



Wassermann Lake Preserve on Wassermann Lake



MINNEHAHA CREEK  
WATERSHED DISTRICT

# 2024 MCWD BUDGET & WORKPLAN

*Pursuing a balanced urban ecology through capital projects and policy*



# 2024 BUDGET & WORKPLAN

2024 marks six years since the adoption of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD)'s 2017 Watershed Management Plan, and with help from our partners, we can clearly see progress. We understand that delivering high-impact projects that measurably improve our treasured waters, while supporting the broader goals of building thriving communities, takes years. For this reason, each budget cycle represents not just an opportunity to look at the fiscal year ahead, but to strategically prepare to take on new, impactful work in the years to come.

This workplan provides an overview of our 2024 annual budget and summarizes progress occurring across the watershed in collaboration with our partners.

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## OUR APPROACH: IN PURSUIT OF A BALANCED URBAN ECOLOGY

*We believe that clean water and a healthy natural environment are essential to creating and sustaining vibrant, thriving communities. The beauty, green space, and recreational opportunities found in the Minnehaha Creek watershed create a sense of place that provides a local identity, adds economic value, and increases well-being.*

*We put this belief into action by partnering with our communities to integrate the natural and built environments across the watershed. In pursuing these partnerships, we focus in areas of high need to achieve significant, measurable improvements, while remaining responsive to needs and opportunities watershed wide.*



Minnehaha Creek Preserve Boardwalk in St. Louis Park

# 2024 BUDGET BREAKDOWN

## FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Our work is supported by an annual tax levy, funds levied in past years for multi-year capital projects (projects fund balance), funds reallocated from programs delivered under-budget (programs fund balance), grants and partner funds, interest, and reimbursement of permit fees.

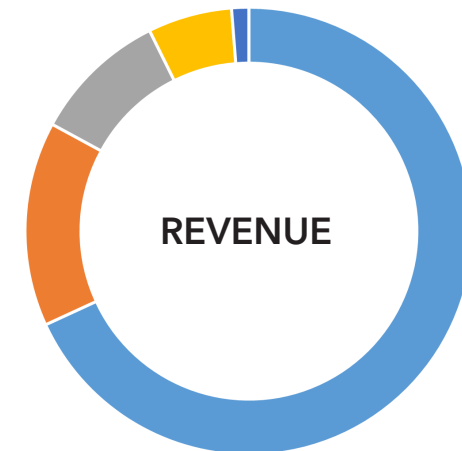
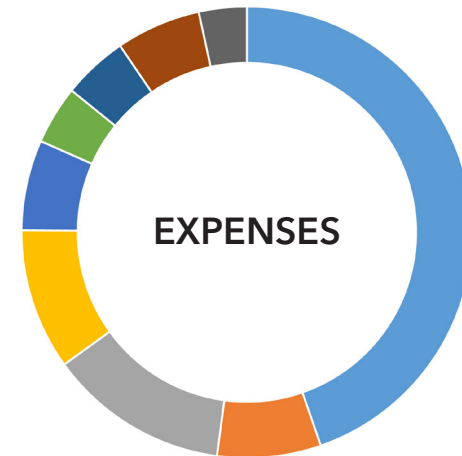
## REVENUE SOURCES OVER TIME

**In 2024, MCWD is maintaining a flat levy.** MCWD has increased its levy by only 2% over the past 5 years. We are **leveraging over \$1 million in outside funding in 2024, which will support 7.5% of the budgeted expenditures,** consistent with MCWD's prior five year average.

EXPENSES	2023	2024
Capital Projects	\$2,886,022	\$6,293,411
Capital Finance	\$4,212,718	\$1,099,868
Operations & Support Services	\$1,899,204	\$1,927,575
Research & Monitoring	\$1,454,612	\$1,493,634
Project Planning	\$902,544	\$955,636
Policy Planning	\$602,395	\$620,151
Project & Land Maintenance	\$2,594,155	\$689,926
Permitting	\$852,789	\$898,299
Outreach	\$527,826	\$507,757
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,932,805*</b>	<b>\$14,486,255</b>

REVENUE	2023	2024
Levy	\$9,869,513	\$9,869,513
Projects Fund Balance	\$2,299,090	\$2,142,408
Programs Fund Balance	\$2,689,202	\$1,213,144
Grants & Partner Funds	\$1,005,000	\$1,081,190
Interest & Fees	\$70,000	\$180,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$15,932,805*</b>	<b>\$14,486,255</b>



\*The 2023 Budget was amended in August 2023, to reflect a shift in timing of capital expenditures.



