



State Will Assist in Optimizing Softeners; Option of "Removing" Softeners is Changed

By Jeff Hill, MWQA Board

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz's 2019 budget proposed funds to optimize water softeners. The bill passed with a small change and is now law. The legislation is motivated by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and their effort to reduce chloride in rivers, lakes, streams and groundwater.

MWQA supported the bill, and while the impact of this legislation is small, it sets a path and the precedent is important. MWQA agrees that chloride is increasing in our waters and that it can reach levels toxic to fish and plants. Water softeners, however, are a critical component in sustainability. Reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions may be the most significant, but reduction in cleaning and other chemical use with soft water has a positive impact on water use and wastewater quality. Installing high efficiency water softeners, tuned to the local conditions, is a critical piece of environmental responsibility. The MWQA members who worked on the issue believe that water conditioning dealers must become aware and lead the effort to reduce salt use and chloride emissions.

No longer for "removing" softeners. That *small* wording change was not insignificant to MWQA, and required work and vigilance on the part of MWQA lobbyists Daryn McBeth and Brian Carr. The initial bill called for "upgrading or removing water softeners." MWQA took exception to the word "remove." Remove may have been intended for municipalities that install lime hardness reduction (LHR) plants, but LHR plants do not produce soft water. New language calls for "**upgrading, optimizing or replacing**" softeners. Many residents on low hardness water will prefer soft water and optimizing these softeners is critical. Salt use and chloride discharge can be reduced by 90% where water was previously 60 gpg.

Environmental Sales Tax Funds. The bill passed as a component of the 2019 Legacy Omnibus Bill. The funding to optimize water softening is from the Minnesota Clean Water Fund, which is part of the constitutional amendment passed in 2008 -- the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. The amendment is to "protect drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve arts and cultural heritage; to support parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater." The Legacy Amendment increased the state **sales tax by three-eighths of one percent** through 2034.

Lobbyist Work. Changing language in a very large bill like the Legacy Omnibus bill was difficult. Legislators fear that allowing one change will invite others and cause unforeseen reaction that might derail the entire piece of legislation. The House version was changed early in the session, but the "remove" language survived in the Senate version until the last minute. McBeth and Carr stayed in touch with staff at MPCA, sponsoring legislators and their staff. They attended hearings for the bill to catch any sudden changes and they worked hard to delete the word "**remove.**"

\$100,000. The fund will not optimize all water softeners in the state. The bill grants \$23,000,000 to MPCA for various projects. \$500,000 is for two years of chloride reduction work. Most of that will go to road salt reduction efforts, as deicing dwarfs all other sources of chloride. \$100,000 remains for softener optimization, but some of that may be used for administering the program.

Municipal Grants. The funds will be allocated by issuing grants. Most likely a municipality with a chloride problem will apply for a grant to assist local homeowners and businesses to optimize or replace softeners. Municipalities become interested when their wastewater plants are discharging chloride above 250 ppm. At that point they become regulatory targets of MPCA. Salt and chloride are not affected by wastewater treatment and pass through those plants.

MWQA Opportunity. It is an opportunity for MWQA and Water Conditioning Contractors to assist with local plans that will make the most chloride reduction impact with the lowest use of state funds. And state funds should not be necessary to encourage people to optimize softeners and replace time clock-operated units. It will be a great success when one municipality with a chloride discharge problem succeeds in reducing their discharge below 250 ppm because of softener optimization. The WQA's work with Wisconsin WQA had resulted in 27% to 47% chloride reduction in Madison, Wisconsin neighborhoods.

MPCA Schedules Meetings for Input On Statewide Chloride Management Plan

Water Softening Discharge Is One Part of Chloride Reduction Plan

Chloride concentrations are increasing in water bodies across Minnesota, raising concern about the impact of this salty pollutant to freshwater fish and other species. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) recently drafted a [Statewide Chloride Management Plan](#) and is seeking public input on the draft, including three upcoming workshops. Speakers will show how your 2017 comments shaped the plan, and provide another chance to give feedback before it is final.

In addition, there are Smart Salting Level 2 Trainings in the same locations in the afternoon. The morning sessions on the draft plan will include refreshments, and the afternoon trainings will include lunch. There is **no charge** for either workshop, and participants are encouraged to attend both. Note that you need to register separately for each event.

- **Duluth: Wednesday, June 12**, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Griggs Center, Kirby Student Center, 1120 Kirby Drive, Duluth, MN 55812-3085. [Register at EventBrite](#). Smart Salting Level 2 Training: lunch at 12:30 p.m. with training starting at 1 p.m. Register at [EventBrite](#).
- **St. Cloud/Alexandria: Wednesday, June 19**, 8:30 a.m.-noon, Douglas County Public Works Department, 526 Willow Drive, Alexandria, MN 56308. [Register at EventBrite](#). Smart Salting Level 2 Training: lunch at 12:30 p.m. with training starting at 1 p.m. Register at [EventBrite](#).

The new plan expands the one that originally addressed road salt runoff impacts in the Twin Cities metro area. The Statewide Chloride Management Plan takes a deeper look into winter maintenance throughout Minnesota and includes other sources of chloride such as water softening, dust control, agriculture, wastewater treatment plants, and more.

The plan will also include an updated analysis of current trends and conditions of Minnesota waters. In addition, the plan will include strategies for reducing chloride from all sources to protect Minnesota waters from increasing chloride pollution.

The MPCA has also updated the Smart Salting Assessment tool (SSAt) that allows winter maintenance and summer maintenance professionals to develop a salt reduction plan and track progress for their organization. In 2017, MPCA staff traveled around Minnesota to gain input on updating the SSAt and Chloride Management Plan for a statewide audience. The agency incorporated those ideas and now seeks additional feedback.

