

# Minnesota Irrigator

PUBLICATION OF THE IRRIGATORS ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA **SPRING 2024**



## Comments by the IAM President

Jake Wildman

Greetings,

I hope everybody had a great Easter and even thou none of us probably love snow, I think we all have to feel pretty fortunate for the moisture as we head into spring planting.

I just want to say from myself and the entire IAM board, thank you to those who attended IAM's annual meeting and convention in February. We had a great turnout and overall felt it was a successful event. We really appreciate all of the IAM members, industry members and speakers for supporting the event. We are excited for next year as it will be IAM's 50th annual meeting and convention and we are already in the early planning stages for that. So, if you weren't able to attend the 49th annual, please plan on joining us for the 50th.

I don't have a lot of new things to bring to everybody's attention, but I do want to provide some updates on things that we have been working on for the last 6-12 months. If you attended your local associations annual meeting over this past winter, you are most likely aware of these issues, but for those who haven't, hopefully this will give you a better understanding of the issues IAM has been working on.

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## 49th IAM CONVENTION A SUCCESS

IAM President call the 49th annual IAM Convention business meeting to order at 9 a.m. in the Freeport Community Center, Freeport, MN. The convention floor was surrounded with 27 exhibitors ready to visit with the 175+ irrigating farmers and other guests during several breaks throughout the day.



During the annual business meeting the past annual meeting minutes and the Treasurers financial report were presented and approved. Membership Secretary Jerry Wright gave a report on past years'

membership topping off at 560 at the end of December. Jerry indicated as of a couple days ago there was a little over 400 past and new members signed up FOR 2024

After the short business meeting Jake invited Mn Ag Commissioner Thom Petersen to share some remarks. Commissioner Petersen has been a regular guest speaker at the IAM

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## MN DNR Director Katie Smith Discusses Enhanced Water Enforcement Measures at IAM's 49th Annual Meeting

Reporter: Tyler Grunewald,  
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**Smith outlines changes to DNR enforcement authority, emphasizing protection of Minnesota's water supply:**

At the 49th annual meeting of the Irrigators Association of Minnesota (IAM), Katie Smith, Director of the Ecological and Water Resources Division with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), addressed attendees regarding significant changes to the state's water enforcement measures.

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## Welcome to the MN Irrigator's Newsletter

Jerry Wright, IAM Membership Secretary

This newsletter comes to you thanks to the support of advertisers, current IAM members, Industry Sponsors listed on page 9.

Your Directors on the IAM Board welcome and strongly encourage you to renew your membership if you have not already joined. Last year we ended up with only 546 members.

Everyone benefits from each other's ideas, experiences,

and partnership in IAM activities this year including keeping a watchful eye on **MN Irrigators Water Rights**; telling personal stories about benefits of irrigation with Legislators as well as representing the interests of irrigation practices across the state.

To become a member, simply return the signup form included on the last page of this newsletter or signup and paid thru the IAM webpage at <https://mnirrigators.org/> As a member, you can also be placed on the IAM email alert list if you submit your email address.



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The first one I would like to touch on is where we are at the DNR's Administrative Penalty Order (APO) in regards to water permit violations. As you are aware in the 2023 session, the legislature passed new language dealing with the DNR's APO authority when it comes to water permit violations. Since then, we have been in contact with the DNR about specific language IAM would like to see in the updated APO guidance document. We met with them in November to provide input on that specific language. Katie Smith from the DNR came to our annual convention to provide an update and just recently, we received the updated guidance document that we are currently reviewing. We plan on meeting with the DNR to discuss these revisions and also provide comments during the 30-day comment period. I expect to see a final draft in the next month or so and once that comes available, we will make sure to share that with anybody that is interested.

The next thing I want to mention are the issues that are occurring up and around the reservation of the White Earth Nation. The first one I'll mention is the situation affecting all of the growers in the region. Simply put, there are conflicting views of what production agriculture should like in the area and these growers have a significant battle in front of them. Water used for irrigation is just one of the issues these growers face, so because of that, IAM wants to be able to support them as much as we can. Just recently, a group of farmers in the area have formed an organization to tackle these issues. IAM plans to have conversations with this group about how we can help support them moving forward.

The other situation up in the area that IAM is keeping a close eye on is the LCCMR project "Protecting water in the Central Sands Region of the Mississippi River Headwaters". Given the title of the project, it is quite obvious why this

is a concern for IAM and its members. After about a year of trying to schedule a meeting, we were finally able to meet here in the first part of April with the project manager and the researchers to discuss the details of the project. This has been a very interesting process to say the least. If you are interested in knowing more on how this discussion went, please reach out and I would be more than happy to have a conversation about it. Moving forward, IAM will continue to monitor this project very closely. One thing we have done is we have allocated some funding to collect some data in the project area. This will allow us to have something to compare to the initial data coming out of the project.

