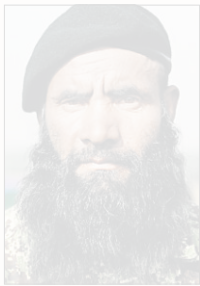




StarTribune

TOP NEWS



AFGHANS' CASUALTY COUNT UP

U.N. says civilian injuries, mostly women and kids, rose to highest since 2009. **A5**

Debate wasn't Trump's best
Analysts say he was thrown off by booing crowd, harsh attacks. **A2**

Obama urges Putin restraint
Leaders say they'll work together and try to save fragile truce in Syria. **A4**

N.D. resists being test site
Feds want to bore deep holes to try out nuclear waste disposal idea. **A4**

Canada sees uptick in guns
It tightens its rules even more to stem influx of weapons from U.S. **A5**

LOCAL NEWS

Gunman, victim were engaged
Parking incident caused Plymouth shooter to explode, attorney says. **A7**

Mpls. eases animal rules
It will be easier to own chickens; pet shelters get new policies. **A7**

Zoo is fixing website bugs
Members, patrons battle glitches as new features are phased in. **A7**

SPORTS

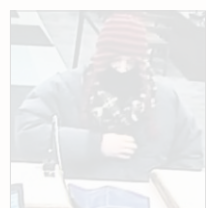
'Big O' honored in Toronto
Oscar Robertson gets award from Karl-Anthony Towns. **C3**

No. 4 Iowa holds off U
Gophers drop 14th in a row, 75-71, in Iowa City. **C1**

BUSINESS

Ad agency opens lounge
Kruskopf's new "truth bar" is place for relaxed, honest talk, but no B.S. **D1**

HAVE YOU HEARD?



Bundled-up thief with a British accent robbed a TCF bank branch in Uptown last week. He's still at large. **B8**

Scalia death opens epic battle

Obama said he'll nominate a Supreme Court justice, but fierce fight awaits in the Senate.

By CARL HULSE and MARK LANDLER • New York Times

WASHINGTON - An epic Washington political battle took shape Sunday after the death of Justice Antonin Scalia as Senate Republicans dug

in and refused to act on any Supreme Court nomination by President Obama. But the White House vowed to name a nominee within weeks.

Two senators seeking the Republican presidential nomination, Ted Cruz of Texas and

Marco Rubio of Florida, both said unequivocally that the Republican-controlled Senate should ignore any nomination sent by Obama to Capitol Hill.

"The president can nominate whoever he wants, but the Senate is not going to act, and that's pretty clear," Rubio said on "Fox News Sunday." "So, we can keep debating it but we're not moving forward on it, period."



CONTENDER?
Sen. Amy Klobuchar's name has been tossed around as a possible nominee. **A6**

In an interview on ABC's "This Week," Cruz, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said: "Let the election See **COURT** on A6 ▶

SO FAR, NEW BUS ROUTE ISN'T BUSTLING



Photos by LEILA NAVIDI • leila.navid@startribune.com

During rush hour on Monday, Feb. 8, the new Route 494 had no passengers. The route began service on Jan. 19.

Suburb-to-suburb bus line slow to attract west-metro riders



With low gas prices and frigid weather testing rider interest in public transportation, few people are hopping on this bus.

18 months to build route ridership	20 peak-time trips a day for the line	\$2M state funding spent on project
--	---	---

By BARRY LYTTON
barry.lytton@startribune.com

The bus, crawling on the shoulder of Hwy. 169, trudged through morning traffic. Its only occupant, the driver, was met at each stop with a familiar sight — nobody.

The new Route 494 — which began service Jan. 19 between Maple Grove and Shakopee in the west-metro suburbs — was rolling.

It's billed as the first express suburb-to-suburb route in the Twin Cities area, running weekday mornings and afternoons down the Interstate 494 and Hwy. 169 corridors through Plymouth and Eden Prairie, to carry suburbanites to their suburban jobs.