# LAND & WATER PARTNERSHIPS



*Long Lake in the Long Lake Creek subwatershed.*

## COLLABORATION AT A SUBWATERSHED SCALE

Since 2018, MCWD has worked closely with the cities of Medina, Long Lake, and Orono, and the Long Lake Waters Association to identify opportunities to improve water quality in the Long Lake Creek Subwatershed. In 2024, three project opportunities are being advanced by the partnership: an MCWD-led retrofit of a regional stormwater pond in Orono, planning for regional stormwater management in Long Lake with state grant funds, and a developer-led wetland restoration in Medina.

## 2024 BUDGET: \$850,940

This funding supports partner-led capital projects through the Land & Water Partnership program as well as related planning and outreach efforts.

## SHARED BENEFITS

We've learned that we can best achieve our mission of protecting natural resources by working with land use partners. As a regional agency, we've developed new ways to support our partners' goals and projects by applying our expertise in concept design, planning, permitting, and project management.

## CRAFTING SYSTEMS TOGETHER

Throughout 2022 and 2023, we conducted a robust engagement process through our Land & Water Partnership Initiative to vet improvements to the permitting program, shape MCWD's new Land & Water Partnership (LWP) program and identify ways to strengthen coordination. MCWD's new permitting rules and LWP program, designed with input from a technical advisory committee of representatives from our communities, are set to launch in early 2024.

## A PATHWAY FOR PARTNERSHIP

The LWP program creates opportunity for partners to connect with us early in project planning and budgeting processes. We are ready to work creatively to provide technical and financial assistance on public and private projects by integrating qualifying projects into our Capital Improvement Plan.

By engaging early and collaboratively, MCWD also leverages the permitting process as an opportunity to provide service, grow relationships, and find mutual value in partnership. Improvements to MCWD's permitting program create a process that is simple, streamlined, and well-integrated with other agencies.



# SIX MILE CREEK - HALSTED BAY SUBWATERSHED

## 2024 BUDGET: \$700,737

This funding supports the implementation of capital projects in this subwatershed.

The Six Mile Creek - Halsted Bay Subwatershed (SMCHB) is a water resource rich system that forms the headwaters of Lake Minnetonka and Minnehaha Creek. Five lakes within SMCHB are impaired by excess nutrients and Halsted Bay is the most degraded in Lake Minnetonka.

## PARTNERSHIPS

MCWD worked with communities to develop the SMCHB Plan, a collaborative vision to improve water quality and natural resources while integrating local goals around infrastructure, community development, and parks, recreation, and open space planning.