The last thing I just want to update everybody on is the groundwater trend level study that IAM funded. The study looked at groundwater trend levels in three different areas of the state. IAM was given the opportunity to fund this study because of your membership, so I

just want to say thank you. Larry Kramka, who led the study, did a great job presenting the findings at IAM's annual convention. That final report should be made available on our website within in the next week or so. I just encourage you to check that out and please reach out with any questions. We feel this will be a valuable tool in the toolbox when we have the opportunity to tell our story to legislator's, the media and the general public.

With that, I just want to say again, thank you for all of your support. There is currently a lot of issues that IAM is working on and we wouldn't be able to face these issues head on if it wasn't for you and your membership. We truly do appreciate each and everyone of you for the support that you give to IAM and we will continue to do our best to fight for you and your right to irrigate.

Jake Wildman  
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If you are not interested in receiving future newsletters from Irrigators Association of Minnesota (IAM), please send a note to [wrightsj@charter.net](mailto:wrightsj@charter.net) or IAM, 24 S. Edquist St., Appleton, MN 56208

If you have a topic that you would like to see discussed in a future issue, drop a note to IAM president, Jake Wildman at [jakewildman@outlook.com](mailto:jakewildman@outlook.com). Articles for the newsletter are solicited and gathered by the IAM officers and Membership Secretary, Jerry Wright who can be contacted at [jerrywright1970@gmail.com](mailto:jerrywright1970@gmail.com).

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convention since his appointment. Commissioner expressed his thank you and appreciation for the IAM organization’s support of the MDA programs and legislative requests over the years. Especially the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), a voluntary program; AFREC (Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council) that awards research grants associated with fertilizer management refinement; expansion of weather station network; and increased support to UM research and staff. He also encourage IAM to keep up their yearly Legislator Farm Tour.

The IAM lobbyists Tony Kwilas and Jon Berns appeared via Zoom sharing updates on legislative activities and encouragement to members for assisting them when needed at the Capital. After the adjournment of the business meeting and a break to visit exhibitors, the program continued with presentation from the following.

- Irrigation Research Update, Dr. Vasu Sharma, U of MN
- Available RCCP Grants, Jeppe Kjaersgaard, MDA
- MN Aquifer Health, Larry Kramka, The Foth Co.
- APO Language, Katie Smith, MN DN

After the presentation of the annual IAM Service awards, keynote speaker **Blois Olson**, founder of **Fluence Media** and a political commentator, took the stage on the topic of "Volatility, Variables, and Votes: 2024 Preview".



As a closing Blois moderated panel of Commodity Leaders related to Mn agriculture: MN Farm Bureau - Miles Kuschel; Northarvest Bean Growers – Norm Krause; IAM - Jake Wildman; and MN Corn Growers - Nick Peterson.



Go to page 11 for more on Blois Olson's Keynote Discussion and page 13 for more convention photos.

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### North Dakota Ag Weather & ET

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<https://ndawn.ndsu.nodak.edu/>

### Benton SWCD

<http://www.soilandwater.org/>  
320 968 5300 ext 3

### East Ottertail SWCD

<http://www.eotswcd.org/>  
218-346-4260 ext 3

### Dakota County SWCD

<http://ima.respec.com/dakota/>  
651-480-7781

### Pope County SWCD

<http://www.popeswcd.org/>  
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## Rainfall Monitoring Network Seeks Volunteers

### Participants provide important data about precipitation, climate trends

The Minnesota State Climatology Office is seeking rainfall monitors for the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network. The network includes more than 20,000 volunteers nationwide who measure precipitation in their backyards using a standard 4-inch diameter rain gauge.

Participants submit their precipitation reports online. The data from backyard rain gauges are a critical source of information and it's beneficial to add more volunteer weather observers each year, even in areas where there are already volunteers.

"Rainfall and snowfall amounts can vary widely over a short distance, so a variety of reports is helpful in the same community or area," State Climatologist Luigi Romolo said. "We have some areas in greater Minnesota that have very few reporting stations. The more

we have across the state, the better information we all have."

"Over time, as more volunteer reports make our precipitation maps more accurate, these observations provide critical guidance on Minnesota's changing climate," Romolo added. "This is also a great educational activity for families with kids and a rewarding hobby for anyone interested in weather or climate."

Volunteers are particularly needed outside the immediate Twin Cities metro area. Volunteers receive training on how to observe weather trends and how to submit their precipitation and weather event reports. All training material is available online. Participants must purchase or provide a standard 4-inch diameter rain gauge (available at discount through CoCoRaHS) and have internet access to submit reports.

