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## Keeping Water Clean in Our Communities

What is the most vital and essential resource in our communities today? Water – specifically, clean water. This is particularly important to us today because we use water not only for drinking, but also for farming, recreation, and business. Therefore, it is important that we maintain clean water sources for the survival of our communities and our state.

Now it might seem surprising to some that maintaining clean water is actually a concern. However, as our society has continued to grow and develop, modern activities have begun to contaminate our precious water sources. For example, fertilizer, both in our fields and on our lawns, can cause pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus to enter our lakes and streams. Herbicides and pesticides as well as urban runoff in our cities also contribute to this problem. These activities can lead to well contamination, damage to local environments and problems for businesses which rely on water recreation.

Water pollution is a controversial subject with many causes and effects. I interviewed my local county commissioner who said that the average attendance at a public meeting usually doubles whenever the county discusses water. Because this issue is so critical, arguments quickly arise regarding a proposed policy. For example, the Minnesota Legislature recently enacted a law concerning buffer strips around drainage ditches. Proponents for this law argue that these buffers will be successful and act as a filter for fertilizer seeping into the drainage ditches. Other, such as one of the members of my township board, disagreed with this law because he believes that the majority of the fertilizer enters the drainage ditch through the tilling system. Many farmers in my area also opposed this law because it caused them to lose valuable farming ground. Regardless of the opinion on this law, it has caused some division in my community. So, while water pollution is an important issue, we must discuss it without dividing communities.

So, what are some of the ways that our communities should approach water pollution? First, we must recognize *all* sources of pollution, not just some of them. We must discuss water pollution both politely and truthfully, realizing that almost everyone in our community has unintentionally contributed to the problem. Second, we must educate people on the solutions to water pollution. While interviewing the local member of the MAT Board of Directors, I learned that educating people about the causes of water pollution, such as over-fertilizing their lawns, can help solve this troubling situation. Also, we can promote more natural pesticides and herbicides which can limit the damage being done. Starting honest discussion in our communities about the varied sources of

water pollution will also help lay the foundation needed for change. With education and honest discussion, we can work towards solving water pollution in our communities. Working together, we can keep Minnesota the Land of 10,000 *clean* Lakes.