Transit officials say the idea of the new route has been met with enthusiasm. But despite fanfare and \$2 million in state funding, the new service has yet to win many loyal customers through the first few weeks See **BUS ROUTE** on A12 ▶

Confusion surrounds buffer law and the bodies of water it covers

By JOSEPHINE MARCOTTY
josephine.marcotty@startribune.com

Only about one-third of the streams in Minnesota's farming regions will get the maximum amount of protection under new state buffer rules — a number that environmentalists say falls far short of what Gov. Mark Dayton's signature water protection law was intended to accomplish.

State regulators are drawing up a map of the streams, ditches, wetlands and lakes that will fall under the new and highly controversial buffer law

— the nation's first — enacted last year in an effort to reduce pollution from farm runoff.

But they are relying on a decades-old list that excludes more than half the known small streams that create a web across Minnesota's landscape and carry sediment, phosphorus and other pollutants into the major rivers.

Officials from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) say the buffer law doesn't give them the authority or time to start from scratch in what would be a See **BUFFERS** on A9 ▶



BRIAN PETERSON • brian.peterson@startribune.com

"Buffers are hardly the silver bullet. But they are part of what we can do."

Scott Strand, of the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy

Unfiltered: See how a buffer zone works. **A9**

Politicos pay some unusual expenses

Legislators use campaign funds for golf, luggage, Vegas hotels, and it's OK.

By J. PATRICK COOLICAN and MAYA RAO
Star Tribune staff writers

Just before Christmas 2014, Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk spent \$562 in political contributions at Country Woods, which hand-crafts wooden urns for the ashes of cremated pets.

Republican House Speaker Kurt Daudt used his campaign account for \$423 in "supplies" at Tumi, a brand of premium luggage and business accessories. State Rep. Tara Mack used campaign funds to pay for more than \$2,000 in child care.

Minnesota legislators and their rivals raise millions of dollars every election cycle to win seats in the state House and Senate. Most contributions go toward mailing ads, hosting fundraisers and handing out Popsicles at parades. Sometimes, the expenses are a little more unusual.

A review of hundreds of legislative campaign finance reports turned up charges as varied as a hotel room on the Las Vegas Strip, child care, golf outings and paying fines for campaign violations.

Gary Goldsmith, the executive director of the Minnesota Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board, said the law is clear that legislators cannot use campaign money for personal expenses.

But that is not the end of the story. Legislators can use campaign money to pay for certain costs they incur in the course of being a legislator. So, for instance, they can hire an extra See **SPENDING** on A9 ▶

FDA pushes to reduce labeling laws

The plan may limit the legal powers of patients.

By JIM SPENCER
jim.spencer@startribune.com

WASHINGTON - A move to relax labeling requirements for drugs and medical devices has some patient advocates concerned that people will have a tougher time holding manufacturers accountable for injuries caused by their products.

Under revised language proposed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), companies no longer have to "provide adequate labeling" for non-FDA-approved uses of their products that they know about. The alteration applies to the detailed explanations that come inserted within virtually all drug or device containers.

The FDA tucked its proposal into a 10,000-word, single-spaced notice about regulating tobacco products, but it applies to all drugs and devices.

While this may seem like nothing more than a change in fine print, patient advocates worry that companies will use See **LABELS** on A9 ▶

Confusion surrounds buffer law's coverage

◀ **BUFFERS** from AI massive job of reviewing all the state's waters. The existing list, known as the Public Waters Inventory, was bitterly fought for years in the 1970s but is now widely accepted as the state's official catalog of waters subject to regulation.

Critics say the state is missing a one-time chance to do it right. Combined with Dayton's recent decision to exclude private ditches from state enforcement, Minnesota's first major piece of new environmental legislation in years will not come close to achieving its potential, they say.

"Buffers are hardly the silver bullet," said Scott Strand, head of the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. "But they are a part of what we can do on the landscape, and we should deploy them to the full extent that the law allows."

The buffer law, one of Dayton's hard-fought victories during the 2015 Legislature, was heralded by environmental groups and bitterly opposed by the state's leading farm groups. It was designed to strengthen existing law, which gives counties authority to require 16½-foot buffers on drainage ditches and 50-foot buffers on streams, lakes and wetlands.