For the past four years, Minnesota has won the "CoCoRaHS Cup" for

recruiting the most new volunteers of any state. "We're hoping Minnesotans will again come through in 2024 to keep the cup in Minnesota and, more important of course, to improve our state's precipitation recording," Romolo said.

To sign up or for more information, visit [CoCoRaHS.org](http://CoCoRaHS.org) or contact Luigi Romolo at [luigi.romolo@state.mn.us](mailto:luigi.romolo@state.mn.us).





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## Warm, Dry Winter Heightens Drought Concerns

Year-round water conservation is beneficial with less than half the average snowfall across much of the state and extraordinarily warm winter temperatures, drought conditions in Minnesota have persisted through the winter. Abnormally dry conditions exist throughout the state and about half of Minnesota is in moderate or severe drought.

Minnesota has experienced significant drought conditions each year since 2021. The 2021 drought was the most severe in Minnesota since at least 1988. Drought in 2023 was generally less severe, but some areas of the state experienced conditions comparable to or worse than 2021.

“While climatologists don’t issue forecasts, we want everyone to recognize that, without substantial precipitation this spring, a continuation of widespread drought conditions in 2024 is likely,” State Climatologist Luigi Romolo said.

Sixty-five surface water appropriation permits remain suspended due to last year's low streamflow conditions. These locations and other watersheds will be monitored closely to support decisions on suspending or reinstating surface water appropriation permits. Surface water appropriation suspensions are implemented when streamflow’s drop to a low level measurement called the Q90, which is a flow that is exceeded 90% of the time. Weekly streamflow reports typically resume the first week of April.

Recent drought events in Minnesota highlight the importance of year-round efficient water use and conservation. The DNR website ([mndnr.gov/waters/watermgmt\\_section/appropriations/conservation.html](https://mndnr.gov/waters/watermgmt_section/appropriations/conservation.html)) has information about what individuals, families, businesses, and communities can do to conserve water.

More information about drought is available on the DNR drought webpage ([mndnr.gov/climate/drought](https://mndnr.gov/climate/drought)).

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Smith highlighted the developments stemming from the 2023 legislative session, which DNR sought to provide the agency with enhanced enforcement authority. According to Smith, these changes are aimed at “addressing violations related to water appropriation without the necessary permit, with the overarching goal of safeguarding water resources for fish and wildlife habitats, domestic water supplies, and the benefit of current and future generations of Minnesotans.”

Smith explained key modifications to the DNR's existing Administrative Penalty Order (APO) authority. The original APO authority, granted in 2014, allowed the issuance of penalties up to \$20,000 for violations related to water appropriation. However, Smith said concerns arose at the agency regarding the adequacy of these penalties to deter violators, especially since they were capped and had to be forgiven if violations were corrected.

To address these concerns, DNR lobbied for the new law, which provides the agency greater discretion in calculating penalties, increases the APO cap to \$40,000, and requires penalties to be paid for serious or repeated violations. Smith emphasized that “these changes aim to ensure the protection of Minnesota's water supply, create a fair playing field, and hold violators accountable.”

While the APO plan revision was not mandatory with the recent changes, the DNR has engaged in discussions with stakeholders to be transparent about its intended use of the APO and to solicit input for consideration.

**IAM President Jake Wildman and Vice President Anna Bregier have been actively involved in these dialogues with the DNR and will continue providing input for the APO plan.**

In addition to the APO changes, the Minnesota DNR lobbied for new tools, akin to those of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), to address various violation scenarios. These

tools can be applied to situations not warranting a penalty, requiring prolonged corrective action timeframes, benefiting from negotiations with a permittee, or warranting higher penalties due to egregiousness.

Smith reiterated the DNR's goal of achieving compliance, noting that “most water users comply with the law and hold a DNR water appropriation permit.” Smith stated the DNR emphasizes education as the first step to correct noncompliance and prefers achieving compliance through cooperation. “The use of APOs is expected to be infrequent, with non-forgivable penalties reserved for egregious or repeated violations,” she said.

When asked about how the DNR would ensure fair and consistent application of enforcement tools across the state, Smith said the DNR is modifying and developing

programmatic guidance, creating a decision-making process for selecting the appropriate tool, and training staff accordingly. Smith emphasized that any “APO appealed by a party would require the DNR to prove the violations occurred and that the penalty was reasonable.”

In closing, Smith encouraged irrigators and agricultural groups to contact the DNR with questions or to report known or potential issues, highlighting the agency's role in providing guidance and assistance to avoid noncompliance. Katie Smith can be reached by email [katie.smith@state.mn.us](mailto:katie.smith@state.mn.us) or by phone 651-342-9227.





