

Air quality alert issued for all of Minnesota

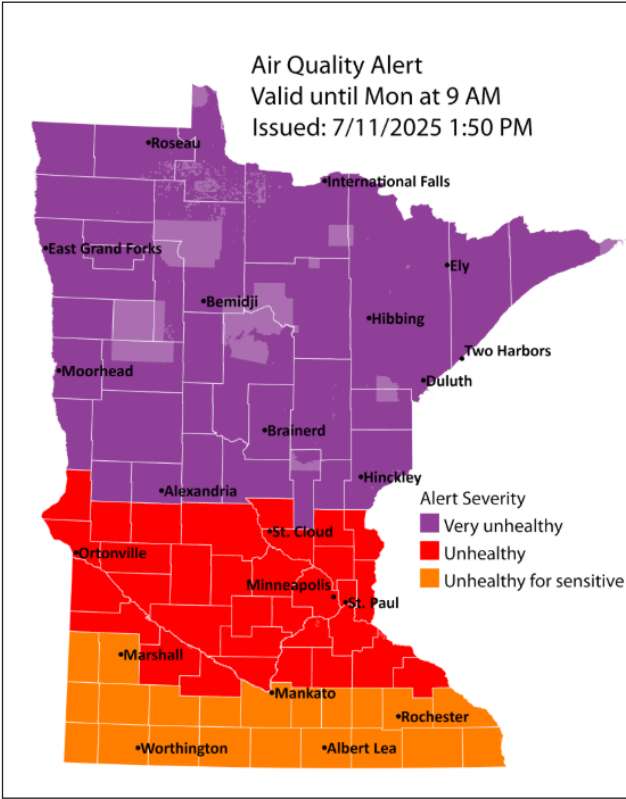
BY RYAN MCNAMARA
WDAY

FARGO — An air quality alert for northwest Minnesota has been extended to cover the entire state and run through Monday, July 14. An alert originally set for northwest Minnesota was set to expire at 6 p.m. Friday, July 11. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency said active wildfires in Canada, which had been relatively quiet due to rainfall in June, have intensified as hotter temperatures begin to dry out fuel sources.

The extended alert runs through 9 a.m. Monday, July 14. “We already have footprints of large wildfires in place before the main wildfire season started, and so that’s given us a little bit of concern, not only for, you know, currently what we’re dealing with now, but through pretty much the rest of the summer,” said Ryan Lueck, an air quality forecaster with the MPCA. A large portion of the state, from roughly south of Alexandria to the north, west and eastern borders of the state, is

listed in the “very unhealthy” air quality index. In the unhealthy air index, anyone can “experience serious heart and lung effects such as asthma attack, heart attack or stroke,” the MPCA release said. People should avoid prolonged or vigorous outdoor activities. From south of Alexandria to about Mankato is listed in the “unhealthy” range and farther south is listed as “unhealthy for sensitive groups,” which includes people with chronic pulmonary diseases, heart disease,

high blood pressure, diabetes or pregnancy, as well as children and older adults. The affected areas include Moorhead, Bemidji, Brainerd, Rochester, Worthington, St. Cloud, Duluth, East Grand Forks, Alexandria, Albert Lea, Marshall, Hinckley, Winona, Ortonville, Mankato, International Falls, Two Harbors, Hibbing, Ely, Roseau and the tribal nations of Upper Sioux, Mille Lacs, Prairie Island, Leech Lake, White Earth, Red Lake, Grand Portage and Fond du Lac.



The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has issued an air quality alert for all of Minnesota. The alert runs until 9 a.m. on Monday, July 14.

‘Substantive’ first meeting between governor, Turtle Mountain leadership

Gov. Kelly Armstrong hopes to turn those conversations into solutions



Gov. Kelly Armstrong visits with attendees of an event held with Turtle Mountain leadership on Thursday, July 10, 2025, in Belcourt.

BY MADISON DAME
Grand Forks Herald

BELCOURT – In their first meeting with Gov. Kelly Armstrong since his election, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa leaders on Thursday had the opportunity to discuss a slate of concerns and challenges they face. Among those concerns are federal budgets for tribal communities, economic development on the reservation, the impact of proposed budget cuts in the “One Big Beautiful Bill” on Turtle Mountain and other tribal nations, lags in Medicaid reimbursement, funding for new schools and more. It was a good educational opportunity for everyone, especially local legislators in attendance, according to Turtle Mountain Chairman Jamie Azure. “The answer isn’t how

TRIBES on A2

Finalists named for ‘26 Teacher of the Year

STAFF REPORTS
Grand Forks Herald

GRAND FORKS — Four finalists have been named for the 2026 North Dakota Teacher of the Year. North Dakota State School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler announced the finalists on Friday, July 11. They are:

- Emily Dawes, a first-grade teacher at J. Nelson Kelly Elementary School in Grand Forks,
- Hannah Sagvold, a business education teacher at Lisbon Public School,
- Frannie Tunseth, who teaches fourth through eighth grades at Mayville-Portland-Clifford-Galesburg Public School in Mayville and
- Leah Wheeling, a sixth-grade physical education and digital literacy teacher at Simle Middle School in Bismarck.

The four finalists were selected from a pool of 48 North Dakota County Teachers of the Year, who were named earlier this year. Baesler plans to visit all all four finalists’ schools during the upcoming academic year, a release from Baesler’s

TEACHER on A5

US runs out of money to pay contracted defense attorneys

Some ND lawyers stop taking on federal indigent defendants

BY APRIL BAUMGARTEN
The Forum

FARGO — The U.S. government has no more money to pay contracted defense attorneys, meaning justice in federal courts will be delayed and harm defendants in North Dakota, experts say. Funds for Criminal Justice Act Panel attorneys dried up on July 3, said Jason Tupman,

federal public defender for the U.S. Districts of North Dakota and South Dakota. The federal judiciary budget can’t pay panel attorneys to represent indigent defendants, he wrote in a Thursday letter to North Dakota’s congressional delegation. “Now no one will get paid for work they’ve already done and had approved to be paid until at least Oct. 1,” Tupman said Friday in an

interview with The Forum. “This snowballs because all those bills come due on Oct. 1.” Several attorneys have told the North Dakota Criminal Justice Panel that they would stop providing services to indigent defendants, knowing that they won’t be paid and can’t afford to set aside other work, said Mark Friese, who has sat on the state’s panel for 15 years. Friese, who also

signed the letter with Tupman, said the state has about 100 panel attorneys. “A lot of our panel members are private practitioners, so it’s them and a paralegal or a legal assistant,” he said. “That single lawyer is the sole source of income for the firm, and it has a big impact on them.” The federal judiciary budget needs \$115.7 million to fill a gap in



Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum
The Quentin N. Burdick Federal Courthouse, located at 655 First Ave. N., is pictured Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2023, in Fargo.

funding, Tupman and Friese wrote in their letter. Unless Congress approves that additional amount, panel attorneys won’t be

paid until October, when the next budget year begins, Tupman said.

DEFENDERS on A3