



Title: Land & Water Partnership Program Update

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Purpose:

At the May 14, 2025 Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) staff will provide the CAC with an overview of the [Land & Water Partnership](#) (LWP) program, current projects, program successes, challenges, and planned improvements since program adoption.

Background:

The LWP program is the outcome of MCWD's Board of Managers, staff, CAC, and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) participation in a process to inform the program's goals, scope, and operations over the past few years. On [November 27, 2023](#), the Board of Managers adopted the LWP program and directed staff to implement it on January 1, 2024. MCWD Policy Planning staff presented initial LWP opportunities and planned improvements to the program at the [March 15, 2024, CAC meeting](#).

LWP Program Overview

The District recognizes that, throughout the watershed, land use changes such as public infrastructure projects and private development create windows of opportunity for water resource improvements that may not re-occur for many years. The LWP program is designed to identify these opportunities for integrated planning and develop collaborative projects that provide greater water resource and community benefits.

The LWP program provides technical and financial resources to support partner-led projects that provide significant regional water resource benefits. The goals of this program are to:

- Increase early coordination and integration of land use and water planning;
- Leverage opportunities created through land use change to improve water resources; and
- Provide service and value to communities across the watershed.

The program is designed to operate in a way that supports MCWD's principles of focus and flexibility, by maintaining focus on high-impact projects and ensuring the flexibility to develop creative partnerships. To accomplish this, the program has an orderly process for partners to coordinate during concept development so that prioritized projects can be integrated into MCWD's budgeting process and Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for funding. This process includes annual deadlines to submit a Notice of Interest to request support at feasibility and then at the implementation stage. Projects can also be considered outside of the program's annual schedule when an opportunity needs to move forward more quickly.

Eligible partners include state, regional, or local agencies (e.g., municipality) or large-scale private developers and landowners with the capacity to lead project implementation. For other non-public groups, such as lake associations, the LWP program seeks active city sponsorship or support, to ensure both that the project aligns with local priorities and that there is partner capacity to lead and implement large scale projects. Through this approach, the District and its partners can align goals and priorities and identify significant, large scale project opportunities for shared investment to provide greater benefit to the region.

LWP Program Update:

LWP Project Opportunities

As a regional agency, MCWD's strategy is focused on delivering impactful projects that provide regional benefits. Since the CAC discussed the LWP program in 2024, the City of Medina applied for \$200,000 of LWP funding for the Morningside Stormwater Improvement Project. This project will provide 36 lbs/yr of total phosphorous removal and includes constructing a regional stormwater pond to treat approximately 76 acres of land and stabilizing three eroding ravines. The project is located within the Painter Creek Subwatershed, and runoff from these 76 acres drains to Lake Katrina, before ultimately discharging to impaired Jennings Bay. Given the City's collaboration on design and the potential to provide significant regional water quality benefits, MCWD staff moved this project through the LWP process on an expedited timeline, and the Board approved funding for the project on February 13, 2025.

The City of Deephaven's Montgomerie Avenue Area Drainage Project beneath the parking lot of Calvary Church has also begun moving forward through the LWP process. MCWD began evaluating the project for LWP funding in 2024, presented the project to the CAC meeting in May of last year, and ultimately recommended \$125,000 in funding for the City of Deephaven's proposal. However, even with support from MCWD as well as Hennepin County, a funding gap remained. This spring, the project was accepted for additional funding through a state grant from the Board of Soil and Water Resources. With the project now fully funded, MCWD staff will continue to move the project through the LWP process and request that the Board approve project ordering and a funding agreement for the project this summer.

Over the past several years, MCWD has worked with the cities of Long Lake, Orono, and Medina to develop the Long Lake Creek Roadmap, which identifies a variety of potential opportunities for regional water quality improvements in the Long Lake Creek subwatershed. Two projects from this Roadmap, the County Road 6 Pond Retrofit and a feasibility study for the downtown Long Lake area, are now being advanced by the District's Project Planning team. In addition, the Roadmap identifies many potential partner-led opportunities that may be a good fit for the LWP program. As the District moves the Roadmap forward in collaboration with our partners, MCWD staff are coordinating with each of the cities to identify the next series of priorities in the Roadmap and evaluate their potential as LWP opportunities.

Program Improvements

To identify and leverage changes to the landscape, the LWP program requires close and effective coordination between MCWD's Policy Planning team and each of MCWD's other departments, as well as our partner agencies. Since the program's start, Policy Planning staff have focused on developing workflows to facilitate increasing coordination between programs. Currently, MCWD Policy Planning staff are further integrating MCWD's Permitting team and the LWP program, as well as developing internal guidance for project development, coordination, and program operations. MCWD is also organizing annual coordination meetings with public partners to build understanding of respective processes, priorities, and opportunities to improve coordination, as well as to collaboratively screen for potential LWP project opportunities.

As part of improving coordination to screen for and develop LWP project opportunities throughout the watershed, Policy Planning staff are scoping additional program improvements as part of the development of MCWD's 2027 Watershed Management Plan. Two key initiatives are to:

- Develop a map of regional opportunity areas based on water resource issues, flood risk, hydrology, land use, and other key data layers to support partner screening and identification of potential LWP projects.
- Create an interactive map for partners to highlight their priorities, areas of interest, and potential projects so that the District can more effectively track and incorporate partner goals into project screening and development.

May 14, 2025, CAC Meeting:

At the May 14, 2025, CAC Meeting, staff will provide the CAC with a summary of recent improvements to LWP

program activities and an overview of project opportunities within the LWP program. Since this program was last in front of the CAC in May 2024, MCWD staff have continued to reflect on the CAC's feedback on how to measure the program's long-term success. As the program is only entering its second year of operation, District staff will discuss and seek feedback from the CAC on opportunities to strengthen the program's approach.