



Title: Land & Water Partnership Program Update

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

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

Purpose:

At the May 15, 2024 Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) staff will provide the CAC with a summary of [Land & Water Partnership](#) (LWP) program improvements and project opportunities since program adoption.

Background:

The LWP program is the outcome of MCWD's Board of Managers, staff, CAC, and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) participation in a process to inform and refine the LWP program's goals, scope, and process over the past few years. The LWP program was last in front of the CAC on [March 15, 2023](#) when Policy Planning staff provided an update on the development of the LWP program and the CAC provided feedback. On [November 27, 2023](#) the Board of Managers adopted the LWP program and directed staff to implement the program on January 1, 2024.

LWP Program Overview

The District recognizes that, throughout the watershed, land use changes such as public infrastructure projects and private development create windows of opportunity for water resource improvements that may not reoccur for years. The LWP program is designed to identify these opportunities for integrated planning and develop collaborative projects that provide greater water resource and community benefit.

The LWP program provides technical and financial resources to support partner-led projects that provide significant, regional water resource benefit. The goals of this program are to:

- Increase early coordination and integration of land use and water planning;
- Leverage opportunities created through land use change to improve water resources; and
- Provide service and value to communities across the watershed.

The program is designed to operate in a way that supports MCWD's principles of focus and flexibility, by maintaining focus on high-impact projects and ensuring the flexibility to develop creative partnerships. To accomplish this, the program has an orderly process for partners to coordinate during concept development so that prioritized projects can be integrated into MCWD's budgeting process and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for funding.

The LWP program is eligible to state, regional, or local agencies (e.g., municipality) or large-scale private developers or landowners with the capacity to lead project implementation. For other non-public groups, such as lake associations, the LWP program seeks active city sponsorship or support, to ensure both that the project aligns with local priorities and that there is partner capacity to lead and implement large scale projects. Through this approach, the MCWD and its partners can align goals and priorities and identify significant, large scale project opportunities for shared investment to provide greater benefit to the region.

LWP Program Update:

Permitting Program Alignment

As a regional agency, the MCWD's strategy is focused on delivering impactful projects that provide regional benefit. To effectively identify and leverage changes to the landscape, the LWP program requires close and effective coordination between MCWD's Policy Planning and Permitting Programs. Over the last nine months, Policy Planning staff have focused

on providing support in key areas of improvement to facilitate increasing coordination between programs, including:

- Developing guidance and training materials for a consistent permit review process, compliance framework, and best practices for communications and relationship management.
- Preparing for the April 29, 2024, implementation of the new rule revisions focused on streamlining, simplifying, and aligning with state standards.
- Participating in weekly meetings to track intake of permitting applications to identify and evaluate potential risks and opportunities.
- Participating in select Pre-Application meetings based on project or relational risk.
- Organizing coordination meetings with public and private partners to build understanding of respective processes and identify opportunities to improve coordination for a more streamlined permitting process.
- 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.

LWP Program Opportunities

MCWD staff have evaluated active or potential project opportunities within the Long Lake Creek, Minnehaha Creek, Lake Minnetonka, and Gleason Lake subwatersheds. As of January 1, 2024, the LWP program has two annual submittal deadlines, February 1 and April 1, for requesting support with project implementation or feasibility work, respectively. This year, MCWD staff received one submittal from the City of Deephaven.

MCWD staff anticipated this LWP program submittal as, 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. This included MCWD providing technical assistance through the development of a city-wide regional opportunity scan which helped the city prioritize and select to move the Calvary Church Project forward through the LWP program. In addition to City of Deephaven partnership, program staff are also coordinating on other opportunities under development and providing technical support as needed.

May 15, 2024, CAC Meeting:

At the May 15, 2024, CAC Meeting, staff will provide the CAC with a summary of recent improvements to LWP program activities, and an overview of project opportunities considered for LWP program support. Since this program was last in front of the CAC in March 2023, MCWD staff have continued to reflect on the CAC's feedback on how to measure the program's long-term success. As program implementation is only five months into its first year of operation, District staff will discuss and collect comments from the CAC on areas for potential improvement.