July 2023 Creation Care Green Tips

**Caring for Our Earth, Our Common Home: A Way to Love Both God and Our Neighbor**

**1.**As we contend with the uncomfortable fact that the world is not on track to stay below the critical target of 1.5 degrees C of warming, we Minnesotans can take heart in knowing that our state is developing and advocating for solutions to the complex and interconnected challenges we face.  As of this past February, Minnesota now joins 21 other states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia in creating a standard that will make our **electricity** **100 percent carbon-free by 2040.**The rigorous and independent scientists of the Union of Concerned Scientists ([ucsusa.org](http://ucsusa.org)) published a state-specific report and fact sheet that helped legislators see how Minnesota could meet its electricity needs entirely with renewable resources while dramatically reducing its use of fossil fuels.  This report and other studies showed how **1) clean energy** can produce electricity reliably even during heat waves and droughts; **2) create new jobs** and drive economic growth; **3)** reduce residential electricity bills; **4)** significantly improve air quality.  The bill directs the state's public utilities commission (PUC) to ensure the standard is effective in all communities, delivers affordable service to all households, provides workers with tools and economic assistance to navigate the transition, builds clean energy facilities in communities where fossil fuel plants have closed, and creates jobs that pay a living wage.  Minnesota's two largest electric utilities, Xcel Energy and Minnesota Power, already have state-approved plans to significantly **increase their use of wind and solar power** while phasing out coal-fired power plants.  In addition, the regional grid operator, the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), will continue working on much-needed **transmission upgrades** that will support the region's transition to renewables.

2.  Minnesota's new omnibus environment and natural resources bill is devoting some $1.6 billion over the next two years into **clean energy, the environment, climate change, invasive species prevention, wildlife habitat, parks, fisheries and outdoor recreation** - the largest investment in state history, according to John Myers, Duluth News Tribune reporter on the outdoors, natural resources and the environment (jmyers@duluthnews.com).  Programs receiving the new bill's natural resources funding are administered by the MPCA, DNR, BWSR, and other agencies dealing with issues like **climate change, protecting pollinators, managing the spread of emerald ash borer, conservation easements** to protect sensitive soil, prevent erosion, save wetlands and capture carbon, and keeping **cancer-causing PFAS ("forever chemicals") out of the environment.**  Minnesotans love their outdoors, and will benefit from the new bill expanding and enhancing boat landings and shore fishing piers across the state, as well as upgraded fish hatcheries, stream stabilization and restoration efforts, and projects to combat the spread of AIS (aquatic invasive species).

3.  In 1988, Minnesota voters passed constitutional amendments to establish a state lottery and to create the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, a permanent trust receiving 40% of net lottery proceeds (the other 60% goes into the state's general fund).  Voters, by margins of more than 2-to-1, have twice renewed the deal, and since 1991 **the fund has provided nearly $875 million to nearly 1,800 projects**  around the state, with the amount spent increased this year from 5.5% to 7% of the fund's total.  The Duluth News Tribune (jmyers@duluthnews.com) reports that project requests are vetted and funding decided by the **Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources,** with final approval by the Legislature.  The trust fund, without voter approval, **will expire at the end of 2024;** as a result of the new natural resources bill, the question to renew the trust fund will appear on the November 2024 ballot.

4.  A new study by the international scientist group Earth Commission, and published in the journal *Nature,* has found that **climate, air pollution, phosphorus and nitrogen contamination of water from fertilizer overuse, fresh surface water, the unbuilt natural environment and the overall natural and human-built environment** have all pushed beyond Earth's safety limits into the "danger zone."  Scientists at the University of Amsterdam and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany warn that the planet can recover only if changes are made, including our use of **coal, oil and natural gas and the way we treat the land and water.**An overheating planet that is losing its natural areas also affects the well-being of people living on it, as experienced by the U.S. with **18 climate-related disasters in 2022, with losses exceeding $1 billion each,**according to the National Centers for Environmental Information**.**