

2009 Sierra Club North Star Chapter State Legislative Priorities

Minnesota's Clean Car Act

One of the most effective ways for our state to reduce its dependence on oil and lower global warming emissions is to join 14 other states in the nation and adopt "clean car" standards for new passenger vehicles. Adopting these standards will improve our air quality, take a big dent out of global warming pollution and make our cars more efficient, saving all of us money in the long run. These standards, which are more stringent than federal standards, drive the auto industry to innovate.

Green Jobs for Minnesota

Sierra Club and the United Steelworkers have formed the Blue-Green Alliance to promote a green jobs agenda in the state and nationally. This year, we will work with the Green Jobs Taskforce at the legislature to create a Green Jobs agenda that supports job creation that help Minnesota transition to a New Energy Economy – reducing global warming pollution, saving money, and investing in local economies.

Risky Sulfide Mining

Sulfide mining operations have never been conducted in Minnesota. This mining for precious metals involves sulfide compounds that generate sulfuric acid mine drainage when exposed to air or moisture and can leach into the surrounding environment. The potential of surface and groundwater contamination by acid mine drainage can remain for centuries or longer after a mine is officially closed. Acid mine drainage from western states' metal mines has caused some of the largest and most contaminated Superfund sites in the country. The Sierra Club supports legislation that would: (1) prohibit mining proposals that have not been proven safe during actual operation and closure of a similar mine, (2) hold companies responsible for the risks of sulfide money through bankrupt-proof financial assurances, and (3) ban mining proposals that would require treatment to protect water supplies after a mine's closure.

Building Sensible Communities

Minnesota's transportation sector accounts for a quarter of the state's greenhouse gas emissions. Due to a lack of convenient transportation choices and urban sprawl, vehicle miles traveled in the state is increasing and having a large impact on global warming. Unless Minnesotans have more opportunities to live closer to their destinations, the need to drive will continue to increase along with personal costs, congestion, and pollution. Building Sensible Communities—where jobs and services are closer together—will give residents more options to travel within their communities. Sensible Communities reduce air and global warming pollution, help protect water quality, and preserve more farmland and open space.

Recording Wetlands Lost

In 2007, Sierra Club and our allies worked to strengthen the Minnesota's Wetland Conservation Act by encouraging better reporting of wetlands considered exempt from the protections of the law. Today, Minnesota still does not have an adequate reporting system for these exemptions. As a result, Minnesota's wetlands are being lost annually despite the state's commitment to "no net-loss of wetlands." The Sierra Club will be working with the Board of Water and Soil Resources, allies, and legislators to find a solution to this major loophole in wetland protection.

For more information on these priorities or other legislation, contact the
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