Those rules were confusing and rarely enforced, and many of the buffers are missing. Dayton's \$28 million buffer law clarified the rules and added financial penalties. But the political fight never really ended. Farm groups and Republicans vehemently challenged the DNR's assertion that private ditches — those constructed and paid for by individual landowners — were subject to the same penalties that apply to publicly maintained drainage ditches.

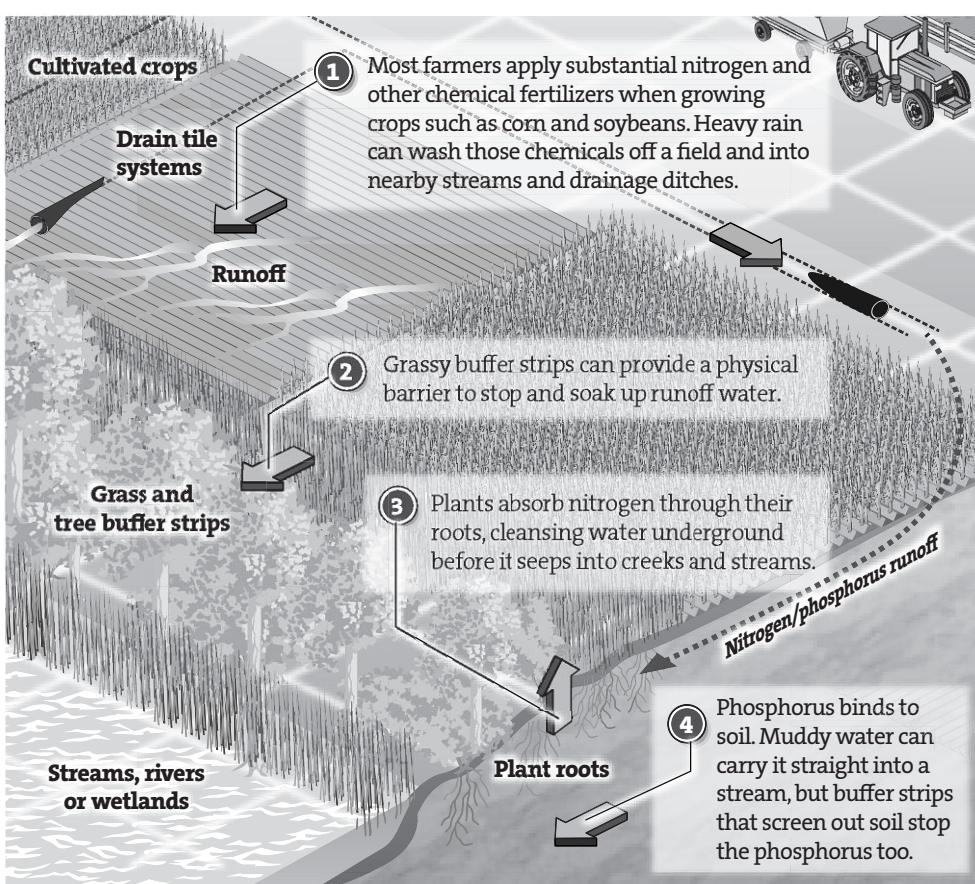
Adam Birr, executive director of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, said resistance was driven in part by the view of some farmers that their ditches are protected by private property rights. But mostly, he said, farmers were confused because there is no official list or map of private ditches, and they weren't sure how the law would apply to their land.

"It was seen as a constraint to implementing the law," he said. "Our folks were concerned about meeting the timelines."

Two weeks ago Dayton agreed to exempt private ditches, saying that he had "caved" to pressure from agricultural groups and Republi-

NATURAL BUFFERS FOR AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Buffer strips of grass, trees and other perennial plants planted along stream banks can catch chemicals and contaminated water before they run off a farmer's field.



Source: USDA-ARS-National Laboratory for Nature and the Environment, Iowa State

MARK BOSWELL • Star Tribune

can legislators.

Whose list is right?

At the same time, environmental groups have been fighting their own battle with the DNR about another term in the law. The critical question: What, exactly, is a public water?

In contrast to public ditches, all public lakes, streams and wetlands would require an average width of 50-foot buffers — considered far more effective than the 16½-foot version — or other approved protective measures. DNR officials say they don't intend to use state's legal definition of a public water — any body that drains 2 square miles of land. Instead, they'll use the long-established public waters inventory.

