

# Peer Perspective

By E. Paul Eckholm, CGCS

## Intended Consequences

As most of you are all now aware, the Minnesota legislature has decided to back a plan by the Department of Natural Resources to dramatically increase water fees for all users of groundwater in the state. The stated goal of this increase is to raise money for the study of the ground water in the state, by increasing the number of monitoring wells and funding other studies to identify ways for protection of this vital resource for all. This is a noble plan worth supporting, and I, for one, do support it.

Not stated in the goals is the reduction in use do to the increase in the fees, in some cases up to a 300% increase. This is, however, one of the intended consequences. Currently, the DNR has no real plan as to how it can get the citizens of Minnesota to reduce their water consumption rate. We as a state take water for granted. After all, we live in the land of 10,000 lakes. Recently, events such as the lake level in White Bear Lake and others has proven that the water in Minnesota is not limitless and some type of control needs to be put in place.

As we have seen in the past with issues like tobacco, liquor and gasoline,



governments in general try to limit use by punishing us in the pocket book to get us to conform to their wishes. But, as with those issues, this type of system, while generating lots of cash, rarely gets the public to change their ways. Change takes time and education, and no amount of money will force the average citizen to drastically change the way they do things immediately.

The water issue in Minnesota is a real issue that needs to be tackled. It is, indeed, an issue that needs real study by qualified researchers to come up with real results that can solve problems down the line. The problem is that this too will take time, and no amount of money thrown at an issue will produce good results instantly. Valuable research is a long process.

Until such time, there are a number of practical things that can and should be done to limit the wasteful use of water in Minnesota. (At this point I could give you a list, but, you might not agree with it and neither will the DNR, so what would be the point.) These options should be debated and thought through, so we can reduce the wasteful use of water and start having an impact immediately. Granted, much of this will be a drop in the overall bucket, but you have to start somewhere.

The MGCSA as a group has been focused on this issue and the Environmental Committee has been developing a plan for our industry to use, and take the lead on this issue.

We are close to finalizing those plans and you should see them soon. We have been working with the DNR and will be presenting our plan to them to show that we are not just users, but rather responsible protectors of the environment as a whole.

This type of process should be forced on all industry users of water. From agriculture to manufacturing to landscape use, every group should have to develop a plan to reduce water use. This will be much more effective in the near term than trying to force reduction through increased fees. Intended and unintended consequences will result from these fee increases, let us hope that both types produce positive results.



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