



Title: MCWD Climate Conversations – SWOT Workshop

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Purpose:

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will build upon the October 14, 2020 workshop discussion by participating in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. This analysis will help inform the development of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District's (MCWD or District) climate adaptation strategy.

Background:

As the effects of climate change are increasingly experienced across our watershed (e.g. more frequent and heavier precipitation events, warmer winters), the District has recognized the need to develop a clear strategy to effectively respond to these changes. This strategy will need to map out the District's role(s) and actions, and how those intersect with the roles and actions of others. The District is currently thinking about a process for ultimately developing a climate adaptation strategy as being broken into the following general phases of work.

- Phase I – Discovery and Grounding
 - Developing a shared understanding of climate science, predictions for our region and how other agencies are anticipated to respond.
- Phase II – Role Mapping and Situational Assessment
 - Evaluating how climate change will act on the watershed, what constituents may expect from MCWD, and outlining MCWD's capabilities today measured against those potentially needed in the future.
 - Coarsely framing MCWD's role, contextualized against the role, responsibility and organizational capabilities expected to be developed by cities, regional and state agencies. Role framing is currently defined categorically as Understand, Plan, Implement.
- Phase III – Develop Organizational Capabilities and Understanding
 - Leveraging Phase I – II to develop an action plan for developing internal organizational capabilities while simultaneously outlining interim actions with outside partners (e.g. participating in Hennepin County's climate planning).
 - Evaluating internal capabilities to be expanded or developed such as RESNET, machine learning and 2D-modeling to solidify our granular understanding of how the hydrology is changing spatially over time.
- Phase IV – Develop Climate Adaptation Implementation Strategy
 - Using a data-driven understanding of the watershed, in tandem with other public partners, develop a watershed-wide prioritized strategy for adapting to the pressures of a changing climate.

As has been done with other strategic initiatives, the District has enlisted the help of the CAC to work through Phases I and II of this process with staff to inform and stress-test the District's thinking and provide a solid foundation for moving into Phase III. To date, this process has included the following climate adaptation conversation series with the CAC:

1. Grounding in Climate Science ([March 3, 2020 CAC Meeting](#))
2. Scanning across Federal, state, regional, and local governments to map existing plans and defined roles in climate adaptation ([June 16, 2020 CAC Meeting](#))
3. Exploring how MCWD will approach defining its role(s) in climate adaptation ([October 14, 2020 CAC Meeting](#))

The first two climate conversations provided a solid foundational understanding of climate science and governance structure. At the third meeting, staff coarsely framed MCWD's role as Understand, Plan, and Implement while taking into consideration the organization's responsibilities and capabilities. In the October 14 workshop, the CAC began exploring the strategic opportunities and threats posed by climate change, including the anticipated impacts to water resources and pressures the District and its partners may face. MCWD staff has considered the input provided at the October workshop and determined it would be beneficial for the CAC to continue its dialog into a full Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis, which can be synthesized into a situational assessment for use by staff and the Board in determining potential next steps.

SWOT Analysis

This SWOT analysis is an exercise to help map out external strategic pressures that climate change will place on MCWD and internal capabilities that need to be developed to adequately respond. A SWOT analysis will guide MCWD to identify its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and threats posed by climate change. For this SWOT analysis, strengths and weaknesses are internal factors while the opportunities and threats are *generally* external factors but can also be internal. These 4 factors can generally be defined as noted below:

- **Strengths:** Positive attributes currently present within MCWD (*Positive, Internal*)
- **Weaknesses:** Negative attributes, issues, or characteristics that limit MCWD's current opportunities (*Negative, Internal*)
- **Opportunities:** Potential openings/opportunities presented by climate change for MCWD to achieve its vision, mission, and goals (*Positive, External, Internal*)
- **Threats:** Pressures posed by climate change impacts to MCWD achieving its vision, mission, and goals (*Negative, External, Internal*)

Workshop Session:

As part of this CAC meeting, members will participate in small breakout groups to conduct a SWOT analysis. In the breakout groups, CAC members will be considering SWOT factors that could influence how MCWD will define its role within climate adaptation as well as inform the development the District's climate adaption strategy. Below are a few questions to consider prior to the November 10, 2020 CAC Meeting:

- Generally, what are the strengths and weaknesses of MCWD and what are the opportunities and threats MCWD faces posed by climate change? Consider:
 - What challenges could MCWD face externally from climate change impacts and what capabilities does the MCWD have to meet these challenges?
 - What factors, if not addressed, will impede or erode MCWD's capabilities today along with those potentially needed in the future?
 - What roles might be well-suited for the District, based on its geography, authorities/responsibilities, programming, and technical capabilities?
 - What type of data, technology, and skills does MCWD need to expand or further develop internally to address climate adaptation efforts?
 - In what areas are cities, counties, or state agencies better equipped than MCWD?

Next Steps:

The outcome of this CAC climate adaptation series will include a staff written synthesis of: (1) how climate change will impact the watershed at a macro-level; (2) what other partners and entities are doing in this area; (3) summary of SWOT

analysis findings; (4) proposed high-level framework for defining MCWD's role in climate adaptation; and (5) summary of recommended next steps. This synthesis will be provided to the CAC for input to wrap-up the climate adaptation conversation series.

Based on the CAC's input from this conversation series this will then be used by District staff and Board of Managers to further develop and refine how MCWD will strategically respond to climate change impacts. The results of these conversations with District staff and Board of Managers in 2021 will be brought back to the CAC as updates throughout the process.