That, too, was the product of a bitter and long political fight in the 1970s, fought county by county and through legal appeals, to determine which bodies of water would fall under state permit requirements.

"It was very controversial, a lot of angry meetings," said Dave Leuthe, a DNR program consultant who worked on the inventory then, and last year was called out of retirement to help with new buffer mapping

project. "You didn't always feel safe or secure."

But when it was finished, the final list omitted a lot of the smaller streams — some of which could be draining 2 square miles and are the most intimately connected to agricultural lands.

"If this is going to exclude a bunch of smaller streams, it will substantially reduce the benefit to them all," said Craig Cox, a vice president at the Environmental Working Group, a national nonprofit that has mapped Minnesota's waters and buffers.

One state analysis, covering 67 counties, found the list includes 21,642 miles of streams — and omits 28,760.

The same is true for streams that were turned into ditches — 4,731 miles are public waters and 15,381 are not.

'Missed opportunity'

Sarah Strommen, assistant DNR commissioner, said the agency's map is still a work in progress. Some of those stream and ditch miles might yet be included, and county governments are responsible for managing and enforcing buffers on the rest. But, she said, the DNR is not going to go through the whole ordeal of debating public waters again.

"We don't see any intent in [the new law] that we go through another similar extensive process to update that inventory," she said.

Environmental groups disagree, saying the DNR has chosen expediency over the best water protection.

"To knowingly give out an incomplete map is a huge missed opportunity," said Trevor Russell, program director at Friends of the Mississippi River.

Regardless, many of the people charged with implementing the law across Minnesota's farm lands say it has changed the conversation.

"I think people understand that it's the law now," said Michele Stindtman, program manager for the soil and water district in Faribault County, which is 99 percent agricultural land. "They are calling to find out, 'Am I 16½ or am I 50?'"

The DNR expects to complete its preliminary map in the next month and will make it available on its website (www.dnr.state.mn.us/buffers/index.html) for review by local governments and other groups. The final map must be done by July, and buffers must be in place in 2017 and 2018.

Josephine Marcotty • 612-673-7394

Donate Your Car

CDF's
Vehicles For Vets MN
"Uplift, Encourage, Support"

* Net proceeds benefit local disabled veterans
 * We accept all vehicles including boats and RVs
 * Fully Tax Deductible - Free pickup, ANYWHERE

(651) 251-7663 www.VehiclesForVetsMN.org

* Car Donation Foundation, St. Louis Park, MN 55076. To learn more about our programs or financial information, visit www.VehiclesForVetsMN.org.

Patient advocates fear FDA's plan to alter labeling

◀ **LABELS** from AI the new rule to avoid liability for injuries caused by their products' off-label applications.

The controversy has become another talking point in a growing and increasingly contentious national debate about free-speech rights of companies and off-label uses of their products. Those experimental applications can enrich businesses and drive innovation, but they also put patients at potential risk.

The government is not currently applying the part of the "intended use" regulation that it wants to delete from the law, an FDA spokeswoman told the Star Tribune. Even if it goes away, she added, the agency will continue to have adequate ways to properly monitor companies for misbranding drugs and devices or improperly promoting their off-label use.

Diana Zuckerman, president of the National Center for Health Research, a non-partisan health policy think tank, questioned the FDA's reasoning.

"This is part of a direction that FDA has been moving in, and it's a very dangerous direction," Zuckerman said. "We know that there are a lot of things that the FDA does not enforce. We don't think the answer is getting rid of the laws they are not enforcing."

The FDA, Zuckerman added, is in many ways "an honor system that works for honorable companies. So let's keep those safeguards that we have, even though they're imperfect, rather than getting rid of them entirely. How is that consistent with the mission of the FDA to protect public health?"

Off-label uses

Rates of off-label use vary from product to product. The American Medical Association (AMA) says that overall, off-label use ranges from 10 to 20 percent but can be much higher in some specialties. Doctors are legally allowed to use drugs and devices in non-FDA-approved ways if they feel they will benefit patients.

The AMA strongly supports that right. It has not taken a position on the proposed labeling changes.

