



News Release

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Minnesota Environmental Partnership Sets 2011 Policy Priorities

Safeguarding Outdoor Investments and Defending Minnesota's Environmental Policy Foundation Top List

SAINT PAUL – December 21, 2010 – Minnesota Environmental Partnership (MEP), the statewide coalition of 80 conservation and environmental organizations, has announced five policy priorities to protect and defend Minnesota's Great Outdoors for future generations.

"Minnesotans highly value our Great Outdoors," said Steve Morse, executive director of MEP. "They want to pass on to future generations a heritage of clean lakes, rivers and streams; abundant wildlife; natural areas; and accessible parks and trails."

"It is in these challenging economic times when our values are truly tested. MEP is committed to protect and defend Minnesota's Great Outdoors legacy to keep our state a safe, healthy place for our children and grandchildren."

MEP member organizations selected five priority issues for 2011:

- **Safeguard Investments:** To stay true to the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment – approved by 1.6 million voters in 2008 – MEP will work with elected officials to protect these dedicated funds so they are not raided to solve short-term budget problems or used for purposes not specified in the Minnesota Constitution.

"Voters passed this constitutional amendment to ensure that we would have the funds to do more than we had been doing to protect and clean up our lakes, rivers, streams and Great

Outdoors,” Morse said. “This money should be used as voters intended – to expand and enhance these efforts. We will be vigilant in our efforts to protect these dedicated funds from raids.”

- **Defend Minnesota’s Environmental Policy Foundation:** Minnesota has a long history of laws that protect public health, land, water and air, including environmental review, community rights, clean energy policies and adequate transit funding. Despite the current economy, MEP’s polling from November 2010 shows that voters strongly support environmental protections.*

“More than 80 percent of Minnesota voters want industries to continue to follow existing laws that protect land, air and water,” Morse stressed. “Minnesotans don’t want us to move backwards. MEP is committed to protecting Minnesota’s future by maintaining these laws and preventing rollbacks of these protections.”

- **Make the Amendment Work for Clean Water:** Approximately \$85 million a year of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment funds are dedicated to cleaning up Minnesota’s lakes, rivers and streams. MEP will work with the Dayton Administration to ensure that those funds are used effectively.

“Polluted runoff, contaminated by pesticides, chemicals and fertilizers, remains a major cause of our water pollution,” Morse said. “We are spending tens of millions of dollars a year from the Legacy Amendment to test and develop clean-up plans for our water, but now we must actually do the clean up. That means targeting the Clean Water Funds where they will do the most good. We need to get the most bang for the buck to make the Amendment work for clean water.”

- **Protect Our Water from Toxic Mining Pollution:** A new type of mining with a long history of causing toxic pollution in other states has been proposed for northern Minnesota near waters that flow into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness and Lake Superior. MEP member organizations will be working with the Dayton Administration to ensure that non-ferrous sulfide mining operations - proposed by large, foreign-owned corporations - won’t cause long-term water pollution and that current state regulations are fully enforced to protect public health as well as taxpayers’ wallets from paying for clean-up costs.

“Clean up of toxic mining pollution can take many decades,” Morse said. “We shouldn’t burden taxpayers with those costs. It only makes sense that we have adequate protections in place before mining begins so we can pass on our legacy of clean lakes, rivers and streams to our children and grandchildren.”

- **Clean Energy Jobs: Harvest Energy from the Sun:** To help reduce Minnesota’s reliance on imported energy, MEP organizations will seek a 10 percent Solar Electricity Standard designed to spur manufacturing and construction jobs by increasing the state’s use of solar power.

“To create and maintain good jobs right in our backyard – and reduce our dependence on imported dirty oil, gas and coal – we need policies that will stimulate manufacturing, development and installation of renewable, clean energy solar projects,” Morse stated.

BOTZEK NAMED AS MEP LOBBYIST

In addition, Morse announced that Gary Botzek will be the MEP lobbyist for 2011. Botzek is former chair of the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board and has served on the board of directors of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership, the Minnesota League of Conservation Voters, the Ramsey County Parks Board, and the Metropolitan Parks and Open Spaces Commission.

For more information on MEP priority issues, go to www.MEPartnership.org.

Minnesota Environmental Partnership is a statewide coalition of 80 nonprofit conservation and environmental organizations, representing more than 450,000 Minnesotans. Formed in 1998, MEP works with its member organizations to protect and restore Minnesota's lakes, rivers, streams, forests, wildlife habitat and natural areas.

**Polling data is from a statewide telephone poll of 701 registered Minnesota voters, conducted Nov. 16-21, 2010 for the Minnesota Environmental Partnership by the bipartisan research team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates and Public Opinion Strategies. The margin of sampling error for the statewide sample is 3.7 percentage points, plus or minus, at a 95 percent confidence level; margins of error for subgroups within the sample will be larger.*

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