# Surface Water Appropriation Contingency Planning

By Dan Miller, Water Use Specialist, DNR Ecological and Water Resources Division Phone: 651-259-5731 Email: [dan.w.miller@state.mn.us](mailto:dan.w.miller@state.mn.us)



Minnesota has experienced three consecutive years of drought, with some areas experiencing significant drought since the fall of 2020. Stream flows and lake levels in many areas of the state decreased again in 2023, with recovery in some areas of the state. With reduced or no snow pack over many parts of the state this past winter, water use efficiency will be imperative for the over 10,000 water appropriation permit holders in the state.

## Stream flows and water levels

The DNR water monitoring and surveys unit has staff who maintain thousands of stream flow gages, lake level gages and groundwater observation wells throughout the state. This information helps the DNR, farmers, businesses and public water suppliers understand water availability, minimum thresholds for appropriation, and protection flows

and water levels for streams, rivers, wetlands, lakes and aquifers.

For example, along with the United States Geological Survey, the DNR maintains a stream gage on the Crow Wing River near Nimrod, about 25 miles north of Staples. At the time of snowmelt in mid-April 2023, average daily flows peaked at 1,120 cubic feet per second (cfs). In early September last year, flows dropped to 140 cfs, whereas median flows at that time of year are approximately 360 cfs. Rain arrived in late September and early October, increasing flows before ice up. In mid-November, before ice started forming, the flows at this location on the Crow Wing River increased to an average daily flow of about 260 cfs. Surface water appropriation permits were re-instated in the watersheds that feed this designated stream monitoring location with the increased flows.

Many streams and rivers across the state followed a similar path throughout the summer and into the

fall -- a drop in flows throughout the summer months until the autumn season. Some, not all, streams recovered sufficiently to reinstate suspended surface water appropriation permits before ice up.

## Surface water appropriation permit suspensions

If water levels decline to a critical level, the DNR must suspend surface water appropriations from that lake, stream, or river. This is because state laws allow for reasonable use by people and businesses while also protecting fish and wildlife habitat and to maintain water availability for other water users downstream. Some permit holders will temporarily use an alternative water source, such as a well, while their surface water appropriation is suspended. Many other permit holders do not have an alternative water source available. The DNR has developed procedures for surface water permit suspensions during low flows throughout watersheds

across the state. You can learn more at the following DNR website: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt\\_section/appropriations/permits.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/appropriations/permits.html)

One farmer in north central Minnesota had a surface water appropriation permit to irrigate agricultural crops also had a backup well associated with another permit and field and was able to use it while the surface water appropriation permit was temporarily suspended in 2023. This creative idea, as river flows dropped, allowed the permit holder to use the well to irrigate the field that primarily depended on the river as its source of water. This planning and implementation of a contingency plan protects water supplies in our lakes, streams and wetlands and protects water availability for fish and wildlife habitat as well as downstream water users during low flows and water levels due to very dry conditions.

In 2023, due to the low water

*Continued on pg 13*



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## MN Irrigator of the Year Congratulations & Thank You BRIAN ROTH



IAM President Jake Wildman awarded the 2023-2024 Irrigator of the Year award to Brian Roth from Wadena County at the 49th annual convention in Freeport, MN.

Brian farms with his wife Nancy and son Nathen at the Roths Riverside Farm near Verndale, Minnesota. Brian is a member of the Central Minnesota Irrigators and has been an active member in keeping his eye on legislative issues related to groundwater usage for ag production.

Brian has been involved with irrigation for most of his life. In January 1959 Brian with his father Maurice, mother and 2 brothers

moved to Minnesota north of Staples on the Crow Wing River. After farming for a few years Maurice knew the importance of irrigation, so he purchased the first irrigator in the area.

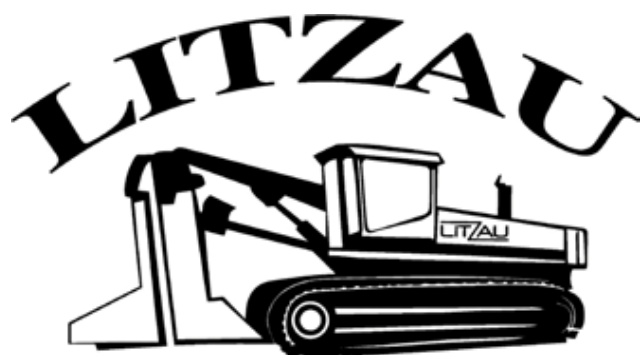
Brian's father became involved in Irrigation and was one of the first leaders to start the Central Minnesota Irrigation Association which served the central Minnesota farmers in the knowledge and management of irrigation. In 1975



Maurice helped start the Statewide Irrigation program called Irrigators Association of Minnesota and served as first President.



