



Title: Minnehaha Creek Watershed District – Look Ahead 2025

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Purpose:

This memo serves to frame the planned Look Ahead presentation to the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), scheduled for January 15, 2025.

Introduction:

MCWD is celebrating another successful year as it looks back on all the organization achieved in 2024. 2025 represents a year of possibility, promise, and potential for the organization.

Where We Have Been:

In 2017, the District adopted a new ten-year [Watershed Management Plan](#) (WMP). In many ways, this plan established MCWD's [Balanced Urban Ecology](#) philosophy as the guiding vision for the organization's approach to water planning recognizing the environmental, social, and economic value created when built and natural systems work in harmony. Beginning in 2018, MCWD realigned programs and people around its Balanced Urban Ecology philosophy to support organizational excellence. Since 2018, every program, including the CAC, has undergone a shift in structure and focus. In the last four years, the organization has shifted from direction setting and realignment to implementing programmatic directives to drive MCWD into the future.

Where We Stand Today:

2024 was a year of execution of work in MCWD's pipeline, and preparation for the next phase of strategic initiatives.

Working closely with local and regional partners, in 2024, MCWD advanced capital improvement projects across three major subwatersheds, in the upper tributaries draining to Lake Minnetonka and along Minnehaha Creek, including the [establishment of a new partnership](#) with the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Guided by input from a convening process involving the watershed's communities, MCWD revised its rules to streamline permitting processes and promote partnership and launched the [Land and Water Partnership program](#) to support partner-led projects that generate regional water resource benefits.

Recognizing the watershed is already experiencing the effects of climate change, in 2024, MCWD expanded its real-time sensor network and initiated the development of a watershed-wide model to identify future flood vulnerabilities, to support data-driven flood forecasting and planning efforts that promote greater resilience across the watershed's communities.

In 2023, the Board completed a strategic analysis to identify and memorialize [Historical Insights and Principles of Success](#) to promote the District's growth over the next four years and beyond. This analysis, in addition to information gathered through workshops with the Board, staff, and [CAC](#) informed the development of a new Strategic Action Plan for the organization, [adopted on August 8, 2024](#), to maintain direction and alignment, drive performance, and facilitate clear communication with stakeholders as MCWD works toward its next Watershed Management Plan in 2027.

Following numerous awards of excellence through the previous few years, the District energetically closed 2024 with James Wisker, MCWD's Administrator, being named by the Minnesota Association of Watershed Administrators (MAWA), as [Administrator of the Year](#) for his 20 years of dedicated service to the District.

What Lies Ahead in 2025:

With the momentum built in 2024, MCWD will initiate the development of its 2027 Watershed Management Plan and deliver high-impact capital projects over the next five years that build community and watershed resilience.

In 2025, important work will be carried forward in the following areas:

- Project Planning:
 - [Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed](#)
 - [Greenway-Cedar Trail Connection and Streambank Restoration](#)
 - [Cottageville Park Expansion Part II](#)
 - [325 Blake Road Restoration and Redevelopment](#)
 - [Phase 1 Minnehaha Parkway projects](#)
 - [Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay Subwatershed](#)
 - [East Auburn Wetland Restoration](#)
 - [Turbid-Lundsten Corridor Plan](#)
 - [Halsted Bay Alum Treatment Facility](#)
 - [Long Lake Creek Subwatershed](#)
 - [County Road 6 Stormwater Pond Retrofit](#)
 - Painter Creek Subwatershed
 - Diagnostic work to inform project opportunities
- Policy Planning:
 - Complete the 2D watershed-wide model to map vulnerabilities to climate change
 - Initiate engagement to develop the 2027 Watershed Management Plan
 - Manage the [Land and Water Partnership program](#), an onramp into MCWD’s capital improvement plan
 - Advance [climate action planning](#) steps with MCWD’s partners
 - Implement MCWD’s [Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(DEI\) Framework](#)

Across MCWD’s portfolio of work, there will be key points of engagement within regularly scheduled meetings, as well as information flowing between them, to continue to engage the Citizens Advisory Committee in ways that meaningfully advance the District’s mission. A preliminary meeting calendar is offered below and will be summarized at the January 15, 2025, CAC meeting:

- **January 15, 2025** - Look Ahead (Board Liaison: Manager Maxwell)
- **March 19, 2025** – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan; 2027 Watershed Management Plan Update (Board Liaison: Manager Olson)
- **April 2025** – Field Trip: New Member On-boarding Capstone
- **May 14, 2025** – Capital Improvement Plan; Land & Water Partnership Update (Board Liaison: Manager Miller)
- **July 16, 2025** – 2026 Draft Budget (Board Liaison: Manager Loftus)
- **September 17, 2025** – 2027 Watershed Management Plan Update (Board Liaison: Manager Hejmadi)
- **November 12, 2025** – 2027 Watershed Management Plan Update (Board Liaison: Manager Sando)

January 15, 2025, CAC Meeting:

During the upcoming meeting, staff will provide an overview of where MCWD currently sits in its strategic trajectory and what lies ahead in 2025 and beyond.