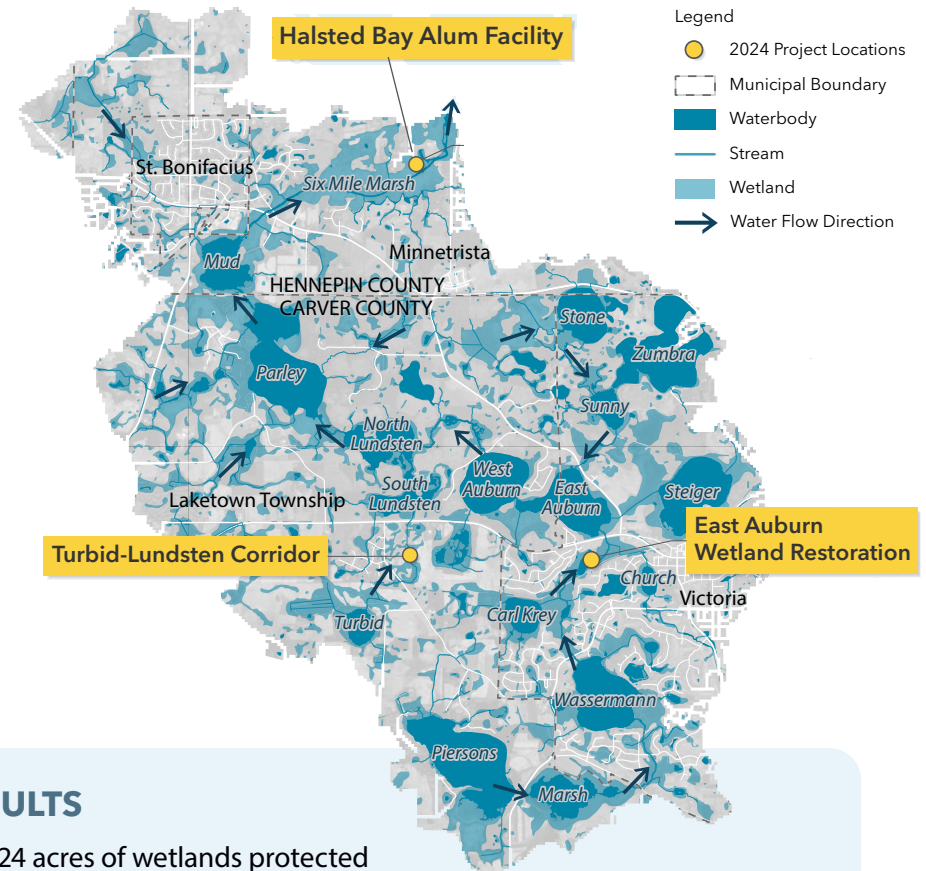
## STRATEGY

- Restore wetlands to reduce phosphorus and improve habitat
- Reduce phosphorus by controlling in-lake nutrients
- Implement stormwater management with cities & developers
- Restore lake habitat by managing carp populations

## WORK TO DATE

We have worked closely with the City of Victoria and other partners to restore Wassermann Lake, an impaired waterbody. Completed projects include a system wide carp management program, restoration of a 20-acre wetland in partnership with a private developer, and alum treatments of Wassermann Lake and an adjacent pond.

The restored lake can be enjoyed from the Wassermann Lake Preserve, a park situated on the Wassermann shoreline.



## RESULTS

- 124 acres of wetlands protected
- \$1.2 million in outside capital leveraged
- 545 lbs/yr of nutrient loading reduced
- 190 acres of publicly accessible green space created
- 275,000 lbs of common carp reduced across 14 lakes
- 2,488 acres of deep and shallow lake habitat restored
- 25 percent improvement of nutrient concentrations at Six Mile Creek
- Wasserman Lake on track to be removed from State impaired list



# SIX MILE CREEK - HALSTED BAY SUBWATERSHED 2024 ACTIVITIES

## EAST AUBURN WETLAND RESTORATION

MCWD recently completed a feasibility assessment to determine project opportunities for the wetland system between Wassermann and East Auburn Lake. East Auburn is impaired for nutrients, and this wetland system has been identified as a major source. The restoration of this wetland will address the system's pollution by reducing nutrients by up to 135 lbs/yr and inform the design of future wetland restoration projects to improve the watershed's resources.

*Right: The East Auburn Wetland complex, between Wassermann and East Auburn Lakes, is a major source of nutrients in the subwatershed. Below: Six Mile Creek flows through the Six Mile Marsh before flowing into Halsted Bay on Lake Minnetonka.*



## TURBID-LUNDSTEN CORRIDOR

This degraded wetland system presents a unique opportunity to create a contiguous wetland and habitat corridor while reducing nutrient levels in both Turbid and Lundsten Lakes. The project could restore up to 95 acres of wetland and reduce nutrient loading to Turbid and South Lundsten Lakes by 35 and 55 lbs/yr, respectively. This restored corridor would be an asset in the future Victoria Chain of Lakes, which aims to create a connected system of parks and open space as development progresses south and west.

