

Low Salt, No Salt Minnesota

Offers a Toolbox for Local Property Managers to Reduce or Eliminate the Use of Deicers



Salt is a **permanent**, invisible pollutant and it is being overused.



THE UNDERSTORY:

Salt pollution is a growing problem

The leading source of chloride pollution is from deicing chemicals (salts) used for winter maintenance. Chloride damages property and the environment, harms aquatic species, and impacts drinking water quality.

Chlorides from winter maintenance operations are a global as well as a local problem. Overuse of deicers for winter maintenance is a growing problem in Minnesota lakes, ponds, wetlands, streams, and groundwater. About 50 waterbodies in Minnesota already have dangerous chloride levels, and another 75 waterbodies are close to the danger zone.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)

“University of Minnesota research shows that 3/4 of deicers stay where they are applied, permanently impairing waters for aquatic life and human consumption. They also adversely change soil structure and prematurely age infrastructure.”

Unfortunately, alternatives to chloride have other tradeoffs in cost, environmental impacts, and service.

The only option for managing chloride pollution is to apply it only when, where, and in the amount needed.

THE INITIATIVE:

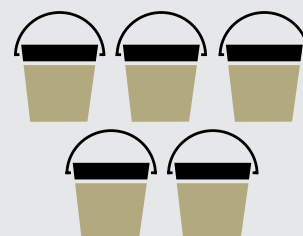
A collaboration between watershed districts and cities in Hennepin County

The Hennepin County Chloride Initiative (HCCI) is a collaboration between multiple watershed districts, watershed organizations, nonprofits, and cities in Hennepin County with support from the county and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

MP+G Marketing Solutions worked closely with HCCI to develop **Low Salt, No Salt Minnesota**, a research-driven program designed to help communities maintain winter safety while reducing chloride-based deicer use and its harmful impact to the environment.

The program was created and tested by professionals from cities and watershed organizations in Hennepin County for implementation by Local Government Units (LGUs) in their communities. It builds on relationships and ongoing opportunities to provide continued program support.

it takes only
1 teaspoon of road salt
to permanently pollute
5 gallons of water.



Once chloride is in a waterbody, there is no feasible way to remove it.

THE CHALLENGE:

How to get people to reduce their use of deicing salts?

HCCI knew many people believe protecting water resources is important. As scientists, they also knew that education can foster positive attitudes about reducing salt use. But they were concerned that education about chloride pollution, by itself, may not be enough to get people to change their winter salting routines.

MP+G's detailed research provided insight into target audience beliefs, habits, and practices and refined HCCI's initial assumptions:

The ability to maintain **safety** while realizing financial **savings** and improving **sustainability** are key messages conveyed through this program.

Our research acknowledged that people are often unsure of how best to reduce chloride use on their properties or how to address concerns about safety or liability. The campaign was built to step into this void by offering a friendly face and simple, site-specific advice.

But HCCI also knew that being the local expert on chloride pollution through the lens of water resources management didn't mean local government agencies have to have all the answers. Instead, cultivating a positive relationship, providing support and encouragement, humbly observing the property manager's challenges with winter maintenance, and pointing people to the right resources would be essential to the success of the **Low Salt, No Salt Minnesota** program.

"The research shows that the biggest driver of over-salting is client demand due to fear of slip and fall lawsuits.

Often, the person applying the salt knows more isn't better, but they are reacting to their customer's demand."

THE SOLUTION:

A toolbox for property managers and their teams

KEY MESSAGE

"When performing winter maintenance, you can maintain safety while realizing financial savings and improving sustainability."

MP+G helped HCCI develop a marketing toolbox to engage communities on the proper use of winter deicers. While these materials are useful for a variety of audiences, the targeted audiences for this program include faith-based communities, property managers, and homeowners/townhome associations.

The solution is based on the premise that personal relationships and site-specific advice is an effective way to change behavior related to winter salt use. With this approach in mind, the primary goal of the initiative was to provide a toolbox that LGUs may use during conversations with residents, businesses, and property managers about best practices related to winter maintenance.