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## IAM Irrigation Service Award 2024 Dan Whitney - NWATS



IAM president Jake Wildman thanked and award Dan Whitney the annual IAM “Irrigation Service Award. Dan is the Principal Hydrogeologist, and co-owner of Northwest AqwaTek Solutions (2015-present).

Northwest AqwaTek Solutions per their website is a full-service company providing water resources consulting and management services to family-based agricultural and commercial operations. Northwest AqwaTek Solutions focuses on water level and water quality testing, nitrate leaching studies, wetland monitoring, well placement, aquifer testing, GIS mapping and water use permit compliance. Our company is located in Wadena, Minnesota.

Dan and his co-owner Kristi Anderson have been very active over the past 10 years working with farmers and others with their water development and issue. They have become very active in the local Central Minnesota Irrigators Association and IAM. Below is a few Dan has been involved in the last few years.

- Summer 2023 – worked with CMI in designing and selecting several surface water monitoring stations along the Straight, Fishhook, and Shell Creek
- March 2020 – present - Serve as a IAM Industry Representative



- 2018 Field Day - Ag & Water Quality Speaker at AG & ENERGY RESEARCH CENTER
- 2017 - started assisting local members of the Little Rock Creek Groundwater Management in reviewing proposed DNR plans with local irrigators and attending IAM Board meetings

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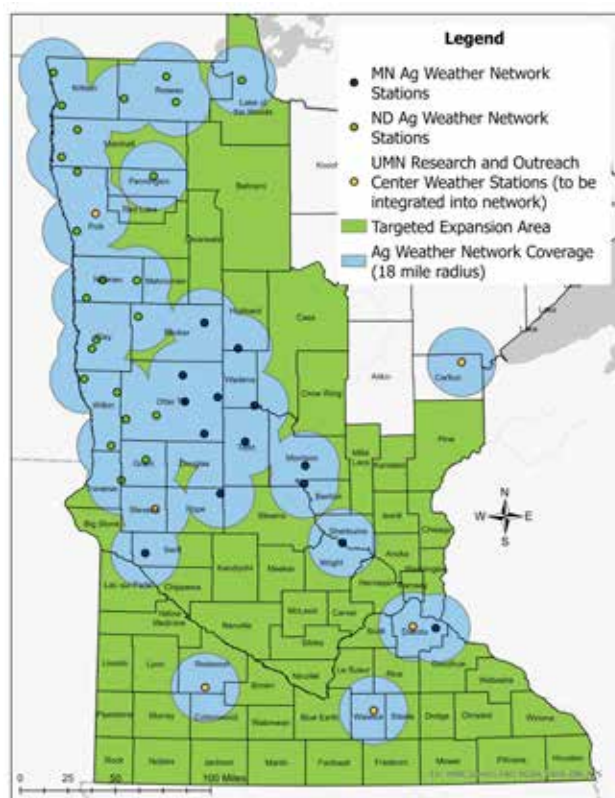






## Minnesota Regional Access to Local Weather Data & Crop ET

<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/central-minnesota-ag-weather-network>



Daily crop water use data (also known as “ET” evapotranspiration) is a crucial piece of information that irrigators need to efficiently manage water. Weather station information is required to precisely estimate water use of the growing crop.

The MDA partnered with the East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Wadena SWCD, Pope County SWCD, Benton County SWCD and Dakota

County SWCD to install weather stations across central Minnesota. The weather stations are placed in agricultural settings with the intent to provide data for agricultural producers and those involved with atmospheric research environment.

Daily crop water use (ET) estimates for a particular field can be viewed online with this Irrigation Management Assistant PROGRAM:

<https://ima.respec.com/app/> or <https://ndawn.info/centralmn.html>

In 2023, the MDA received \$3 million from the Clean Water Fund to expand the weather station network to agricultural areas statewide. The initial expansion of approximately 40 additional weather stations. There are now 38 NDAWN and MDA weather stations in Central and northwestern Minnesota. The MDA installed and manages 14, while NDAWN has installed and manages 24. The Minnesota Weather Network (MAWN) will be completed in two phases.

### PLANNED EXPANSION

Given the climatic variability across Minnesota, accurate and detailed local weather data within 20 miles of most agricultural areas is a goal of the project. Approximately 80 stations may be necessary to achieve this goal.

The map highlights the targeted expansion area. Final weather station locations are to be determined based on weather station siting criteria. If you are interested in hosting a weather station on your land, please complete the Minnesota Ag Weather Station Host Application. If you have any questions please reach out to Stefan Bischof at [Stefan.Bischof@state.mn.us](mailto:Stefan.Bischof@state.mn.us) or 218-396-0720.