## LAKE MINNETONKA-HALSTED BAY ALUM FACILITY

MCWD is exploring the feasibility of a water quality treatment facility at the mouth of Six Mile Creek that would remove dissolved phosphorus from the stream before it enters Halsted Bay. This facility could remove 1,620 lbs/yr, approximately 50 percent of the nutrient load to Halsted Bay.



# MINNEHAHA CREEK SUBWATERSHED

**2024 BUDGET: \$4,175,734**

This funding supports the implementation of capital projects in this subwatershed.

Minnehaha Creek flows nearly 23 miles from Lake Minnetonka and collects stormwater from Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Edina, Richfield, and Minneapolis, before it makes its way into the Mississippi River.

The creek suffers from:

- A fragmented riparian corridor
- Polluted stormwater runoff
- Altered stream channels with risk of flooding
- Impairments for E. coli, chloride, and dissolved oxygen
- Creek pollutants degrade water quality in Lake Hiawatha

## PARTNERSHIPS

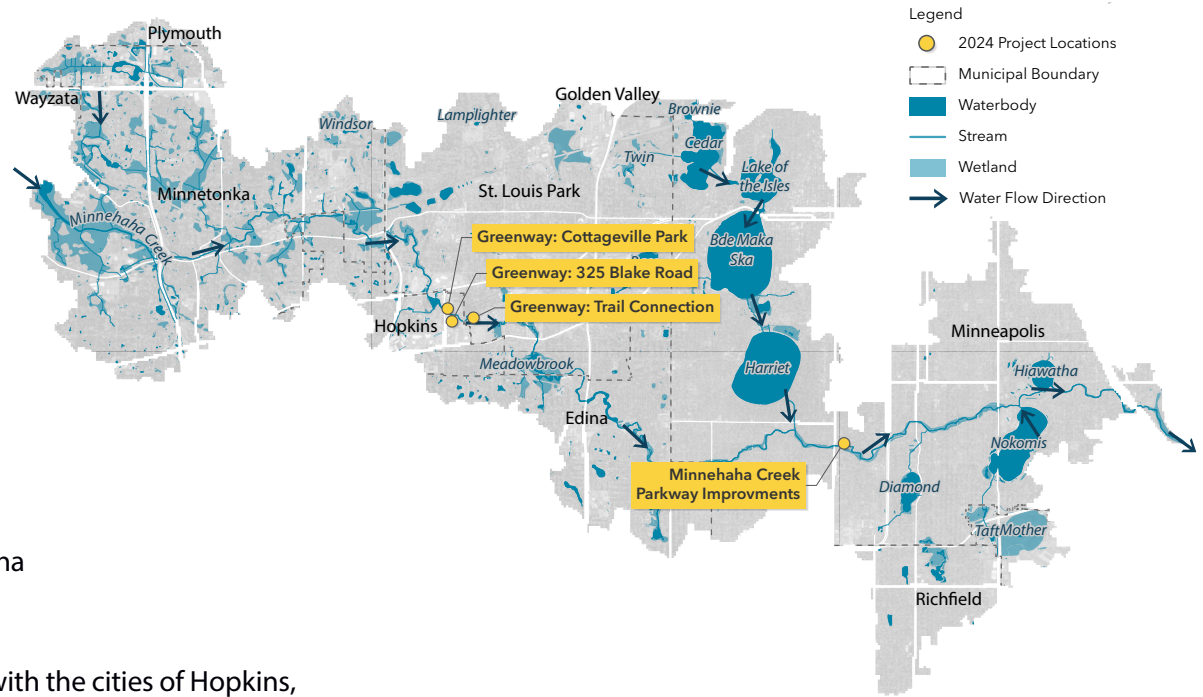
We have developed strong relationships and momentum with the cities of Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Edina, and Minneapolis to integrate natural resource goals with park planning, community development, and infrastructure improvements.

