



Title: Minnehaha Creek Watershed District – Look Ahead 2024

Prepared by: Name: James Wisker
Phone: 952.641.4509
Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org

Purpose:

This memo serves to frame the planned Look Ahead 2024 presentation to the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), scheduled for January 17, 2024.

Introduction:

MCWD is celebrating another successful year as it looks back on the accomplishments of 2023 and finds itself at an MCWD exciting juncture, with 2024 representing a year of possibility, promise, and potential for the organization!

Where We Have Been:

The last six years have been transformative for MCWD. In 2017, the District adopted a new ten-year [watershed management plan](#). In many ways, this plan represented MCWD's reintroduction to its member communities and partner organizations, and established MCWD's philosophy for the decade. Carrying forward the vision policy established in 2014 ([In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology](#)), the plan cemented that MCWD's approach to water planning recognizes the environmental, social, and economic value created when built and natural systems work in harmony.

Beginning in 2018, MCWD pursued, in earnest, efforts to realign programs and people to live into its Balanced Urban Ecology philosophy, and drive new levels of organizational excellence – defined in a [2017 Alignment Report](#). Since 2018, every program, including the CAC, has undergone a shift in structure and focus. In the last three years, despite contractions in staffing and disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization has shifted from direction setting and realigning to implementing these new programmatic directives in ways that are driving MCWD into the future.

Given all our recent history has taught us, there is also much to be learned from the organization's long history. That is why, in 2021, the Board began a strategic analysis of its history, to understand where MCWD has been over its 50-plus years of watershed management, and derive insights and lessons that can be memorialized, institutionalized, and carried forward to drive future success. The capstone of this work, [Historical Insights and Principles of Success](#) was accepted by the Board on January 12, 2023 and memorialized key events and learnings from MCWD's history that will serve the District in its continued growth over the next four years and beyond.

Where We Stand Today:

2023 was a year of execution of work in MCWD's pipeline, and preparation for the next phase of strategic initiatives. Following last year's statewide award as Watershed of the Year, we energetically opened the door into 2024 with Michael Hayman, MCWD's Director of Projects, being named by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) as [Outstanding Watershed District Employee of the Year](#) for his work implementing innovative capital projects that generate significant benefits. Earlier in 2023, MCWD also received an award for Community Design Excellence from the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), which recognized the District's efforts to center place-making in the design of its capital projects.

What Lies Ahead in 2024:

This all serves as backdrop for the District's plans to drive policy planning toward the development of the 2027 watershed management plan and deliver high-impact capital projects over the next five years that build community and watershed resilience.

In 2024, important work will be carried forward in the following areas:

- Project Planning:
 - [325 Blake Road](#) stormwater management improvements and transit-oriented development
 - Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay's [East Auburn wetland restoration](#), and [Turbid-Lundsten corridor plan](#)
 - The [Long Lake Creek Roadmap](#), including two regional stormwater management projects
 - Development of the [Clean Water Partnership 2.0](#) in Minneapolis

- Policy Planning:
 - The advancement of a 2D watershed wide model to map vulnerabilities to climate change
 - The [Land and Water Partnership program](#), an onramp into MCWD's capital improvement plan
 - Finalizing [changes to MCWD's regulations](#) to streamline and encourage partnership
 - Launching [climate action planning](#) with MCWD's partners
 - Implementation of MCWD's [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(DEI\) Framework](#)

Across MCWD's portfolio of work, there will be key points of engagement within regularly scheduled meetings, as well as information flowing between them, to continue to engage the Citizen Advisory Committee in ways that meaningfully advance the District's mission. A preliminary meeting calendar is offered below and will be summarized during our January meeting together:

- **January 17, 2024** - Look Ahead (Board Liaison: Manager Maxwell)
- **March 20, 2024** – Strategic Action Planning (Board Liaison: Manager Olson)
- **April 2024** – Field Trip: New Member On-boarding Capstone
- **May 15, 2024** – Capital Improvement Plan; Land & Water Partnership Update (Board Liaison: Manager Miller)
- **July 17, 2024** – 2025 Budget; Carp Management Study (Board Liaison: Manager Loftus)
- **September 18, 2024** – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan Update (Board Liaison: Manager Hejmadi)
- **November 13, 2024** – Climate Action Planning (Board Liaison: Manager Sando)

January 17, 2024, CAC Meeting:

During the upcoming meeting, staff will provide an overview of where MCWD currently sits in its strategic trajectory and what lies ahead in 2024 and beyond.

Questions in advance of the meeting can be directed to James Wisker at Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org or 952.641.4509.