



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

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

Purpose:

At the March 19, 2025 Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, staff will provide a 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 (CAF) on [December 15, 2022](#). This was the outcome of MCWD's Board of Managers, staff, and CAC participation in a multi-year process to review and examine the climate science, impacts and vulnerabilities, governance context, and MCWD's implemented work to date. In addition, MCWD's [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Framework](#) is the result 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 MCWD Board approved the DEI Framework and its work plan on [November 9, 2023](#).

Since these two frameworks were adopted, MCWD staff have been refining, prioritizing, and advancing key actions to move each initiative forward. Below is an overview of the updates MCWD staff will cover at the March CAC meeting.

Climate Action Framework Update:

The [Climate Action Framework](#) outlines MCWD's approach to enhance its understanding of vulnerabilities across the watershed and the need to 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 based on 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*
 - [Convene and Engage Partners in Climate Talks](#) - Led by the Policy Planning Program, MCWD will begin to convene and engage its partners in climate talks that will involve the establishment of policy and technical advisory committees (PAC and TAC). 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.

- Discuss Vulnerabilities and Conduct Scenario Planning - Led by the Policy Planning Program, in late 2025 MCWD will begin to discuss vulnerabilities and conduct scenario planning that will continue through 2026 with its TAC and PAC.
 - Equity Lens – See DEI Framework Update section for 2025 work plan status and next steps.
 - Flood Action Plan – Led by the Policy Planning Program with support from the Outreach, Research and Monitoring, and Project Maintenance and Land Management Programs, staff scoped and kicked off internal plan development in 2024. In 2025, MCWD staff will draft an internal document to ensure institutional knowledge is documented to inform decision-making roles and processes, including internal and external communication workflows before, during, and after flood events.
- *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 building infrastructure, to better understand opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This scope of work will be brought forward to the Board in 2025, pending staff capacity.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework Update:

The [DEI Framework](#) is organized to focus internally on MCWD’s people and operational processes as well as externally around MCWD’s mission-driven work that affects the community. The DEI Framework is defined by three areas of focus, Operations, Projects and Policies, and Outreach and Engagement. In 2024, MCWD prioritized work in equitable staff recruitment, retention, and promotion practices; education and training; culture of inclusion, belonging, and engagement; and developing an equity lens for MCWD’s projects and policies. As this work continues, MCWD has prioritized key actions for 2025:

- *Operations*
 - Onboarding – Led by the Operations Program, staff have developed an updated employee onboarding process, that includes a socialization model to support clear roles, expectations, and resources for new employees. In 2025, staff are refining and testing the onboarding process prior to finalizing formal process.
- *Projects and Policies*
 - Equity Lens - Led by the Policy Planning Program, in coordination with the Project Planning Program, staff are building an equity lens to provide a consistent framework for how MCWD staff assess, reflect, and identify potential project or policy outcomes that could create or further amplify social, environmental, and/or economic benefits and burdens.
 - Staff completed a discovery phase of work in 2024 and have developed a draft equity lens that staff will provide an overview at the March 19 CAC meeting, including the approach, content, and next steps for the equity lens.
 - *Approach* – The equity lens includes key questions and supports a data-driven approach that integrates into MCWD’s project and policy workflows, ensuring that solutions align with the mission and promote equity-driven decision-making.
 - *Content* - There are five sections to the draft equity lens:
 - Section 1 Proposed Project or Policy – Provides context and identifies the goals, approach, and intended outcomes of the project/policy.
 - Section 2 Data Gathering and Analysis – Leverages data and GIS mapping to assess disparities related to the project/policy.
 - Section 3 Community Engagement – Helps staff develop an engagement strategy in coordination with utilizing best practices to ensure inclusive participation.
 - Section 4 Benefits and Burdens – Identifies how different communities may experience positive or negative impacts throughout a project/policy lifecycle.

- Section 5 Metrics and Accountability – Tracks project/policy success and identifies equity-focused metrics to ensure accountability post project/policy implementation.
 - DEI Policy and Goals – Led by the Policy Planning Program, staff will begin a discovery phase for its Evaluation Framework as part of the 2027 Plan scope of work, that includes developing DEI goals and metrics for Thriving Communities and seeks to guide internal and external DEI actions across MCWD’s operations and programs.
 - 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 2025, this work may be initiated in late 2025.
- *Outreach and Engagement*
 - Engagement Framework – Led by the Outreach Program, 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 mid-2025 and be finalized in late 2025 for staff implementation.

March 19, 2025, CAC Discussion:

At the March 19, 2025, CAC meeting, staff will provide an update on each 2025 action. Staff will facilitate a discussion for any questions or feedback regarding the two initiatives’ status and next steps along with specific questions on the approach, content, and next steps for the draft equity lens.