## STRATEGY

- Manage regional stormwater to slow down water, reduce pollution entering the creek, and decrease flood risk while improving resilience
- Restore the creek to reduce bank erosion, slow down water, and improve habitat while increasing opportunities for public access and economic development
- Connect ecological corridors to maximize green space, enhance habitat, and increase flood storage

## WORK TO DATE

Over the past decade, MCWD has partnered to re-meander sections of Minnehaha Creek, implement stormwater management, and create new recreation opportunities along the Minnehaha Creek Greenway. In 2022, MCWD also partnered with the City of Edina to restore Arden Park and improve the health of Minnehaha Creek.



## RESULTS

- 19 percent reduction in phosphorus levels in Lake Hiawatha
- Creek chlorophyll-a concentrations now meet state standards
- 109 acres of newly accessible green space
- 30 acres of restored wetlands
- 150+ lbs of phosphorus removed per year
- 2.3 miles of new trails and boardwalk
- 1.5 miles of restored creek/banks
- \$4.6 million in outside funding leveraged



# MINNEHAHA CREEK SUBWATERSHED 2024 ACTIVITIES

## CONNECTING THE MINNEHAHA CREEK GREENWAY

Over the past decade, MCWD has focused along the most degraded stretch of Minnehaha Creek to build projects that improve water quality and create a sense of place for communities. MCWD's 325 Blake Road project will be the capstone of the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, a 2-mile stretch of continuous greenspace between Hopkins and St. Louis Park. This project, on a former industrial site bordering Minnehaha Creek, will feature riparian restoration, recreational amenities, and regional stormwater treatment.

In partnership with the City of Hopkins and a developer, roughly 12 acres of 325 Blake Road will be transformed into an integrated, transit-oriented mixed-use development. The project will treat stormwater from 270 acres of the surrounding communities and reduce phosphorus by up to 385lbs/yr. In 2024, MCWD will start construction on the 325 Blake Road project and the expansion of Cottageville Park.

The Southwest Light Rail Transit (LRT) line provides another opportunity to connect communities in this revitalized corridor. In partnership with the City of St. Louis Park and the Metropolitan Council, a key connection will link investments along the Minnehaha Creek Greenway trail system to the Cedar Regional Trail and restore the streambank along the corridor.



*Improvements along Minnehaha Parkway will improve the water resources of the Minneapolis area, including Minnehaha Creek and Lake Hiawatha.*



*In 2022, project partners broke ground on the first building of the 325 Blake Road site's mixed-use development.*

## IMPROVING THE MINNEHAHA PARKWAY

In 2020, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), in coordination with the City of Minneapolis and MCWD, adopted a 30-year plan for the Minnehaha Creek Regional Trail. Now four years later, MCWD, the MPRB and the City of Minneapolis are in the early stages of planning at least three projects over the next several years that will transform this natural space in south Minneapolis.

The proposed projects include strategies to manage and treat regional stormwater and restore the creek to improve its ecology, water quality, and adjacent infrastructure. The proposed projects will also improve water quality in the creek's receiving water body, Lake Hiawatha, which is impaired with excess nutrients.



# A DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGY FOR RESILIENCE

## ADAPTING TO A CHANGING CLIMATE

Water systems throughout Minnesota were built for stable, predictable precipitation patterns. Extreme swings in precipitation are impacting water quality, wildlife habitat, and the safety of homes, public infrastructure, and businesses. In 2023, MCWD adopted its Climate Action Framework (CAF), a roadmap for building resilience across the watershed.

The CAF identifies three pillars of our new approach: Understand & Predict, Convene & Plan, and Implement, Measure, & Adapt. In 2024, MCWD is poised to advance its understanding of how changing weather patterns will impact communities by building a high-resolution model of the watershed. This model will leverage advancements in data science and combine land surface information with local infrastructure data to provide a detailed understanding of surface and groundwater in the watershed.

## A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

With a foundation built on sound science, MCWD will engage technical experts, policymakers, and communities in 2024 to shape our next Watershed Management Plan, which will identify strategies to address the impacts of climate change in the watershed.