MP+G Marketing Solutions worked collaboratively, through the Hennepin County Chloride Initiative (HCCI), with water resource professionals who provided the scientific background and practical expertise behind the campaign. MP+G conducted target-audience interviews to inform a comprehensive market research report. This detailed report provided insight into target audience beliefs, habits, and practices and helped us develop key messaging that resonated with our audiences. The research further informed the development of a branding platform, a name for the initiative, campaign strategy, brand identity, and tagline. Other elements of the campaign included a recruitment letter, marketing toolbox, and a high-end, branded ice chipper for program participants.

Included in the marketing toolbox are a customizable PowerPoint presentation, explainer video, a legal guidance video, social media clip, brand assets, and informational materials. The toolbox is available on an internal website for local government units.

THE TARGET AUDIENCES:

Why focus on homeowners' associations, property managers and faith-based organizations?

On large developed properties, winter maintenance is typically performed by contractors. When developing an approach for **Low Salt, No Salt Minnesota**, HCCI wanted to understand if contractors would be a good audience for focusing outreach efforts.





What MP+G helped HCCI find through our interviews was that private salt applicators were generally knowledgeable about chloride as a water contaminant. However, their salting practices were primarily driven by client demand and liability concerns. These clients are usually owners and managers of large properties; the program focuses on reducing their demand for salt.

THE RESOUNDING RESULTS:

Low Salt, No Salt Minnesota is being well-received.

- Our clients hosted five pilot presentations to townhome, condo, and faith-based groups both in-person and online.
- Additionally, other organizations including Capitol Region Watershed District, Nine Mile Creek Watershed, and the City of Plymouth either have hosted sessions or have sent letters out to target audiences.
- HCCI hosted a Train-the-Trainer workshop with over two dozen staff from cities and watersheds attending and received great feedback.
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is pleased with the campaign and is planning to implement it across the state.

- A mapping tool is being developed to track presentations which will help the team develop a more geographically complete community of practice.
- Train-the-Trainer video is in the works to aid presenters without attending an in-person training.
- The HCCI team is slated to present the campaign at the Water Resources Conference in St. Paul along with a similar presentation and training at the Minnesota Watersheds conference.
- Plans are in the works with MPCA for training Green Corps members to help deliver the program in various cities.
- As well as working with Freshwater (founder of the Minnesota Water Stewards) to utilize Stewards for pilot presentations and to help gather properties to receive the formal presentation.
- Additionally, Hennepin County created a new position to help watersheds and cities with water education. This position will be responsible for giving the **Low Salt, No Salt Minnesota** presentation several times a year.



Full video - [Click to View](#)



Social Media - [Click to View](#)



Legal Guidance Video - [Click to View](#)



For more information visit the website
rpbcd.org/low-salt-no-salt

“MP+G’s approach, which included market research to identify key messages and materials tailored to those messages, was truly impressive and sets them apart. MP+G demonstrated a deep understanding of our target audience, and their market research provided valuable insights that informed the development of the campaign. From the eye-catching logo and branding to the engaging videos and informative printed materials, every aspect of the campaign was carefully crafted to resonate with our target audience.”

Jessica Vanderwerff Wilson, CFM | Water Resources Manager
CITY OF EDINA | HENNEPIN COUNTY CHLORIDE INITIATIVE

“MP+G successfully led our newly formed group representing multiple organizations with a common goal through the process of developing an effective new program from the ground up.”

Sue Nissen | Minnesota Water Steward
HENNEPIN COUNTY CHLORIDE INITIATIVE

“I truly appreciated MP+G’s flexibility and the ‘above and beyond’ issues they tackled or took extra time to get just right. They handled our feedback with patience and poise, but also held firm when we needed to meet timelines. It was wonderful to get outside perspectives and their truly professional touch to a brand-new campaign name, logo, tagline, and materials! All in all, it was a fabulous project with outstanding products and I will recommend MP+G to others.”

Laura Jester | Commission Administrator
BASSETT CREEK WATERSHED MANAGEMENT |
HENNEPIN COUNTY CHLORIDE INITIATIVE

About the Marketing Solutions Team



MP+G is passionate about protecting and preserving the environment. Our goal was to help HCCI drive positive change in the winter maintenance habits of Minnesotans.



MP+G partnered with Danie Watson, The Watson Group, for her research and communications expertise to build this resilient brand and dynamic educational marketing campaign for the Hennepin County Chloride Initiative.