



MEMORANDUM

To: MCWD Board of Managers
From: James Wisker
Date: July 11, 2017
Re: DRAFT Framework for Developing 2018 Workplans

Purpose:

- Outline a draft framework to guide the development of 2018 workplans.
- Facilitate discussion of the July 13, Planning and Policy Committee Meeting

Strategic Priorities:

On February 9, 2017 the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Board of Managers approved resolution 17-007, adopting a strategic direction for the organization. This strategic direction, as summarized below, was to guide and be incorporated into the District’s 2017 Comprehensive Plan, Human Resources Plan, Information Technology Plan, and Budget planning.

The District’s mission is to *collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*

This mission is accomplished by overarching organizational strategy prioritizing:

- The development of high-impact capital improvement projects
- Changing the land-use / water policy environment to increase early, value-added public and private partnership in planning, policy, development, and infrastructure investments.

All other MCWD programs will be developed in support of these priorities. Following is a summary of the 2018 – 2020 Project and Policy priorities that will guide the development of multi-year program workplans for the organization.

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

2018 MCWD Workplan Priorities:

As outlined in the strategic direction adopted by the Board of Managers, the District's mission will primarily be achieved by capital improvements, and efforts to further integrate land use and water policy. These priorities will guide how programs align within the organization.

In 2018 – 2020 priorities in areas of Projects and Policy can be broadly summarized as follows:

Planning-Projects:

1. Minnehaha Creek
 - a. Greenway
 - b. Arden – Edina
 - c. Minneapolis
2. Six Mile – Halsted Bay
3. Painter Creek – Jennings Bay
4. Responsive Projects and Incentive Grants

Land-Use / Water Policy Priorities:

A 24-36 month goal of enhancing early, value-added coordination with public and private partners in areas of planning, policy, development and infrastructure investments.

1. Comprehensive Plan roll-out and marketing as MCWD policy umbrella to support this goal
2. Review and coordinate Local Surface Water Management Plan development to create municipal policy umbrella to support this goal
3. Promoting MCWD as preferred partner and MCWD Permitting as value-add through early coordination
4. Developing Incentive Program/Opportunity Grant to work with public and private partners on development and infrastructure improvements that are funneled into MCWD through early coordination.

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

Strategically Aligning Program Support:

Land-Use / Water Policy Program (Balanced Urban Ecology Program)

A suite of integrated programming must be developed to achieve the policy objective of enhancing early, value-added collaboration with public and private partners in areas of planning, policy, development and infrastructure investments.

The District's Plan will be approved in December 2017, formally establishing the District's new approach and framework for working with public and private partners to improve integration of land-use and water planning. The Plan includes requirements for Local Water Management Plans (LWMP) which will be submitted to MCWD for approval throughout 2017-2018. The District will also be restructuring its grant program to serve as a responsive tool for supporting partner-led projects that align with District goals and priorities. The District needs to develop a multi-pronged strategy for getting cities and developers to coordinate early with the District in areas of planning, policy, development, and infrastructure investments.

Programming in this area could target a broad range of audiences through a variety of tactical approaches, resulting in a diffuse and sprawling effort. The challenge will be to focus and align programming in the most cost-effective impactful manner, around a relatively narrow set of refined objectives.

For example, marketing material promoting the incentives of early coordination could be developed and distributed to the development community and their consulting teams, workshops and seminars could be developed for the same audience. Education programming could target municipal officials with goals of influencing land-use development processes – inserting the District earlier into the process. Similar efforts could target planning commissions. Municipal staff could be targeted to change procedures and checklists, requiring MCWD coordination and comment on proposed development prior to advancing preliminary plat. Efforts could be taken to involve MCWD in the feasibility stages of developing or distributing municipal CIPs for road reconstruction, to be scanned for partnership opportunity. Etc.

Workplan will need to be iteratively developed, revisited and refined over the coming 12, 24 and 36 months.

Projects:

While program support of capital improvements must be custom tailored to the individual needs of each proposed capital improvement, commonly recurring support initiatives needed from programs (Education-Communications, Research & Monitoring, Permitting) can be assembled into a menu or template to guide workplan development.

Support initiatives selected off these menus will depend on a variety of project factors including, but not limited to:

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

- **Project Location:**
 - Urban versus rural geographies, land-use type, etc. may require different monitoring or communications strategies.

- **Project Scale:**
 - Program support (monitoring, ed-comm, etc.) will also differ depending on whether planning and project work is occurring at a subwatershed, management unit, or individual project scale.

- **Project Phase:**
 - Projects will require differing levels of monitoring, communications, and permitting support depending on which of the following phases a project may be in:
 - Pre-Project Planning
 - Concept Development/Feasibility
 - Design/Construction
 - Post-Project

Of these factors, the phase of planning-project development is likely to exert the most influence over the type and intensity of program support needed. Below is a coarse grain summary of example program support at various phases. This is provided as an example to guide discussion with staff and the Board and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of opportunities for program integration.