Still, deleting the sentence has stirred strong feelings in other quarters. They range from industry suggestions that less regulation is needed to develop cutting-edge treatment to consumer charges that a putative government watchdog attempted to hide off-label promotion and protect corporations rather than public health.

Medtronic PLC, the world's largest medical device maker and one of Minnesota's top employers, declined to comment on the new rule.

The company is battling off-label promotion charges by thousands of patients who say they were injured by non-FDA-approved uses of Medtronic's Infuse bone graft. A company spokesman referred the Star Tribune to AdvaMed, the nation's largest device industry trade group.

In addition to Medtronic, AdvaMed's members include St. Jude Medical, Boston Scientific and other companies in Minnesota's burgeoning medical technology sector. A spokesman for AdvaMed said it did not lobby for the FDA rule change. But the trade group strongly endorsed the revised labeling requirements in formal comments made after the agency proposed to delete the sentence.

And it added a request that the FDA cut even more language from "intended use" labeling laws.

As proposed, the new labeling rule is good because the sentence it deletes was not fair, AdvaMed said. If the proposal is made permanent, device and drug companies will no longer be "held to actual or constructive knowledge" of off-label uses.

"An actual use standard is inconsistent with the voluminous legal precedents that make clear intent must be based on the claims made by a manufacturer," the trade group said.

Besides the newly deleted sentence, the device industry also wants the FDA to remove from labeling laws "generic references to evidence beyond a manufacturer's promotional claims." This includes a section of the regulation that lets the FDA determine intended uses based on "circumstances surrounding the distribution" of products. Examples of those circumstances given in existing FDA law include "labeling claims, advertising matter, or oral or written statements."

AdvaMed further encouraged the FDA to make clear that "truthful, nonmisleading scientific exchange is not evidence of a manufacturer's intended use" in order "to align the regulations with First Amendment jurisprudence."

Patient advocate Kim Witczak of Minneapolis believes reduced regulation will make it harder for people injured by off-label drug and device use to hold manufacturers accountable.

Witczak's husband killed himself after being prescribed Zolof, an antidepressant, for insomnia. Lack of knowledge about potentially dangerous side effects from off-label uses led Witczak to form a patient advocacy group, Woody Matters. The group is part of a coalition called the Safe Patient Project that lobbies for patient protections.

Witczak recently spent several days in Washington meeting with the staffs of Minnesota Sens. Al Franken and Amy Klobuchar and Rep. Keith Ellison, among others. She raised concerns about the device and drug industry's free speech and off-label strategy, including the changes to the "intended use" law.

In addition to direct-to-consumer advertising, Witczak called the new FDA labeling proposal a "loophole that makes it worse for patients."

Even patient advocates like attorney Allison Zieve of Public Citizen, who believes cutting the sentence from the "intended use" law will do very little damage, questions why the FDA chose to try to implement the new rule in such a roundabout way.

"If the FDA is going to revise an important device regulation, it should be made clear," she said. "The title of this rule-making notice seems to be about tobacco."

Zuckerman was more direct. "Nobody noticed this because it was hidden," she said. "And it was hidden for a reason."

The comment period on the new rule is over for the public, Zuckerman noted. "But it is not over for members of Congress. We think that when we bring this to the attention of members of Congress, they will express their views to the FDA very clearly."

Jim Spencer • 202-383-6123

Politicians pay for some unusual expenses

◀ **SPENDING** from AI assistant to perform constituent service. They can spend money for extra office supplies and computers, including thousands of dollars at Mall of America's Apple store, as Sen. Katie Sieben, DFL-Newport, did last year.

Mack, R-Apple Valley, used campaign funds to pay for \$2,316 in child care. She said her family personally pays for child care during campaign events and reimburses themselves about half the money to ensure they stay within the law. State statutes deem child care during campaigning an allowable expense.

As for the pet urn expense? Alyssa Siems Roberson, a spokeswoman for Bakk, said the campaign money was spent on "mementos given to some staff who have gone above and beyond the call of duty."

Serving in the Legislature is generally a part-time job. Rank-and-file members earn a salary of \$31,140, but legislative leaders get a bump of \$12,456. Many legislators have outside jobs, often as lawyers, teachers

and farmers.