Daily crop water use (ET) estimates for a particular field can viewed online with this Irrigation Management Assistant. <https://ima.respec.com/> **In late March, IMA will be consolidated into a single statewide system. Try out the 2023 Statewide Demo. All accounts in separate instances will be rolled in. You will be notified by email when this takes place.**



## Blois Olson Delivers Keynote at 49th Annual IAM Meeting Discusses Minnesota Politics and 2024 Election Preview

By Tyler Grunewald, Agriculture Program Coordinator, Northern Agricultural Center of Excellence, AgCentric; Central Lakes College, Staples, MN [tyler.grunewald@clcmn.edu](mailto:tyler.grunewald@clcmn.edu)

Blois Olson, a prominent figure in Minnesota's political and media landscape, delivered a thought-provoking keynote address at the 49th annual IAM meeting. Olson, known as "Mr. Minnesota" for his astute understanding of the state's political and economic climate, engaged the audience with his insights on voter sentiment, political dynamics, and the upcoming 2024 elections.

During his presentation titled "Volatility, Variables, and Votes: 2024 Preview," Olson highlighted the prevailing exhaustion among voters with the current political landscape. Quoting a Suburban, Independent, Pro-Choice, Fiscal Moderate woman, he shared sentiments like, "I just don't want my President to be old and crazy," reflecting the mood of many voters.

Citing a recent NPR-Marist poll, Olson pointed out that 65% of voters do not want Joe Biden to run for president again, while 60% feel the same about Donald Trump. He also shed

light on why the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) consistently wins in Minnesota, attributing it to the deeply damaged state of the Republican Party due to Trump's influence.

Olson emphasized the growing divide in Minnesota between rural and urban areas, noting that the DFL has won the suburbs in the past three elections. He showcased the DFL's increasing margins in key counties like Ramsey and Hennepin, underscoring the party's stronghold in these areas.

The presentation also touched upon key issues likely to dominate the 2024 election discourse, including the border situation, the economy, inflation, abortion, and war. Olson urged farmers to engage more with legislators, particularly highlighting the disconnect between agricultural interests and the legislature.

In addressing agricultural concerns, Olson emphasized the imperative for farmers to

engage with legislators and advocate for their interests amidst regulatory volatility. He also touched upon the burgeoning indigenous dynamics that demand attention in the state's political discourse.

Following his keynote, Olson led a panel discussion on commodity leadership, featuring IAM President Jake Wildman and representatives from the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, Minnesota Farm Bureau, and Northharvest Beans. The panel addressed challenges faced by Minnesota farmers, such as new regulations and the importance of effective land management.

Blois Olson can be followed on X at @bloisolson and heard on WCCO Radio at 9 AM/PM Sundays for "Sunday Take" and 6:20 AM Monday through Thursday for "Morning Take".



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levels, the DNR suspended 176 surface water appropriation permits, out of a total of 1,550 surface water appropriation permits in the state. The permit suspensions included uses for agricultural crop irrigation, golf course irrigation, landscape and athletic field irrigation, wild rice irrigation, sod farm irrigation, cemetery irrigation, construction-related activities, dust control, mine processing, and sand and gravel washing.

Some surface water appropriation permits continue to be suspended across the state, because water levels and flows did not recover enough to reinstate the permits before ice-in this winter. The DNR will continue to monitor water levels and flows across the state and keep you informed of any potential changes to surface water appropriation permits. If you have questions about a surface water appropriation permit, please contact your local DNR area hydrologist. A

list of staff and the geographic areas they cover is available at [https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/area\\_hydros.pdf](https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/area_hydros.pdf)

**Prepare for the next dry period!**

Many water appropriation permit holders have taken action to increase their water use efficiency. We encourage those who have not already done so to prepare for potential continued dry conditions. Install water-conserving nozzles and

other hardware, talk with someone who is using efficient irrigation water management practices, use soil moisture meters or contact your crop advisor or a University of Minnesota Extension Irrigation Specialist < <https://extension.umn.edu/soil-and-water/irrigation> > to learn more. Planning for and implementing some new strategies to conserve water is good for business, agriculture, our water resources, and fish and wildlife habitat throughout the state.