Pre-Project Planning:

- **Research and Monitoring:**
 - Diagnostic monitoring to identify issues and drivers (creating the water resource layer)

- **Education and Communications:**
 - Assist in partnership development (policy makers, staff, businesses, residents)
 - Website, fact-sheets, e-newsletter, meeting support, media, community engagement

Concept Development/Feasibility:

- **Education/Communications:**
 - Develop communications plan, including objectives, audiences, messages, strategies, tactics, roles, schedule
 - Creation of webpage/fact sheets/other materials
 - Community outreach and support building (cities, residents, lake associations, master water stewards)
 - Grants and lobbying

- **Research and Monitoring:**
 - Develop monitoring plan, including objectives, assessment of existing conditions, projected benefits, monitoring needs (locations, parameters, schedule)
 - Pre-project monitoring/assessment

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

- Permitting:
 - Develop permitting plan, including types of permits needed, schedule, roles

Design/Construction:

- Education/Communications:
 - Website updates
 - Publications/materials (fact sheets, press releases, newsletter)
 - Community outreach/meetings
 - Lake Association communication and management
 - Grants and lobbying
- Research and Monitoring:
 - Continue pre-project monitoring
- Permitting:
 - Implement permit plan to assist project managers in obtaining permits

Post-Project:

- Education/Communications:
 - Post-project signage, community engagement, education programming
 - Website updates
 - Apply for awards, conferences, trade publications
- Research and Monitoring:
 - Post-project effectiveness monitoring

Given the various scales, geographies, and phases of planning and project work proposed, 2018 workplans will need to be developed for each of the project areas and individual priorities within those areas, which integrate Research and Monitoring plans, Permitting plans, and Education-Communications plans.

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

Project Support Needed:

Below is a summary of prioritized planning-project initiatives and preliminary concepts of the type and level of program support needed. This list is intended as a preliminary roadmap, to guide discussion with the PPC and among program staff as the workplan development process is initiated.

Minnehaha Creek Background

The Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed has historically been impacted by urbanization. The Minnehaha Creek channel has been straightened, widened, and moved to accommodate land use change. Wetlands have been drained and filled, and hard surfaces have increased as a result of development. These changes have negatively impacted stream geomorphology, reduced and fragmented riparian greenspace, and changed runoff patterns – sending larger volumes of polluted runoff at faster rates, into the stream. Minnehaha Creek and its receiving water, Lake Hiawatha, are impaired.

To address the impairments in this regional namesake resource that comprises the entire lower portion of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed, the MCWD is working to (1) restore natural stream channel structure and function, (2) expand, restore and connect riparian greenspace, (3) treat regional stormwater flows to improve flow regime and water quality, (4) accomplish these objectives in ways that enhance local community goals while connecting people to this iconic resource.

These goals are focused in the following areas of need:

- Minnehaha Creek Greenway:

The Minnehaha Creek Greenway between West 36th Street and Meadowbrook Lake in Hopkins and St. Louis Park exhibits the highest pollutant loading per unit area of anywhere on the Creek. Consequently, it has been a strategic planning and project focus of MCWD since 2009. Through a series of public-private partnerships, the District has made significant progress towards its strategic goals within the subwatershed.

This project is in a mature stage of planning and project development, with robust understanding and support from local communities, other public agencies, and the private business community. Priorities for the coming 24-36 months are focused on finalizing project partnership agreements, identifying funding sources, and advancing projects through construction. The following initiatives are the highest priority for intra-program support in 2018:

- **325 Blake Road**

The 325 Blake Road site (Hopkins Cold Storage) is the cornerstone project in connecting the District's decade long effort in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway. The District has been working with numerous partners – Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Public Facilities Authority, Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, and others – to plan and implement over 260 acres of regional stormwater treatment on the site in an approximately four acre greenway along the 1,000 feet of Minnehaha Creek frontage on the site.

Further, to facilitate a thoughtful redevelopment in a transforming Blake Road corridor, the District has been working collaboratively with the City of Hopkins and Hennepin County to

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

conduct a master development strategy – Blake Road Station TOD Early Implementation Plan – that frames and layers the keystone 325 Blake Road site with other critical projects and sites throughout the Blake Road Corridor. The Blake Road Station TOD Early Implementation plan advances these efforts by identifying feasible development scenarios for multiple parcels within the corridor, including 325 Blake Road, and creates a shared vision and implementation roadmap for project partners to follow as a means of helping this area reach its full development potential.

In order for any work to advance, the site must be cleared and razed, including demolition of the existing cold storage facility, thus preparing the site for restoration and redevelopment.

