



Title: Updates on Climate Action Framework and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workplans

Prepared by: Name: Becky Christopher and Kate Moran
Phone: 952-641-4520
bchristopher@minnehahacreek.org; kmoran@minnehahacreek.org

Purpose:

At the July 25, 2024 Policy and Planning Committee (PPC) meeting, staff will provide a mid-year status update on two priority initiatives: the Climate Action Framework (CAF) and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Framework.

Background:

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) Board of Managers adopted the Climate Action Framework on [December 15, 2022](#) and approved the MCWD DEI Framework and its 2024 Work Plan on [November 9, 2023](#). Since these two initiatives have commenced, MCWD staff have been refining, prioritizing, and initiating key actions to move each initiative forward. Below is an overview of the updates MCWD staff will cover at the July 25 PPC meeting.

Climate Action Framework Updates:

The [Climate Action Framework](#) (CAF) is the outcome of MCWD's Board of Managers, staff, and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) participation in a process to review and examine the climate science, impacts and vulnerabilities, governance context, and MCWD's implemented work to-date. The CAF outlines MCWD's commitment to ongoing collaboration with partners, to continue planning and preparing for the future, and to ultimately memorialize shared climate goals and strategy in the 2027 Watershed Management Plan.

Appendix A of the CAF outlines MCWD's near-term work plan comprised of three pillars of work, and MCWD has prioritized key 2024 actions under each pillar, including:

- *Pillar 1: Understand & Predict*
 - [2D Watershed Wide Model Build](#) – Led by the Research & Monitoring Program, staff are currently developing a 2D model to characterize and quantify vulnerabilities within the watershed. This work is essential to support informed, collaborative decision-making on climate adaptation projects and policies for MCWD and its partners. The model build was kicked off in May 2024 and is anticipated to be completed in late 2025 to support scenario planning as part of the climate engagement process.

- *Pillar 2: Convene & Plan*
 - [Climate Engagement and Planning Process](#) – Led by the Policy Planning Program, in coordination with other programs, staff are developing a climate engagement plan with the goal of bringing it forward for Board approval this fall and initiating stakeholder engagement by the end of 2024. This engagement process will run in parallel to the 2D model build and will involve establishment of policy and technical advisory committees to understand issues, set goals, identify and evaluate management strategies, and develop a collaborative plan to meet the goals.
 - [Equity Lens](#) – Led by the Policy Planning Program, in coordination with the Project Planning Program, staff are building an equity lens in 2024 to inform decision-making for projects and policy (see DEI Framework Updates for more information).
 - [Flood Action Plan](#) – Led by the Policy Planning Program, in coordinate with other MCWD programs, staff are refining a scope of work to create a flood action plan that outlines operational steps, essential stakeholder communication, and expectations for each MCWD program. Staff anticipates bringing

forward a scope of work in late August for Board approval and completion of a flood action plan by the end of 2024.

- *Pillar 3: Implement, Measure & Adapt*
 - Evaluate and Improve MCWD Operations – Led by the Operations Program, staff anticipate developing a scope of work for an audit of MCWD’s operations, including building infrastructure, to better understand opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This scope of work will be brought forward to the Board by the end of 2024 or early 2025, pending staff capacity and remaining budget this year. Based on the outcome of this evaluation, MCWD staff will develop recommendations for the Board on the next steps to implement greenhouse gas emission reductions tied to the organization’s operations.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework Updates:

The MCWD [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Framework and 2024 Work Plan](#) is the outcome of a staff-led workgroup’s discovery process to build organizational understanding of DEI topics relevant to MCWD and input from the Board of Managers, staff, and CAC. The DEI Framework is defined by three areas of focus and MCWD has prioritized key actions for 2024, including:

- *Operations*
 - Onboarding Process – Led by the Operations Program, staff are actively evaluating and updating the employee onboarding process, including building out a socialization model and a potential mentorship program. Staff anticipate providing the Board of Managers an update on the Onboarding Plan in Fall 2024 and will continue to refine and build out the onboarding process in 2025.
 - Education and Training – Led by the Policy Planning Program, in coordination with other programs, staff have received training on the MCWD’s DEI Resource Hub. This resource will also be integrated into the Onboarding Process, and staff anticipate finalizing an annual training framework in 2024, including the process for staff to maintain and grow the DEI Resource Hub.
- *Projects and Policies*
 - Equity Lens - Led by the Policy Planning Program, in coordination with the Project Planning Program, staff are building an equity lens in 2024 to inform decision-making for projects and policy. This action item is tied to both the DEI Framework and CAF. Staff are actively in a discovery phase and will be building out an equity lens, a series of questions paired with available data, by the end of the year.
 - Gap Assessment – Led by the Operations Program, in coordination with the Policy Planning Program, staff will develop a scope of work for a qualified external consultant to review and identify potential gaps in MCWD’s employee handbook and policies, Onboarding Plan, Equity Lens, and DEI Framework. Pending staff capacity, and upon completion of other actions in 2024, this work may be initiated in late 2024 and is anticipated and budgeted to move forward in 2025.
- *Outreach and Engagement*
 - Engagement Framework – Led by the Outreach Team, in coordination with other programs, staff will build from the Equity Lens to develop a tailored engagement strategy and toolkit to support inclusive opportunities to engage communities in MCWD’s planning and decision-making processes. This work is anticipated to begin in late 2024 and be finalized in early 2025 for staff implementation.

July 25 PPC Discussion:

At the July 25 PPC meeting, staff will provide an update on each 2024 action/project, including its status, approach, next steps, and any anticipated checkpoints with the Board of Managers. Staff will include a discussion section for any questions or feedback regarding the two initiatives’ status and next steps.