

2022 SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET: DROUGHT RELIEF

Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan’s Budget to Move Minnesota Forward invests \$13.35 million in funding in response to the significant adverse effects of the 2021 drought on two of the state’s critical natural resources: water and trees. The drought stressed well-established shade trees in communities and caused an extremely high mortality rate for tree seedlings planted in 2021.

The Budget to Move Minnesota Forward includes \$5.55 million to re-plant public and private forest lands where seedlings were irrevocably damaged by the drought and \$4.5 million in community shade tree grants. Additionally, the proposal includes \$3 million in funding for municipal, tribal, and other community water suppliers to implement proactive water conservation measures, and \$300,000 for an individual and small community well interference fund.

These investments will advance the DNR’s mission by addressing proactive and long-term water conservation projects and supporting tree health, carbon storage, habitat, and water quality in Minnesota.

Addressing Drought-Induced Seedling Mortality (\$5.55 million)

The 2021 drought has severely impacted recent reforestation efforts on state, tribal, county and private forest lands. The DNR estimates mortality of 72 percent for conifer plantings less than four years old. Field monitoring conducted this summer revealed seedling mortality of 100 percent on some DNR sites.

Half of the \$5.55 million investment would replace seedlings that didn’t survive the drought on DNR-managed lands and the other half would go to a pass-through grant program to assist tribal, county, and private forest owners who are also faced with drought-related reforestation needs. Funding for partners would be made available for four years to allow time to grow replacement seedlings, develop the grant criteria and process for the pass-through grant program, and prepare sites and execute the replanting. This investment provides necessary funding to ensure Minnesota’s young forests continue to grow by replanting 6.8 million drought-damaged seedlings.



Community Drought ReLeaf Grants (\$4.5 million)

Trees become stressed during times of drought, leaving them more susceptible to damage from pests and disease. This, on top of the ongoing challenge of emerald ash borer, makes it essential that local and tribal governments have access to technical and financial support to replace shade trees and maintain vital tree cover. In recent years,

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the DNR has seen great demand for shade tree grants to communities, with requests far outpacing available funding. The 2021 drought significantly added to that need.

The budget includes \$4.5 million for shade tree grants to communities to replace drought-stressed trees and acquire tree watering bags and equipment to support tree survival in the future. This four-year effort would allow time for communities to assess how the drought has affected their forests and apply for assistance accordingly.

Water Conservation Grants (\$3 million)

Times of drought remind us all of the importance of water. To prepare for the next drought, communities can take high-impact measures now to conserve significant amounts of water, sometimes in the range of millions of gallons a year.

The Walz-Flanagan budget provides \$3 million in funding for municipal, tribal, and other community water suppliers to implement proactive water conservation measures in their own infrastructure, and to incentivize their residential and business customers to install water-efficient equipment. Eligible water conservation projects could include:

- Finding and repairing leaks
- Incentivizing residential and business customers to install water-saving devices
- Increasing irrigation efficiency for both municipal and residential systems
- Education campaigns geared toward residents to promote conservation actions.

“This proposal includes high-impact measures in order to conserve water and preserve our precious tree cover. This funding will help protect the resources we all value and depend on for our quality of life in Minnesota.”

–DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen



Individual/Small Community Well Interference (\$300,000)

During times of drought, a domestic or municipal well may run out of water due to nearby high-capacity groundwater users. This is termed a “well interference.” In 2021, 24 domestic well interferences were officially reported to the DNR and an additional 34 “out of water” calls were received without a formal complaint filed. It takes time for the DNR to investigate and confirm the cause of a well interference, which can create delays in resolving the situation. Meanwhile, owners and municipalities incur costs to repair wells, lower pumps, or drill new wells, costs which can range from \$2,000 to more than \$10,000.

The budget provides \$300,000 in funding to reimburse or directly pay corrective action costs incurred by domestic well owners and municipalities to resolve DNR-confirmed well interference problems in a rapid, efficient, and equitable manner.

Throughout the 2022 legislative session, you can find updates on this drought relief proposal as well as investments in DNR’s work on climate mitigation and adaptation and local jobs and projects on the [DNR website](#).