

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** MCWD Citizens Advisory Committee

**From:** Becky Christopher, Lead Planner & Project Manager, and Anna Brown, Planner & Project Manager

**Date:** March 4, 2016

**Re:** Comprehensive Plan Update

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### **Purpose:**

On March 4, 2016, MCWD planning staff will present an update on the development of the District's Comprehensive Plan.

### **Background:**

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is currently in the process of updating its comprehensive plan. Since the adoption of the 2007 plan, the District has undergone a major policy shift based on the success of the Minnehaha Creek Greenway. This 1.5 mile stretch of stream was identified in the 2007 plan as having the highest phosphorus pollution loading of anywhere in the District. Through sustained focus, flexibility, and partnership, the District not only substantially reduced pollutant loading, but also created newly accessible greenspace, trails, and leveraged substantial external investment.

The success of this model led the District Board of Manager to adopt the Balanced Urban Ecology Policy, which emphasizes the integration of land use and water resource management to achieve better natural resource outcomes. More recently, the Board has adopted a new mission, vision, and goals to better reflect the integrated planning model and provide direction and focus for the next Comprehensive Plan.

The two-track approach is a planning tool that will be used to implement the Balanced Urban Ecology Policy of partnership, flexibility, and focus. In this planning approach, focal geographies are identified in which the District will convene project partners in areas of high need in order to make substantial progress towards addressing persistent challenges in the watershed. The Six Mile subwatershed will be the first official focal track geography. The remainder of the watershed falls under the responsive track, in which the District can employ

other programs and technical assistance to address water resource challenges with the community initiating District involvement.

**March 9<sup>th</sup> CAC Meeting:**

At the upcoming CAC meeting, planning staff will provide an update based on recent developments in the comprehensive plan process, including:

- Draft criteria for focal geography selection
- The focal geography planning approach, demonstrated through the Six Mile Subwatershed Plan development process
- Tools and opportunities for responsive track planning

CAC members will have an opportunity to ask questions and weight in on best practices for implementing the two-track approach.

**Attachments:**

- Focal geography draft criteria
- Mission, vision, principles and goals statement

If there are any questions in advance of the meeting please contact Becky Christopher ([bchristopher@minnehahacreek.org](mailto:bchristopher@minnehahacreek.org), 952-641-4512) or Anna Brown ([abrown@minnehahacreek.org](mailto:abrown@minnehahacreek.org), 952-641-4522).



# MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

## ***Vision***

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**A landscape of vibrant communities where the natural and built environments in balance create value and enjoyment.**

## ***Mission***

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

## ***Guiding Principles***

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**Partnership** – We seek to understand the goals of others so that we can meaningfully integrate our work to add broader value to the community.

**Innovation** – We are flexible and creative in our approach and strive for continuous improvement.

**Excellence** – We commit to work that achieves outstanding results and honors our partners.

**Sound Science** – We are a trusted source of scientific data and analyses that provide the foundation for wise decisions.

**Service** – We are responsive and accountable to our communities and careful stewards of public funds.

## ***Goals***

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**Water Quality** – To preserve and improve the quality of surface and ground waters.

**Water Quantity** – To manage the volume and flow of stormwater runoff to minimize the impacts of land use change on surface and ground waters.

**Ecological Integrity** – To restore, maintain, and improve the health of ecological systems.

**Thriving Communities** – To promote and enhance the value of water resources in creating successful, sustainable communities.

## **DRAFT Focal Geography Criteria**

The District has identified the following as factors that will be taken into consideration when selecting focal geographies:

- Water resource issues and impairments
- Public value of resources
- Local partnerships and support
- Known opportunities (landowner relationships, partner projects, funding sources)
- System scale and complexity (multiple jurisdictions, waterbodies, and stressors)
- Development/redevelopment pressure
- Probability of success (available data, land rights, restorability of waterbody)
- Past investment by District or others

In 2014, the Board identified the Six Mile Creek Subwatershed (a 27 square mile area in the southwestern portion of the District) as a priority focal geography for the following reasons:

- The subwatershed includes 16 lakes and over 6,000 acres of wetland, with 58 % of the subwatershed classified as open water or wetland and 6 of the lakes classified as impaired;
- The receiving water, Halsted Bay, also is impaired and, under the Upper Minnehaha Creek Watershed TMDL, requires the largest load reduction of any other waterbody in the District to meet state standards;
- The area is subject to growth and development activity that may adversely affect natural corridors and water quality and which will benefit from careful integration of land-use management and water resource protection, as well as District program activity and investments;
- The District has completed a comprehensive study to diagnose the water quality stressors within the subwatershed and identify actions to improve the water quality of the system;
- Implementation strategies and priorities will be developed that are unique to the needs of individual drainage areas within the Six Mile Creek subwatershed; and
- The Cities of Victoria, Minnetrista and St. Bonifacius; Laketown Township; the Three Rivers Park District; Carver and Hennepin County; lake associations and others, have expressed support for a cooperative effort toward fulfilling water quality, flood management, land-use and related public goals and offer the opportunity for collaboration.