



Title: Painter Creek Preliminary Assessment and Opportunity Screening

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Purpose:

At the August 28, 2025 Policy and Planning Committee (PPC) meeting, staff will provide a preview of the early findings from the ongoing Painter Creek Subwatershed assessment work and outline general project strategies to support consideration of a potential near-term acquisition opportunity along Painter Creek.

Background:

The Painter Creek Subwatershed is a regionally significant landscape characterized by an extensive network of large wetland complexes. These wetlands are interconnected by Painter Creek, which outlets to impaired Jennings Bay on Lake Minnetonka. Wetlands in the Subwatershed have been historically ditched, drained, or otherwise altered to support agriculture and development, resulting in disrupted hydrology, degraded habitat, and poor water quality conditions.

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District's (MCWD) focal geography approach emphasizes the benefits of concentrated and sustained efforts—including monitoring, planning, partnership development, and implementation— in priority areas with significant natural resource challenges. The Painter Creek Subwatershed has been identified as one such geography due to the scale and degree of natural resource issues and its contribution of phosphorus loading to Jennings Bay.

Painter Creek Wetland Restorations are included in MCWD's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), with project planning funds assigned in the 2026 budget. Ahead of site-specific planning efforts, the Research and Monitoring department initiated subwatershed assessment work in mid-2025 that will continue into 2026. This foundational work will support setting a comprehensive management strategy for inclusion in the 2027 Watershed Management Plan. Preliminary insights from this ongoing work may also help inform timely project opportunities as they arise.

Summary:

Recently, MCWD was made aware of a unique property acquisition opportunity along Painter Creek in the city of Minnetrista. Project Planning and Research and Monitoring staff have coordinated to review early findings from previous and ongoing subwatershed assessment work to explore how this property might align with potential project strategies and the broader implementation plan. This review has not only informed project potential at the acquisition site but has also provided insights that will guide strategies elsewhere in the lower subwatershed. At the August 28, 2025 PPC meeting, staff will ground the Board in the broader subwatershed context, provide an early touchpoint in the subwatershed assessment process, and highlight possibilities associated with the property under consideration to support discussion and direction around this near-term acquisition opportunity.

Supporting documents:

- Painter Creek Wetland Restorations CIP 1-pager

MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

MULTI-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2026-2030

OVERVIEW

PROJECT NAME

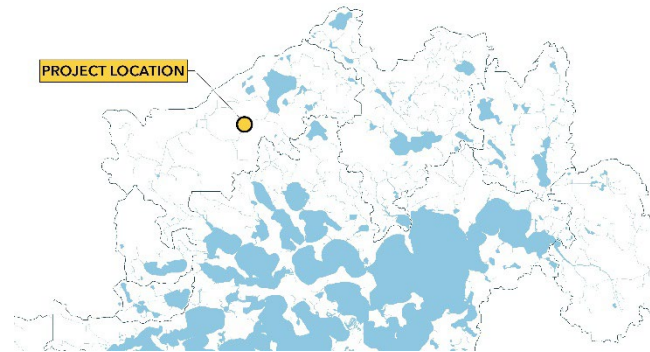
Painter Creek Wetland Restorations

LOCATION

Independence, Medina, Minnetrista, Orono
(Painter Creek Subwatershed)

TARGET WATERBODY

Jennings Bay, Lake Minnetonka



DESCRIPTION

SCOPE

Proposed development of a systematic implementation plan for the subwatershed that protects and improves the ecological integrity of the extensive wetland network through hydrologic and vegetative wetland restorations while addressing nutrient loading to downstream Jennings Bay.

GOALS

The development of specific project goals will be a component of the implementation plan. Target goals may include increased wetland habitat diversity, reduced sedimentation and pollutant loading, and hydrologic restoration.

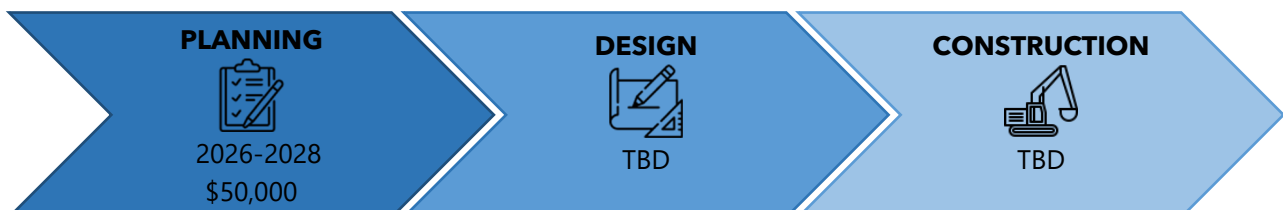
JUSTIFICATION

The Painter Creek Subwatershed is a regionally significant subwatershed that contains a number of large wetlands, many of which have been ditched or otherwise altered, that are connected by Painter Creek. Painter Creek contributes an estimated 33-50% of the total annual phosphorus load to Jennings Bay on Lake Minnetonka, which is impaired. The MCWD has previously established a partnership with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), which identified the potential restoration of four of the major wetland marsh systems under the Federal Section 206 Program, which may provide funding and implementation assistance for projects in the subwatershed.

WORKPLAN SUMMARY

Prior to commencing project work in the Painter Creek Subwatershed, MCWD will systematically develop an implementation framework that integrates natural resource goals, local context, and the previous work completed in partnership with the USACE. Initial planning work will start in 2025 with a comprehensive subwatershed assessment, led by MCWD's Research and Monitoring team.



SCHEDULE + BUDGET



MCWD CIP OVERVIEW

PAINTER CREEK

Legend

-  MCWD Subwatersheds
-  MCWD Project Location