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DNR Irrigation Report - AG IRRIGATION - PERMITTED ACRES as of Jan 2024

Data MDNR Sean Hunt Jan 4th 2024 - Summarized Jerry Wright Mar 2024

Counties	Agr Crop	Nursery	Orch/Vin	Sod	Wild Rice	Grand Total
Aitkin					7,874	7,874
Anoka	1,452	196		2,020		6,082
Becker	20,387			40		20,427
Beltrami					5,805	5,805
Benton	19,639	10				19,649
Big Stone	3,996					3,996
Blue Earth	2,569			60		2,629
Brown	7,664					7,664
Carlton			30			30
Carver	128	75				203
Cass	7,752			100		7,852
Chippewa	1,116					1,116
Chisago	3,316			1,725		5,041
Clay	8,363					8,363
Clearwater	352			120	5,934	6,406
Cook						0
Cottonwood	2,271	76				2,347
Crow Wing	2,859	8			216	3,083
Dakota	64,578	1,733	102	1,174		67,587
Dodge	896					896
Douglas	9,655		10			9,665
Faribault	140			31		171
Fillmore	571		85			656
Freeborn	3,223			569		3,792
Goodhue	7,613			160		7,773
Grant	9,346					9,346
Hennepin	126	58		100		284
Houston						0
Hubbard	26,545	144	6			26,695
Isanti	2,897	20	35			2,952
Itasca	213				1,342	1,555
Jackson	92	91	18			201
Kanabec	440					440
Kandiyohi	16,723					16,723
Kittson	4,043					4,043
Koochiching					805	805
Lac qui Parle	5,766					5,766
Lake						0
Lake of the Woods	105				740	845
Le Sueur	1,848					1,848
Lincoln	715					715
Lyon	520					520
Mahnomen	548					548
Marshall	260					260
Martin	1,125					1,125
McLeod	645	3	31			679
Meeker	10,574					10,574
Mille Lacs	625					625
Morrison	39,161	41				39,202
Mower	10,082					10,082
Murray						0
Nicollet	683					683
Nobles	475					475
Norman	2,635					2,635
Olmsted		4				4
Otter Tail	104,422	137				104,559
Pennington	470				3,272	3,742
Pine	592	75		1,200		1,867
Pipestone	5,158					5,158
Polk	8,496	35			2,922	11,453
Pope	57,672					57,672
Ramsey	229	120				349
Red Lake	4,147				780	4,927
Redwood	318	10	8			336
Renville	399					399
Rice	2,417		72	135		2,624
Rock	2,229					2,229
Roseau	904					904
Scott	279	68	22	118		487
Sherburne	45,088	50	40	1,315		46,493
Sibley						0
St. Louis						0
Stearns	68,042			15		68,057
Steele	1,391					1,391
Stevens	21,578					21,578
Swift	45,071					45,071
Todd	25,707					25,707
Traverse	292					292
Wabasha	2,072		110			2,182
Wadena	33,514			240		33,754
Waseca	280			60		340
Washington	3,057	538	76	88		3,759
Watsonwan	6,716					6,716
Wilkin	4,109					4,109
Winona						0
Wright	7,451		124			7,575
Yellow Medicine	1,401					1,401
G. Total 2024	758,233	3,492	769	9,270	29,690	803,868
2023	753,285	3,551	769	10,300	29,568	797,473
2020	739,692	3,566	729	10,663	30,008	784,658
2016	721,490	3,583	669	10,663	29,870	766,275
2006	517,120	3,037	207	8,554	30,531	559,449



# Minnesota Drought Update

By Luigi Romolo PhD, Minnesota State Climatologist - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

