
Susan Thornton, Director

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Minnesota's Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan offers vision for the state's environment and natural resources

MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL (7/8/08) – A new report, released today by the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment and the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR), offers comprehensive assessments and recommendations pertaining to the future of Minnesota. The Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan (SCPP) charts long-term strategies for addressing critical issues and trends impacting Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

The SCPP team will give a public presentation before the LCCMR on its assessment and recommendations from 8:45-11:45 a.m. Tuesday, July 8, at the State Office Building (Room 5), 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St. Paul. The presentation will be followed immediately by a press conference in Room 181.

Funded by Minnesota's Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, the report is the culmination of a one and a half year collaborative public/private effort led by the University of Minnesota's Institute on the Environment and done on behalf of the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). The LCCMR requested the creation of the SCPP in response to directives from the Legislature and Governor Tim Pawlenty. The report is intended to guide public and private decision-makers with planning, policy and funding investment.

Deb Swackhamer, interim director of the Institute on the Environment and SCPP Principal Investigator, said the plan represents a "profound moment" for Minnesota. "The Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan project teams aimed to create a blueprint for preserving our quality of life and economic vitality across the state," said Swackhamer. "The recommendations in this report will serve as foundation for Minnesota's environment going forward."

The final recommendations work together to provide multiple, overlapping benefits for the state's economy, environment and natural resources in a cost-effective way. The recommendations speak to potential policy, action and knowledge infrastructure efforts that could be implemented across five categories:

- **Integrated Planning**, which includes guidance on improving inter-agency and community-level coordination of related conservation efforts, such as water protection and mercury contamination reduction; and investing in the tools needed to support land use and conservation decisions.
- **Critical Land Protection**, which includes guidance on identifying, prioritizing and protecting critical land and aquatic habitat, forest land and shorelands; increasing public understanding of how land and water interact at larger scales; and improving connectivity and access to outdoor recreation throughout the state.

- **Land and Water Restoration**, which includes guidance on restoring habitat, wetlands and watersheds; reducing streambank and soil erosion; and improving our understanding of groundwater resources.
- **Sustainable Practices**, which includes guidance on renewable energy sources, practices and adoption strategies; expanding the involvement of individuals and communities in energy conservation and carbon reduction efforts; and the expansion of sustainable forestry.
- **Economic Incentives for Sustainability**, which includes guidance on developing and providing incentives for investment in and adoption of renewable energy practices.

Referring to the “unprecedented” nature of the SCPP, Susan Thornton, director of the LCCMR, said: “This effort has uniquely benefited from the participation of a broad spectrum of environment and natural resources experts and stakeholders, many of whom volunteered their time because of the importance this project has for Minnesota.”

The effort was completed in two phases. The first phase concluded in July 2007 with a draft report that identified critical issues and trends having implications for Minnesota’s environment and natural resources. Now, the second phase concludes with a final report on how to address these critical issues and trends.

“LCCMR members look forward to studying the plan in detail and learning how it can inform investment priorities for Minnesota’s Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund,” said Thornton. “Based on what we’re already hearing, we expect that decision-makers around the state will be making use of it’s guidance in their own efforts.”

For more information and to view or download a copy of the SCPP, please visit <http://www.lccmr.leg.mn> or <http://www.mnconservationplan.net>. Contact Mike Banker for specific inquiries relating to the LCCMR. Contact Eve Daniels for specific inquiries relating to the Institute on the Environment.

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Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR)

The LCCMR is made up of 17 members (five senators, five representatives, five citizens appointed by the governor, and one citizen appointed by both the Senate and the House). The function of the LCCMR (formerly LCMR) is to make funding recommendations to the Minnesota State Legislature, primarily for expenditures from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, for special environment and natural resource projects. These projects help maintain and enhance Minnesota’s environment and natural resources. The LCCMR developed from a program initiated in 1963. Since then, more than \$600 million has been appropriated to over 1,250 projects throughout Minnesota.

Institute on the Environment

As the gateway to and the link between "all things environmental" at the University of Minnesota, the Institute on the Environment is discovering solutions and delivering results to the region, the nation and the world. The Institute’s research and activities are organized around four themes, including Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation; Renewable Energy and the Environment; Landscapes and Watersheds; and Human and Ecosystem Health. World-class fellows from a wide range of colleges, along with visiting scholars and affiliated organizations, provide intellectual leadership for an interdisciplinary mission that entails research, ongoing initiatives and public outreach.