State law permits legislators to use campaign money for travel to public policy conferences, as did Sen. Scott Dibble, DFL-Minneapolis, who used \$1,100 in campaign money to fly to Las Vegas and pay for a room at the Tropicana for a conference training LGBT leaders. And state Sen. Rena Moran, DFL-St. Paul, who spent \$5,287 on airfare and hotels for conferences last year, including the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and the National Foundation of Women Legislators.

State Rep. Cindy Pugh, R-Chanhassen, spent at least \$3,393 on traveling last year, including a flight to San Diego with other GOP lawmakers to the annual conference of the American Legislative Exchange Council.

Those trips are all allowed as long as lawmakers don't use the money to pay for family to attend or extend the trip beyond reason.

"You can't use campaign money for personal use. So the question for the board is: When is it personal, and when

is it not personal? And that has some gray areas," Goldsmith said.

State campaign finance officials occasionally punish legislators who violate the law.

In 2012, a three-judge panel at the Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings levied a civil penalty of \$500 against then-Rep. Ernie Leidinger, R-Mayer, for using campaign funds to pay a speeding ticket.

In the past, with hundreds of paper filings by candidates, the board only investigated matters that were brought to their attention, Goldsmith said. There was no spot-check system to look for unusual spending. "We rely on people to notify and tell us," he said.

Now that most of the reports are filed electronically and entered into a database, the board will begin using computer programs to look for unusual spending or unusual sums, Goldsmith said.

Many campaign reports revealed the expenses that go into politicking at small-town parades, where candy, Popsicles, dog treats, and auto repair for cars in the parade all add up. And many legislators, particularly in the House GOP, spent hundreds of dollars on flowers.

Rep. Joe Atkins, DFL-Inver Grove Heights, paid \$145 for a Sam's Club membership. Rep. John Lesch, DFL-St. Paul, spent about \$500 on a 24-inch TV and a projector, which he classified in his report as "expenses of serving in office."

Republican legislators like Reps. Tony Cornish and Dan Fabian spent money on

memberships in sportsman's clubs, which, given their ties to the gun-rights community, appeared to qualify as campaign expenses.

Senate DFLers spent substantial sums on the golf course — far more than the other caucuses. They used \$28,745 in campaign donations for golf expenses last year, playing rounds at a scenic corporate retreat in Lake Elmo. Bakk spent another \$4,421 from his own account on golf event prizes.

Even when Minnesota politicians land in legal trouble, most draw from their political donations to address the penalties.

In 2014, the Senate DFL caucus used \$100,000 of its political donations to pay one of the largest fines ever levied for campaign violations in Minnesota. The state finance board found that the DFL Senate improperly coordinated 2012 campaign mailings with candidates.

And last year, Sen. Matt Schmit, DFL-Red Wing, used \$825 from his election fund to pay a campaign violation fine.

Sen. Jeff Hayden, DFL-Minneapolis, used \$14,000 from his campaign account last year to pay legal fees to defend himself during an ethics investigation.

The Minnesota Senate is probing his activities at the now-closed nonprofit Community Action of Minneapolis, where leaders allegedly mis-spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayer funds.

Patrick Coolican • (651) 925-5042
 Maya Rao • (651) 925-5043

More of what matters
 to Minnesota.
 All day. Every Day.

February 15, 2016



Confusion surrounds buffer law and the bodies of water it covers

By JOSEPHINE MARCOTTY

Only about one-third of the streams in Minnesota's farming regions will get the maximum amount of protection under new state buffer rules — a number that environmentalists say falls far short of what Gov. Mark Dayton's signature water protection law was intended to accomplish.

State regulators are drawing up a map of the streams, ditches, wetlands and lakes that will fall under the new and highly controversial buffer law — the nation's first — enacted last year in an effort to reduce pollution from farm runoff.

But they are relying on a decades-old list that excludes more than half the known small streams that create a web across Minnesota's landscape and carry sediment, phosphorus and other pollutants into the major rivers.

