



Title: Land & Water Partnership Program Updates

Prepared by: Name: Kate Moran
Phone: 952-641-4520
kmoran@minnehahacreek.org

Reviewed by: Name/Title: Becky Christopher, Director of Policy Planning

Purpose:

At the April 11, 2024 Operations and Programs Committee (OPC) Meeting, staff will brief the Board of Managers on the Land & Water Partnership (LWP) program, including updates on internal program improvements and project opportunities, as well as review of one LWP program funding request.

Background:

On [November 27, 2023](#) the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) Board of Managers adopted the LWP program and directed staff to implement the program on January 1, 2024. Since then, MCWD staff have been operating the new program as outlined in the internal program policy (LWP Program Implementation Guidance) which includes providing the Board of Managers a program update at least annually.

LWP Program Updates:

Permitting Program Alignment and Internal Coordination Improvements

As a regional agency, the MCWD's strategy is focused on delivering impactful projects that provide regional benefit. Throughout the watershed, land use changes such as private development and public infrastructure projects, create a window of opportunity for water resource improvements that may not reoccur for many years. To effectively identify and leverage changes to the landscape, the LWP program requires close and effective coordination between the Policy Planning and Permitting Programs.

Over the last nine months, the Policy Planning staff have focused on increasing coordination and collaboration with the Permitting Program, including:

- Program Alignment: Providing strategic vision and direction to support key improvement areas, including:
 - Guiding internal workflows in preparation for the adoption of rule revisions vetted under the Land and Water Partnership Initiative to streamline, simplify, and align rules with state MS4 standards.
 - Developing guidance and training materials for a consistent permit review process, compliance framework, and best practices for communications and relationship management.
 - Supporting improvements in data collection and analysis to track land use changes, measure the effectiveness of the District rules and processes, and inform potential policy improvements.
- Internal Coordination: Increasing points of coordination between programs, including:
 - Overseeing weekly meetings to coordinate intake of permitting applications to collectively identify and evaluate potential risks and opportunities.
 - Participating in selected pre-application meetings based on project or relational risk.
 - Organizing permitting coordination meetings with public and private partners to build shared expectations and understanding of respective processes, as well as identify opportunities to improve coordination for a more streamlined permitting process.

Based on internal workflow improvements implemented over the last nine months and the development of a clear strategic plan to drive program alignment forward within the Permitting Program, MCWD staff have initiated the hiring process for a Permitting Program Manager.

Review of LWP Program Opportunities

At the April 11, 2024 OPC Meeting, staff will provide the Board of Managers an overview of LWP program activities. MCWD staff's presentation will include updates on active or potential opportunities within the Long Lake Creek, Minnehaha Creek, Lake Minnetonka, and Gleason Lake subwatersheds. In addition, staff will review a funding request received for the City of Deephaven's Calvary Church Project.

City of Deephaven's Calvary Church Project

Over the last year, MCWD and the City of Deephaven have worked together to seek measurable, regional, and cost-effective water resource improvements within the city. Based on a concept-level screening for potential opportunities across the City, the Calvary Church Project was estimated to provide the highest water quality benefit across all the considered project opportunities (8.3 lbs/yr of TP).

The City submitted an application under the LWP Program on February 1, 2024 requesting funding support of \$465,750 (75% of the water resource elements). MCWD staff reviewed the submittal and requested additional clarifying information. The City's most recent information, received in March 2023, included revised modeling information, water resource benefits, and cost analysis information. Based on this updated information, it appears water quality benefits for the project have decreased (5.4 lbs/yr of TP), and the life-cycle cost/benefit has shifted from an estimated \$2,200/lbs of TP to \$5,000/lbs of TP removal. MCWD staff will provide the Board of Managers an overview of the proposed project, review the funding request and revised benefits, and discuss staff's evaluation and recommendation for Board input.