Throughout the next 12-24 months, the District will focus efforts on site restoration and redevelopment, including finalizing refinancing plans, demolition plans, and grant funding; formal partnership agreement with Hopkins and Hennepin County; developing and issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a Master Developer of the site; engaging community in development planning process; collaboration with a developer on design and implementation of regional stormwater and greenway restoration; and finalizing the sale of the site.

This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:

- Communications and outreach plan that focuses on elements such as community outreach, website and social media, publications, fact sheets, RFQ layout and graphics, public notifications and meetings, and media relations.
- Diagnostic report for stormwater monitoring to influence design and management activities.
- Monitoring plan describing pre-project research and monitoring, post-project monitoring and effectiveness monitoring.
- Integrated permitting approach for restoration and redevelopment, including factors such as site remediation and mitigation, Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), construction permitting, etc.

- **Meadowbrook Golf Course**

The District is finalizing partnership agreement with Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to reconfigure and enhance Meadowbrook Golf Course to restore and improve the ecological integrity of the Minnehaha Creek stream corridor, and connect the Minnehaha Creek Greenway through MPRB land to the City of Edina parks and trails system.

Situated within the most degraded section of Minnehaha Creek – between West 34th Street and Meadowbrook Lake in St. Louis Park and Hopkins – the project addresses historic issues such as ditching of the stream channel, loss of wetlands, corridor fragmentation, and fragmented and degraded habitat, all of which negatively impact the ecological integrity of the stream and its riparian systems and contribute to impairments of Minnehaha Creek.

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

Over the next 12-24 months the District will focus efforts on design and implementation of a significant ecological restoration, including re-meandering Minnehaha Creek and reconfiguring three holes of Meadowbrook Golf Course to more thoughtfully interact with the restored corridor. The District will also work closely with its partners to develop a concept design for expanding the Minnehaha Creek Greenway trail system through the golf course and into Edina, including significant education and outreach to develop support.

This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:

- Communications and outreach plan that focuses on elements such as community outreach, website and social media, publications, fact sheets, public notifications and meetings, and media relations.
 - Monitoring plan describing pre-project research and monitoring, post-project monitoring and effectiveness monitoring.
 - Integrated permitting approach for restoration, including Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) process and construction permitting.
- Arden – Edina:
The Arden Park project is in concept development phase in partnership with the City of Edina. The project combines MCWD natural resources goals to address known creek impairments with community goals for the park. It includes restoration of over 2,000 feet of stream channel and the potential to treat over 100 acres of stormwater runoff. The project provides community benefits by connecting people visually and physically to the creek. It provides access to fishing, more accessible in-creek recreation with safer access and portage without crossing 54th Street, dryer and more usable greenspace in the park, and a new multi-purpose shelter building. The project is scheduled to begin design phase in September 2017 with construction anticipated fall of 2018 through 2019. There is a heightened awareness and engagement within the community.

This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:

- Proactive information sharing through the website, newsletters, and email listserves
 - Targeted community coordination at key milestones during project development and the start of construction
 - Create a baseline assessment of ecological, site-specific conditions and projected benefits.
 - Stormwater sampling
 - Post construction monitoring and assessment plan
- Minneapolis:
MCWD, Minneapolis and MPRB are collaborating over the next two years to develop an integrated plan that melds recreation, flood mitigation, economic development, trails, stormwater and ecosystem improvements into an implementation roadmap/capital improvement plan that will guide cross-agency plans and investments into the future. This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:
 - Community engagement process designed in coordination with MPRB

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

- Routine project updates on website
- Fact sheets
- Media relations strategy
- Ecosystem assessment of the corridor in coordination with MPRB
- Pre-Project Stormwater monitoring plan

Six Mile – Halsted Bay

The Six Mile – Halsted Bay subwatershed was identified as a priority for planning and projects due to the number of high-value regionally significant resources, levels of impairments, changing landscape and need for a multi-jurisdictional framework to guide MCWD’s plans and investments.

Six Mile – Halsted Bay is moving out of the planning and regional partnership development phase, and into project development and implementation. Below is a summary of priority initiatives within the Six Mile-Halsted Bay focal geography, and the types of program support needed for each.