The informational meetings are intended for:

- City and county staff
- Tribes
- Road salt applicators: public (school districts, colleges, etc.) and private contractors
- Watershed districts and Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- State agencies such as the Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Interested citizens and groups such as lake associations

If you are a water softening dealer, you may find it beneficial to attend the meeting in your coverage area. MWQA President Scott Schiesser attended the first meeting, held in Rochester, in early May.

For additional information, please contact Eric Alms at the MPCA: Eric.Alms@state.mn.us or 651-757-2589.

(The above article is a reprint from "On Point," the MPCA's online newsletter.)

Now Is A Great Time To Get Involved!

By Scott Schiesser, MWQA President

How social are you? In today's fast paced world, we get our news in many ways. We still watch the world and local news, read a paper and chat with a friend over the water cooler. But, in today's modern, hectic, and often confusing social world, there are many ways to get the news. Each day we read or hear about the latest "Tweet," "Snap Chat," "Facebook post," "Viral video," "Influencers," "Pinterest," "Flickr," "Tumblr," "Google reviews," "Linkedin followers," "Instagram," "Google +", "YouTube," "Reddit," "Quora," "Vine," "Periscope," "BizSugar," and "StumbleUpon"...phew! People are communicating about the news and events in many ways today, and it can be daunting to say the least.

Communication and action about the important issues that affect *your* business is what MWQA is doing every day for you. You don't have to filter through all the noise that is swirling around you every day; you just need to be connected to MWQA, and most importantly be an active, supportive member. MWQA is focused on the issues that affect our industry each day, and your support is critical. Currently, we are very active as we are faced with the chloride discharge topic. We have formed the Minnesota Chloride Task Force with very clear objectives on ways to support our industry and work together with state agencies that are regulating chloride discharge.

Below are the four objectives of our Task Force:

- #1. Monitor the news in Minnesota for anything that applies to chloride discharge.*
- #2. Create an online database of anything and everything that applies to chlorides in our state.*
- #3. Design marketing materials that discuss what we, as consumers, can do to reduce chloride discharge without centralized water treatment.*
- #4. Clearly communicate with MWQA members across the state on what is happening, and what everyone can do to support the actions.*

What can you do? Show your support by attending a board meeting and getting involved in these critical issues. Also, send any and all news that you see and hear about chlorides to our attention. Attend your city or county meetings if you hear anything about proposals for water treatment plant improvements, or centralized "softening." Some communities are already looking at restricting water softener discharge and regulating what type of softener residents may have in the home.

Come and join us at the fall convention to learn more about what we are doing to support our industry in the great State of Minnesota, and have some fun along the way!

MWQA Can Assist With Ethics Issues

By Mike Ritter, MWQA Board

Where do you turn when you have an ethics issue with something that you have heard or read or that may not look or feel right regarding the water treatment industry?

If you're not sure, reach out to the Minnesota Water Quality Association. The MWQA offers a non-biased platform to review industry issues and help resolve these issues in a timely and ethical manner.

We all have different views on what may or may not be ethical, but let us know if MWQA can be of assistance. For more information please reach out to me or one of your MWQA Board members.

MWQA Convention Is October 1-2, 2019

If you need credit to renew your water conditioning or plumbing license this year, plan to get it through the MWQA in October. You can check your [license status here](#).

We will again offer several classes at our fall convention, allowing you to get both your code credit and technical/other credit to renew your license. We are hoping to offer more code courses this year, as we

have several members with plumbing licenses who need additional code credits. We take care of submitting your credits online - all you need to do is register and show up for the class.



SAVE THE DATE!
MWQA Annual Convention
October 1 - 2, 2019
Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria, MN

**New this year -
* DAYTIME Vendor Fair***
- Continuing Education for
WC and Plumbing Licenses
- State License Exams
(Pending Approval by DOLI)

MWQA
Phone: 763.754.2123
Email: info@mwqa.com

The Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry requires that all persons holding Water Conditioning or Plumbing licenses must complete Continuing Education Credits (CEU) during each license cycle in order to renew their license. Check your license today on the DOLI website

<https://secure.doli.state.mn.us/lookup/licensing.aspx>

Credit will also be offered for WQA certifications and Wisconsin licenses.

Registration materials will be available soon on the MWQA website at
www.mwqa.com

Alexandria Will
Host MWQA
Convention
October 1-2

Golf Outing on
September 30

MWQA Needs More "Everyday Leaders"

By Mike Herman, MWQA Past President

As I am writing this I am watching the rain and just not quite appreciating this "invigorating weather" as much as I usually do and am desiring the sun to come out for a few days at a time.

Here at Driessen Water we have been involved with a program called "Everyday Leadership." All of us in leadership positions are a part of this and continue to gain knowledge on how to become better Everyday Leaders. Everyday Leaders is what we need in our industry and profession here in Minnesota from each of you. We need to get more involved with issues that have and will effect us and our profession.

Have you heard the terms Chloride, Chloride Reduction, Chloride Elimination, Chloride Initiatives or other buzzwords such as these? Do you live in a community that has chloride discharge issues, or have you heard of communities regulating softeners and chloride discharge? If you have not, you most likely will. Minnesota is becoming more aware of the chloride discharge challenges and we in the water conditioning profession need to stay knowledgeable, aware and proactive. MWQA has created a Chloride Task Force, has partnered with MPCA and is developing information and training for those in the industry. This information would target local communities and be used to determine what the best and most economical solutions are.

How can you be a part of this? Join MWQA, ask your neighbors and friends in our industry to join MWQA. The larger our membership the more communities we can touch, the more we can continue to influence and provide input and solutions. Be the **Everyday Leader** and become involved in your local communities and educate them on what we can provide to help address chloride reduction.

Be Involved!

For more information please contact one of your MWQA Board members, listed on our website at www.mwqa.com.