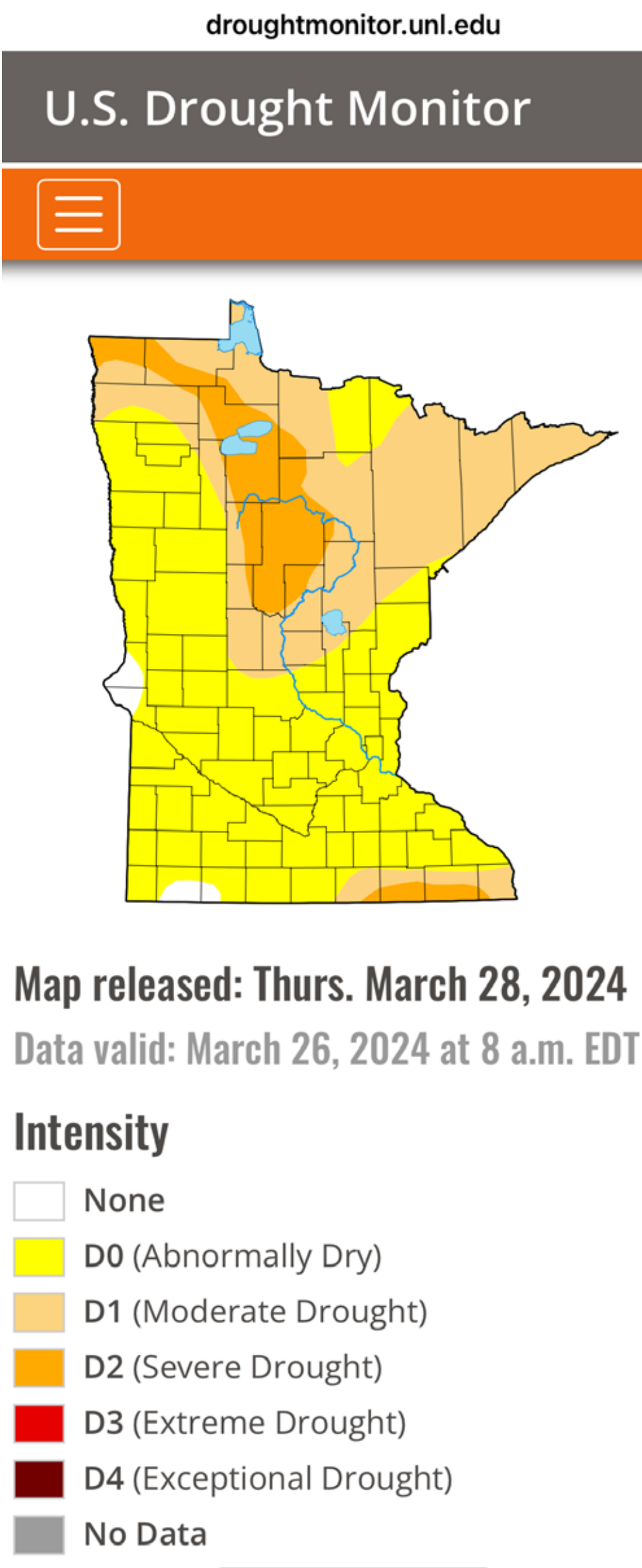
Drought is a natural part of Minnesota's climate, however; there is nothing natural with what Minnesota has experienced with respect to drought over the past three years. In 2021, Minnesota experienced its worst drought since 1988. This drought spanned the entire growing season and marked the first instance of Exceptional Drought (D4) conditions in Minnesota since the inception of the United State Drought Monitor Map over 20 years ago. The drought of 2021, which actually started in the late summer of 2020 saw some relief in the latter part of the summer, but lingered in parts of the state through the winter of 2021-2022. Beneficial winter snowfall, along with healthy spring rains helped eliminate drought conditions in the spring of 2022. Persistent dryness in the middle to late summer of 2022 once again led to significant drought conditions across the state of Minnesota. Drought conditions were more severe in the southern half of the state, but many counties in the west central portions of the state were also impacted. The drought of 2022 persisted through the winter of 2022-2023. Once again, abundant winter snow, combined with spring rainfall helped reduce drought conditions. In 2023, the cycle continued with drought conditions emerging in early summer following an extremely dry latter half of May. Drought conditions impacted much of the state and though some relief occurred in the fall, drought conditions did persist through winter. Would another Minnesota drought be once again saved by our glorious wintry weather?

The short answer is no. The winter of 2022-2023 was heavily impacted by an El Niño event. Though the correlation between El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events and Minnesota climate is weak, El Niño events are typically associated with less snowy and warmer winters in Minnesota. This particular El Niño, however; resulted in a winter that saw much of the state experience what we called a lost winter. Rainfall around the holidays did provide some relief, but most areas of the state received less than half of their normal amount of snowfall through

the month of February. In addition to the lack of snow, anomalously warm temperatures dominated with many areas experiencing a record or near-record number of days above freezing.

The lack of snow has heightened concerns about the potential for spring drought because lakes and rivers may not receive their usual spring replenishment from winter snowmelt. In order for the state to avoid the potential of another 2021 like drought, spring rains and snowfall would be needed to account for the lost winter. Fortunately, a strong winter storm in late March provided a broad delivery of snow across much of central and northeastern Minnesota. Although notoriously late, winter had finally arrived. Snowfall totals from the event varied from 8 to 18 inches of snow. Though this was not enough to eliminate drought across the state, many areas in central Minnesota saw a one category improvement in drought conditions. As of March 28, much of the southern half of the state is now drought-free and categorized as abnormally dry (D0). It is important to note that though a D0 designation is not drought, it is still an area that is extremely vulnerable to drought should dry conditions return. Long story short, we are not out of the woods so to speak.

It is difficult to know exactly how this drought may evolve later this spring or early this summer. Certainly, the snow and rain we received in late March is a step in the right direction, but many locations are still short many inches of precipitation from the previous droughts we've endured since 2020. Additionally, severe drought is still holding on in Cass and Beltrami Counties and in the extreme northwest of the state. The seasonal three-month (April through June) precipitation outlook from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center does not provide much guidance as it is indicating an equal chance of above or below normal precipitation. If we are to get out of this drought completely, we are going to need above normal precipitation throughout the spring and beyond. As per usual, when it comes to drought, only time will tell all truths.





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