- Wassermann West
MCWD and the City of Victoria are entering the design phase for a collaborative restoration and park enhancement project that will address phosphorus loading from a 6 acre pond on site, enhance the wetland, buffer and shoreline areas of the site, and develop trail and low-impact recreational programming in the upland areas. Design will be complete in 2017, and implementation of water quality improvements and prioritized park improvements are anticipated in 2018. This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:
 - Community engagement meeting planning and materials development in partnership with City (2017)
 - Website management and email updates throughout construction and implementation
 - Develop/implement educational programming in the park in partnership with Victoria
 - Post-project efficacy monitoring

- Carp Management
R&M staff have developed a carp management plan for the SMCHB subwatershed based on the data gathered through the U of M Six Mile Carp Assessment. Staff have submitted a funding request to Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council that would provide funding to implement the management plan from 2018-2021. The program is being developed as the first phase of the broader Six Mile-Halsted Bay implementation strategy. This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:
 - Grant implementation is anticipated to rely heavily on R&M staff for implementation and effectiveness monitoring, during and after the grant implementation timeframe
 - External advertising in the form of newspaper articles, press releases, and publications to highlight project and its significance in order to gin up support for subsequent phases of implementation
 - Routine website and email updates

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

- Halsted Bay Alum Treatment

The District has executed a cooperative agreement with Three Rivers Park District for the acquisition of land along Six Mile Marsh in Minnetrista that would facilitate the development of an alum treatment facility to improve water quality in Halsted Bay. This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:

- A communications plan should be developed in the very near term to address developing local (neighborhood/community) support, developing partnerships and support with other benefitting lake communities, hosting informational meetings with aforementioned parties, and memorializing and maintaining support over what could be a 3-8 year implementation timeline.

- Pierson Headwaters

Restoration of the headwaters of the Six Mile Creek system at Pierson Lake was identified as a priority in the Six Mile-Halsted Bay Subwatershed Plan. At present, it is unlikely that implementation will move forward in 2018. However, with substantial interest and concern from lake residents, education and communications should plan to play a lead role in this pre-project phase while implementation is on hold. Support needed:

- Develop a communications and communications plan in coordination with lake residents.
- Education staff should lead in working with WAI and the Lake Residents to develop goals and objectives for the interim time period.
- R&M staff to develop pre-project monitoring plan reflecting knowledge to date on water quality issues on Pierson Lake.

- US Army Corps Wetland Prioritization Tool (SWAMPs)

MCWD staff are working in partnership with the US Army Corps of engineers to develop a wetland prioritization tool for the Six Mile-Halsted Bay subwatershed. The tool is a GIS-based analysis that allows the user to evaluate wetlands across multiple criteria and will be developed with input from partners and the local, state, and federal level. The tool should help guide implementation of wetland restorations in the subwatershed, and will help identify projects eligible for various grant activities. Support needed:

- On the ground verification of outputs and wetland monitoring from R&M.
- Assistance in gathering and sharing data with USACE.
- Incorporation of e-grade results into prioritization tool.

- Grant application and promotion

Implementation of the Six Mile-Halsted Bay Subwatershed plan will require the District to strategically identify and apply for external funding that can be applied towards both project-specific implementation and components of implementation that are more programmatic in nature (i.e. carp management, large scale wetland restorations). With the Lessard Sams funding request in process for carp management, we can begin to understand the types of program support that will be required on a routine basis with all of these large grant asks. This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:

- Application support materials including websites, handouts, and mailings.
- Lobbying of deciding bodies, where applicable.

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.

Painter Creek – Jennings Bay

Throughout 2018, project work within the Painter Creek subwatershed will be focused on planning and coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and targeted land and easement acquisition within the geography in support of four discrete wetland restorations to be built over the next 5-6 years.

Program support needed during this project phase will include assistance in communicating to stakeholders as milestones are reached with the USACE and directed community outreach regarding land acquisition. This planning and coordination phase will likely progress over the next 24 months.

Although this subwatershed is well-studied, and it is known that Jennings Bay, the outlet of Painter Creek, is the second-most degraded bay of Lake Minnetonka, finer scale metrics will be needed to inform the selection of projects supplemental to the Corps' work. Nutrient load reduction in Painter Creek will be the goal of these complementary projects as they also serve to link the discrete wetland restorations.

This work will require strong coordination amongst all District programs, including but not limited to:

- Project webpage to include project history in subwatershed, past studies and feasibility reports, current progress on USACE coordination, and information on the four major wetland projects proposed by the USACE, once approved.
- Periodic updates that communicate project milestones and plan development.
- Specific, targeted outreach to residents adjacent to the project areas and areas of land acquisition.
- Diagnostic monitoring and data synthesis to identify key locations for projects that will complement the four USACE wetland restorations and advance nutrient load reductions to Jennings Bay.
- Development of, or adjustment to, a monitoring plan that will provide strategic pre-project monitoring.

Next Steps:

At the July 13, 2017, PPC Meeting staff will review this general framework for guiding cross-program workplan development in support of the organizational priorities.

As noted above, the information contained within this document is intended as example to guide discussion and clarity on the type and level of program support/alignment expected within 2018 workplans. Pending feedback from the Committee, staff will proceed to work across programs to refine the list of projects prioritized for support, and to develop a *Balanced Urban Ecology* policy initiative relying on cross-program support for review by the Board in August.

If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact James Wisker at or 952-641-4509 or Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org.

We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.