These guidance values are developed using available toxicity and exposure information. MDH scientists calculate guidance values that will protect people who drink from a water source for different time periods, whether briefly, occasionally, or daily for a lifetime.

MDH places a high priority on understanding whether children are more exposed and/or vulnerable to the health effects of contaminants. The calculations MDH uses are designed to protect the most vulnerable groups as well as the most exposed.

Proposal

The work of CEC program staff includes identifying contaminants of emerging concern, selecting contaminants for in-depth research (screening), and completing evaluations that result in drinking water guidance and information about exposure. The program began in 2010 with an initial screening of 27 contaminants and guidance

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developed for 10 contaminants during the first two years. MDH anticipates continuing to screen 10 contaminants and to provide guidance for up to five contaminants annually. To date, staff has completed screening of 36 contaminants and review of 16 contaminants.

Staff evaluates new methods for assessing health risks from contaminant exposure, especially in cases where little is known about the contaminant. Recently, the program began to work more closely with the MDH Public Health Laboratory to better understand the analytical challenges posed by contaminants and ensure methods are available to test for contaminants in water. This work will expand in the Fiscal Year 2014-15 biennium.

MDH also develops research partnerships and works with technical contractors to carry out specialized research that supports the work of the program. MDH is working with experts to collect new data, assess new methods in risk assessment, and evaluate new models and tools to improve risk assessment for emerging concerns. Five research projects have been initiated under this program.

Additionally, MDH initiated an outreach and education grant program in 2012 with plans to provide approximately \$100,000 per grant cycle. Through this grant program, the public may become more aware of contaminants, the health effects of contaminants, the source of contaminants, how personal actions relate to exposure and release of contaminants, how people are exposed to contaminants, the combined effects of multiple exposures or multiple contaminants, and other concepts.

The first grant cycle resulted in innovative proposals that will begin in spring 2013. Proposed grant activities for this cycle include: a media campaign that includes newspaper inserts, billboards, and on-air public service announcements; development of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials for environmental education events; and increasing the

amount of pharmaceuticals and hazardous materials collected and properly disposed of through promotion and support of take-back and collection programs.

Rationale

The work of the CEC program is vital to MDH and other state agency Clean Water Fund programs because it provides critical information needed to determine if a contaminant represents a human health risk. This information is used to set research priorities, prioritize cleanup actions, develop prevention strategies, and support sister agencies in developing guidance for other living things.

The work of the program is facilitated by collaborative relationships with the public, various local, state, and federal government agencies, academic organizations, non-profit groups, industry groups, and drinking water and wastewater professional organizations.

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