



Title: Strategic Action Planning – Strengthening Partnerships and Leveraging Brand Equity

Prepared by: Name: Samantha Maul
Phone: 952-641-4518
smaul@minnehahacreek.org

Purpose:

To engage in discussions to support a 2023 Board Retreat, bringing focus to MCWD's five-year strategic priorities.

Background:

At the midpoint in its 10-year watershed plan cycle the MCWD Board of Managers has spent time analyzing its past and current situation, to support preparations for the future. Recently the Board agreed to undertake a series of discussions, leading to a 2023 Board Retreat, that will culminate in the development of a new five-year strategic action plan to guide the organization ahead of development of the 2027 Watershed Management Plan.

During its first discussion, the Board spent time with staff brainstorming and sorting five-year priorities. Below is a synthesis of the six categories of priorities from this discussion:

1. Build High-Impact Capital Projects

Deliver quality projects that measurably improve the watershed, community, and create place.

2. Deliver Meaningful Climate Action Policy

Move from the Climate Action Framework to a 2027 Watershed Management Plan with full community support.

3. Strengthen Partnerships and Leverage MCWD's Brand Equity

*Increase the level of explicit support for MCWD's priorities at local, regional, and state levels.
Maximize the perceived value of working with MCWD, to generate new opportunities.*

4. Enhance Data-Driven Decision Making

Create tools to understand the watershed, inform decisions, shape communications, and build trust.

5. Invest in People, Culture and Equity

Grow capabilities, methodically expand the team, and fortify culture to achieve excellence.

Within these focus areas, MCWD has existing action plans (e.g. 5-Year CIP, Climate Action Framework, Outreach Strategic Direction). In each meeting, these existing plans will be reflected out, and discussion will drill down into unanswered questions and ideas. This process will synthesize existing plans and discussions in a five-year strategic action plan.

- [January 2023 PPC – Kickoff Brainstorming of Five-Year Priorities](#)
- [March 2023 OPC – Capital Projects](#)
- [April 2023 PPC – Climate Action and 2027 Plan](#)
- May 2023 PPC – Partnerships and Brand Equity
- June 2023 PPC – People and Culture
- July 2023 Retreat – Data-Driven Decisions and Strategic Priorities Synthesis

Summary:

Outreach Strategic Direction Background:

As the Board engages in discussions around the topic of partnerships and brand equity, it is building from the clarity developed in 2020, with the [Strategic Direction for Outreach](#) (Strategic Direction).

The Strategic Direction realigned the Outreach program, positioning land use decision makers as the primary audience to advance MCWD's strategic objectives. This direction has moved the District towards outreach that builds targeted support for the organization's key initiatives, and away from broad-based awareness and education. Beyond refocusing audience, the Strategic Direction also emphasized that the most effective channels for building support within the land use community are through context-specific, interpersonal communications delivered by MCWD's "relationship managers."

As the District pivoted away from traditional watershed education programs (e.g. sunsetting the training of new MN Water Stewards), the Strategic Direction did identify the significance of residential audiences within the watershed. Specifically, their connection to elected officials, and the need to strategically engage them with a geographic focus, to advance key initiatives like capital improvements (e.g. Arden Park).

To offset the sunsetting of legacy programming, the Strategic Direction also recommended the creation of a new website for MCWD, which would serve as an easily navigable hub connecting people to tools and third-party services and resources.

Progress Towards Strategic Direction:

Since 2020, the Outreach program has made progress toward implementing the strategy outlined in the Strategic Direction. While specific data isn't readily available, relationships with local governments remain strong, with open communication, broad support for MCWD's approach, and targeted support for specific initiatives. Outreach efforts on this front have focused on supporting relationship managers in key initiatives, such as the Land & Water Partnership Initiative's stakeholder engagement process, the Lake Nokomis Groundwater and Surface Water Evaluation, and community engagement on the design of 325 Blake Road

The new website, [previewed for the Board in March](#), nears completion. Focused content across the draft website connects users with the information they're looking for and positions MCWD's vision, approach, and project portfolio strategically. The launch of the website will also mark the revitalization of some baseline communication channels, that provide a supportive ecosystem for more targeted and direct engagement around MCWD's key initiatives.

Meanwhile, Citizen Advisory Committee operations have been realigned, and new Outreach staff have begun engaging non-profit partners like Freshwater to better understand the evolution of their programming to potentially complement MCWD's outreach with their focus on MN Water Stewards and Lake Associations.

May 25, 2023, PPC:

As MCWD's Outreach continues its aligned growth in programming and staffing, current staff are working towards developing clarity for the 2-5 year workplan and what we hope it will achieve. Therefore, at the May 25, 2023 PPC meeting, Outreach staff will lead the Board through a discussion of the District's current and future outreach efforts.

Please consider the following questions ahead of the meeting:

- How has MCWD's relationship capital changed across the watershed over the last five years?
- What do we hope the partnership landscape and MCWD's relational capital looks like in 2027?
- How can we increase the level of support for our specific initiatives, and maximize MCWD's perceived value?
- How will we measure the progress and success of the District's outreach efforts?

Supporting documents:

[Outreach Strategic Direction](#)

[Partnership Principles](#)