Officials from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) say the buffer law doesn't give them the authority or time to start from scratch in what would be a massive job of reviewing all the state's waters. The existing list, known as the Public Waters Inventory, was bitterly fought for years in the 1970s but is now widely accepted as the state's official catalog of waters subject to regulation.

Critics say the state is missing a one-time chance to do it right. Combined with Dayton's recent decision to exclude private ditches from state enforcement, Minnesota's first major piece of new environmental legislation in years will not come close to achieving its potential, they say.

"Buffers are hardly the silver bullet," said Scott Strand, head of the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy. "But they are a part of what we can do on the landscape, and we should deploy them to the full extent that the law allows."

The buffer law, one of Dayton's hard-fought victories during the 2015 Legislature, was heralded by environmental groups and bitterly opposed by the state's leading farm groups. It was designed to strengthen existing law, which gives counties authority to require 16 ½-foot buffers on drainage ditches and 50-foot buffers on streams, lakes and wetlands.

Those rules were confusing and rarely enforced, and many of the buffers are missing. Dayton's \$28 million buffer law clarified the rules and added financial penalties. But the political fight never really ended. Farm groups and Republicans vehemently challenged the DNR's assertion that private ditches — those constructed and paid for by individual landowners — were subject to the same penalties that apply to publicly maintained drainage ditches.

Adam Birr, executive director of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, said resistance was driven in part by the view of some farmers that their ditches are protected by private property rights. But mostly, he said, farmers were confused because there is no official list or map of private ditches, and they weren't sure how the law would apply to their land.

"It was seen as a constraint to implementing the law," he said. "Our folks were concerned about meeting the timelines."

Two weeks ago Dayton agreed to exempt private ditches, saying that he had "caved" to pressure from agricultural groups and Republican legislators.

Whose list is right?

At the same time, environmental groups have been fighting their own battle with the DNR about another term in the law. The critical question: What, exactly, is a public water?

In contrast to public ditches, all public lakes, streams and wetlands would require an average width of 50-foot buffers — considered far more effective than the 16 ½-foot version — or other approved protective measures.

DNR officials say they don't intend to use the state's legal definition of a public water — any body that drains 2 square miles of land. Instead, they'll use the long-established public waters inventory.

That, too, was the product of a bitter and long political fight in the 1970s, fought county by county and through legal appeals, to determine which bodies of water would fall under state permit requirements.

"It was very controversial, a lot of angry meetings," said Dave Leuthe, a DNR program consultant who worked on the inventory then, and last year was called out of retirement to help with new buffer mapping project. "You didn't always feel safe or secure."

But when it was finished, the final list omitted a lot of the smaller streams — some of which could be draining 2 square miles and are the most intimately connected to agricultural lands.

"If this is going to exclude a bunch of smaller streams, it will substantially reduce the benefit to them all," said Craig Cox, a vice president at the Environmental Working Group, a national nonprofit that has mapped Minnesota's waters and buffers.

One state analysis, covering 67 counties, found the list includes 21,642 miles of streams — and omits 28,760.

The same is true for streams that were turned into ditches — 4,731 miles are public waters and 15,381 are not.

'Missed opportunity'

Sarah Strommen, assistant DNR commissioner, said the agency's map is still a work in progress. Some of those stream and ditch miles might yet be included, and county governments are responsible for managing and enforcing buffers on the rest. But, she said, the DNR is not going to go through the whole ordeal of debating public waters again.

"We don't see any intent in [the new law] that we go through another similar extensive process to update that inventory," she said.

Environmental groups disagree, saying the DNR has chosen expediency over the best water protection.

"To knowingly give out an incomplete map is a huge missed opportunity," said Trevor Russell, program director at Friends of the Mississippi River.

Regardless, many of the people charged with implementing the law across Minnesota's farm lands say it has changed the conversation.

"I think people understand that it's the law now," said Michele Stindtman, program manager for the soil and water district in Faribault County, which is 99 percent agricultural land. "They are calling to find out, 'Am I 1/2 or am I 50?'"

The DNR expects to complete its preliminary map in the next month and will make it available on its website (www.dnr.state.mn.us/buffers/index.html) for review by local governments and other groups. The final map must be done by July, and buffers must in place in 2017 and 2018.