



Title: Climate Action Framework and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Plan Update

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Purpose:

For the April 24, 2025 Policy and Planning Committee (PPC) meeting, staff is providing an informational update on two priority initiatives: the [Climate Action Framework](#) (CAF) and the [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework](#) (DEI Framework). This memo provides status updates for projects under each initiative's 2025 work plan.

Background:

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) Board of Managers adopted the CAF on [December 15, 2022](#). This was the outcome of the Board of Managers, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and staff's participation in a multi-year process to review and examine climate science, impacts and vulnerabilities, governance context, and MCWD's implemented work to date.

In addition, MCWD's DEI Framework is the result of a staff-led workgroup's discovery process to build organizational understanding of DEI topics relevant to MCWD, along with input from the Board of Managers, staff, and CAC. The MCWD Board approved the DEI Framework and its work plan on [November 9, 2023](#).

Since these two initiatives commenced, MCWD staff have refined, prioritized, and advanced key actions to move each initiative forward. Below is an overview of key project updates under the CAF and DEI Framework's 2025 work plans.

Climate Action Framework Update:

The CAF outlines MCWD's approach to enhance its understanding of vulnerabilities across the watershed and collaborate with partners to develop shared goals and a coordinated management strategy to be memorialized into the 2027 Watershed Management Plan (Plan). Appendix A of the CAF outlines three pillars of near-term work and provides a clear roadmap to support the development of the 2027 Plan. In 2024, MCWD completed prioritized actions under Pillars 1 and 2, including expanding RESNET, improving short-term water level predictions, testing a 2D pilot model, and developing a stakeholder engagement plan for the 2027 Plan.

For 2025, MCWD has prioritized the following actions under each pillar:

Pillar 1: Understand & Predict

- [2D Watershed-Wide Model Build](#) – Led by the Research and Monitoring Program, this work was kicked off in May 2024 and informed by lessons learned from the pilot model build. The 2D watershed-wide model build is anticipated to be completed in late 2025 to support scenario planning as part of the 2027 Plan stakeholder engagement process.

Pillar 2: Convene & Plan

- [Partners Climate Conversations](#) - Led by the Policy Planning Program, MCWD will begin convening and engaging partners in climate talks, including the establishment of policy and technical advisory committees (PAC and TAC). For the climate engagement and planning process, the engagement plan for the 2027 Plan was vetted at the

[November 13, 2024](#) CAC meeting, and on [December 19, 2024](#) the Board authorized staff to initiate stakeholder engagement for the 2027 Plan.

- Staff are currently conducting a soft rollout, including annual meetings with all cities and other key partners, scoping consultant support, and developing materials and detailed plans for the engagement process. Staff anticipate a 2027 Plan kickoff event this fall and initiating the TAC and PAC in Q4 of 2025.
- Discuss Vulnerabilities and Conduct Scenario Planning - Led by the Policy Planning Program, MCWD will begin discussions on vulnerabilities and conduct scenario planning with the TAC and PAC in late 2025, continuing through 2026.
 - To support this work, staff are developing a white paper that includes a comprehensive literature review on the costs, benefits and tradeoffs between conveyance and a Balanced Urban Ecology approach to storage for flood resilience. This white paper is anticipated to be completed in summer 2025.
- Equity Lens – See DEI Framework Update section for project status and next steps.
- Flood Response Plan – Led by the Policy Planning Program with support from the Outreach, Research and Monitoring, and Project Maintenance and Land Management Programs, staff kicked off plan development in 2024.
 - The purpose of the plan is to streamline operational response to high water and flooding as well as clarify MCWD’s role before, during, and after flood events.
 - Between fall and winter 2024, MCWD staff conducted internal workshops to support plan development, focusing on decision-making roles and processes, including defining flood risk tiers and communication workflows before, during, and after flood events. The Flood Response Plan is anticipated to be brought forward for Board approval in summer of 2025.
 - In Spring 2025 MCWD staff are initiating external engagement in partnership with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Hennepin County Emergency Management to co-host a Flood Response Summit in May 2025 with creek communities and other key stakeholders. The summit will outline the service and value that the partnership provides communities, and collect community feedback on data, tools, and communications, helping to crystalize the roles of partners, communities, and residents.

Pillar 3: Implement, Measure & Adapt

- Evaluate and Improve MCWD Operations – Led by the Operations Program, staff will develop a scope of work for an audit of MCWD’s operations, including infrastructure, to identify opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
 - In early 2025, staff have been conducting discovery work to inform scope development and costs. This scope of work will be brought to the Board in 2025, pending staff capacity.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework Update:

The DEI Framework focuses on internal operations and people, as well as externally on MCWD’s mission-driven work. It includes three areas of focus: Operations; Projects and Policies; and Outreach and Engagement. In 2024, MCWD prioritized work on equitable staff recruitment, retention, and promotion practices; education and training; a culture of inclusion and belonging; and developing an equity lens for projects and policies. Key 2025 actions include:

Operations

- Onboarding – Led by the Operations Program, staff developed an updated onboarding process that includes a socialization model to support clear roles, expectations, and resources for new employees. In 2025, staff are refining and testing before finalizing the process.
 - Staff anticipate bringing the final Onboarding Framework to the Board in late summer or early fall 2025.

Projects and Policies

- Equity Lens - Led by the Policy Planning Program in coordination with Project Planning, staff are building a framework to assess and reflect on project and policy outcomes that may create or amplify social, environmental, or economic benefits and burdens. As outlined in the DEI Framework, the equity lens supports MCWD's project and policy development but does not direct project prioritization.
 - Staff completed a discovery phase in 2024 and shared a draft outline with the CAC on March 19, 2025 including the content, approach, and next steps.
 - Staff anticipate launching a pilot phase by end of 2025 for the Project Planning and Policy Planning Programs and operating through 2026 in a pilot phase.
- DEI Policy and Goals – Led by the Policy Planning, staff will begin discovery work on the Evaluation Framework under the 2027 Plan scope of work, including development of DEI goals and metrics for Thriving Communities.
 - Discovery begins summer 2025, with the high-level approach to be vetted with the CAC and Board by year-end.
- Gap Assessment – Led by the Operations, with Policy Planning support, staff will scope work for an external consultant to review potential gaps in the employee handbook, Onboarding Framework, Equity Lens, and DEI Framework.
 - Pending staff capacity, and upon completion of other actions in 2025, this work may be initiated in late 2025.

Outreach and Engagement

- Engagement Framework – Led by Outreach, staff will develop a strategy and toolkit, building on the Equity Lens, to support inclusive and tailored community engagement in MCWD planning.
 - This work initiated its discovery work in March 2025 and will be finalized in late 2025 for implementation.

Next Steps:

MCWD staff will continue advancing each individual project under the CAF and DEI Framework. Staff are available to return to PPC if there is a particular topic the Board would like to explore in greater detail.

Attachment:

- Attachment 1: CAF and DEI Work Plan Update – Timeline