### MCWD'S CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK



Understand & Predict

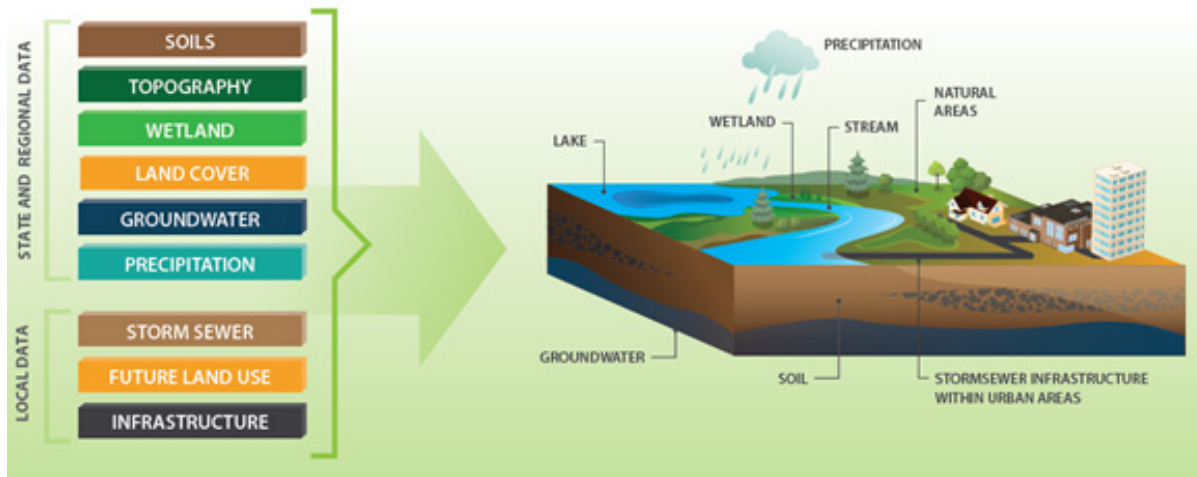


Convene & Plan



Implement, Measure, & Adapt

### MCWD'S WATERSHED-WIDE MODEL



### OUTPUTS

High-resolution understanding of complex watershed

Predict impact of changing climate

Identify natural resources most in need of protection

Quantitatively compare proposed projects

Improve flood forecasting and emergency response

### 2024 BUDGET: \$609,750

This budget supports climate action planning and engagement efforts, as well as the build of the 2-D watershed-wide model. MCWD also recently received funding from the Legislative Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) to build the high-resolution model.



# WATERSHED-WIDE SERVICES

To serve partners and residents across the watershed's 178-square miles, we provide a variety of services that complement our work in focal geographies and through land and water partnerships.

## BUILDING COLLECTIVE UNDERSTANDING

In 2024, MCWD continues to expand its network of real-time sensors (RESNET), which capture live data to characterize how water moves throughout the watershed, even with changing precipitation patterns. This data, collected in partnership with Hennepin County and the U.S. Geological Survey, enables MCWD to provide real-time water level information to partner agencies and the public. MCWD developed a machine learning model that uses remote sensing data from key RESNET locations to develop near-term water level forecasts, which support the optimization of the Gray's Bay Dam.



## 2024 BUDGET: \$1,844,420

This supports the delivery of critical services like monitoring, permitting, and outreach across the watershed.

## SERVICES

- **Research and Monitoring:** Collecting and analyzing data across the watershed to identify resource needs to inform planning and implementation.
- **Permitting:** Reviewing and overseeing construction activities, in coordination with our communities, to protect natural resources from degradation as a result of land use change.
- **Outreach:** Connecting people to information they value and engaging residents, agencies, and private sector partners to ensure that our work is integrated with the goals of our communities.
- **Project Maintenance and Land Management:** Maintaining our projects and land to ensure their continued function and value, and managing the operation of Gray's Bay Dam to balance the water budget throughout our 178-square miles and reduce the risk of flooding.

Find contact information for MCWD's Board of Managers and program staff at our new website: [www.minnehahacreek.org](http://www.minnehahacreek.org)



**MINNEHAHA CREEK**  
WATERSHED DISTRICT