



**Title:** Adoption of Minor Plan Amendment to Watershed Management Plan

**Resolution Number:** 26-035

**Prepared by:** Rachel Baker  
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**Reviewed by:** Michael Hayman, Director of Project Planning

**Recommended action:** Adoption of a minor plan amendment to the 2017 Watershed Management Plan's Table 3.12 Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed CIP

**Schedule:** February 12, 2026: Authorize distribution of minor plan amendment  
March 12, 2026: Committee Meeting – Minneapolis Thriving Waters Partnership Update  
March 12, 2026: Public Hearing for minor plan amendment  
March 26, 2026: Adoption of minor plan amendment (anticipated)  
April 2026: Update Watershed Management Plan

**Budget Considerations:** N/A

**Past Board actions:** Res #: 26-023 Authorization to Distribute Minor Plan Amendment  
Res #: 24-028 Authorization to Execute a Cooperative Agreement with the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and Release the Request for Proposals for the Minnehaha Parkway Phase I Project Feasibility Study

### Background

In 2024, the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB), and MCWD formalized a partnership through a Cooperative Agreement, subsequently named the Minneapolis Thriving Waters Partnership, to deliver impactful projects that improve water resources and enhance thriving communities in the City of Lakes.

In 2025, the partners completed a feasibility study for [three Phase 1 projects along Minnehaha Creek](#), and the Partnership's steering committee selected the first project to advance into design. In parallel, the partnership's Technical Team, comprised of staff from each agency, initiated development of a series of Management Unit (MU) plans to inform long-range project identification and implementation across Minneapolis.

The first of these plans, the Cedar Lake Management Unit Plan, is currently under development and will be finalized in early 2026. The Cedar Lake MU Plan outlines water quality conditions, key nutrient drivers, and potential strategies to address both external and internal nutrient sources affecting Cedar Lake and upstream waters.

While each partner maintains its own capital improvement planning processes, the MU planning framework is intended to support alignment across agencies, facilitate coordinated investment, and guide future amendments to MCWD's Watershed Management Plan (WMP).

## **Cedar Lake Management Unit**

Cedar Lake has been and remains a high priority for MPRB due to recurring public health concerns, beach closures due to E. coli, and recent [harmful algal blooms](#) (HABs). In 2023, MPRB independently completed HAB studies that further documented water quality issues in the lake.

Given Cedar Lake's location at the top of the Chain of Lakes watershed, its influence on downstream lakes, the recent adoption of MPRB's 2023 Cedar-Isles Master Plan, and MPRB's identification of potential watershed retrofits such as improvements to the Cedar Meadows Stormwater Facility, the partners aligned around the development of a Cedar Lake MU Plan to guide both mid-term implementation and long-term watershed strategy.

MPRB has expressed interest in pursuing external funding, specifically Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Clean Water Fund (CWF) grants, to support internal lake sediment treatment for Cedar Lake. To be competitive for CWF funding, proposed projects must be included in an approved water management plan. The MU Plan will support MPRB's efforts to strengthen its application for CWF grants.

Changes to the CWF grant timelines required earlier initiation of planning actions than originally anticipated. Adjustments to the grant cycle include transitioning from an annual program to a biennium cycle, and the open application window transitioning from the summer months to early spring, with this year's application window closing March 25, 2026. MCWD is committed to being flexible and remaining responsive to partner needs and evolving funding opportunities.

Because MPRB does not have an independent water management plan, MCWD or the City of Minneapolis must serve as the applicant and fiscal agent for such grants. MCWD has agreed to lead development of the Cedar Lake MU Plan, support necessary amendments to MCWD's WMP, and has discussed serving as fiscal agent for potential state grant funds. MPRB would lead the grant application, assemble a full funding strategy including local match, and oversee design, bidding, and construction/application if the internal sediment management project is successful in receiving grant funds.

## **Minor Plan Amendment**

In order for MPRB to be competitive for CWF funding, internal nutrient load management must be included in MCWD's WMP. The proposed minor plan amendment adds internal nutrient load management as a potential implementation plan within the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed's Stormwater Volume and Pollutant Load Reduction capital improvement program (CIP) entry. This amendment is consistent with existing WMP subwatershed plan discussions that recognize internal nutrient loading and the potential need to address it when conditions and supporting data indicate it is appropriate. The amendment does not commit MCWD to a specific project, funding level, or timeline, but ensures the WMP reflects a full range of strategies that may be needed to address nutrient impairments identified through ongoing planning.

Attachment 1 provides the redlined changes to the WMP's Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed Plan under this minor plan amendment. At the February 12, 2026 Board meeting, MCWD Board of Managers authorized distribution of the proposed minor plan amendment. In accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 8410, MCWD requested review and comment on the proposed amendment from its city, county, and agency partners. Comments on the minor plan amendment were accepted from February 18, 2026 – March 20, 2026.

Staff received responses from six public agencies/organizations – Hennepin County, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), MPRB, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Department of Health's Source Water Protection Unit. Each agency noted appreciation of MCWD's approach and the opportunity to review the proposed amendment, with none of the agencies voicing concern or opposition to the proposed amendment. The DNR commended MCWD's adaptive management approach, and asked us to consider the [Minnesota State and Regional Government Review of Internal Phosphorus Load Control](#) report, which is a guide for management and project planning. Hennepin County and the DNR provided responses via submitted letters, which can be found in Attachments 2 and 3.

MCWD Board of Managers held a public hearing for the minor plan amendment at the March 12, 2026 Board meeting. One resident attended the public hearing and expressed support for the minor plan amendment, specifically noting his support

for internal load management at Lake Nokomis. This resident also submitted comments in support of the minor plan amendment via email during the open comment period. Prior to Board consideration of the minor plan amendment, BWSR will provide its review of the proposed revision and formally determine whether the revisions constitute a minor plan amendment.

**Requested Action**

MCWD staff recommend that the Board of Managers adopt the minor amendment to the 2017 Watershed Management Plan to add internal nutrient load management as a potential implementation plan within the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed's Stormwater Volume and Pollutant Load Reduction capital improvement program (CIP) entry and direct staff to incorporate the amendment into the WMP in accordance with Minnesota Rules 8410.

**Supporting Documents:**

- Attachment 1: Draft Watershed Management Plan minor amendment
- Attachment 2: DNR Letter on Minor Plan Amendment
- Attachment 3: Hennepin County Letter on Minor Plan Amendment



## RESOLUTION

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**Resolution number:** 26-035

**Title:** Adoption of Minor Plan Amendment to Watershed Management Plan

- WHEREAS the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) adopted its 2017 Watershed Management Plan (WMP) to guide the District's long-range planning, policies, and implementation strategies for protecting and improving water resources within the watershed;
- WHEREAS in 2024, MCWD, the City of Minneapolis, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) through a Cooperative Agreement formed the Minneapolis Thriving Waters Partnership to coordinate planning, funding, and implementation of water resource projects that improve water quality and enhance community benefits within Minneapolis;
- WHEREAS as part of the Minneapolis Thriving Waters Partnership, the partners are developing a series of Management Unit (MU) plans to inform mid-range project implementation and long-term watershed planning, with the Cedar Lake Management Unit Plan serving as the first of these efforts and a model for future planning across the Chain of Lakes subwatershed;
- WHEREAS the Cedar Lake Management Unit Plan will document water quality conditions, identify key nutrient drivers, and evaluate potential strategies to address both external watershed inputs and internal nutrient loading;
- WHEREAS MPRB has expressed interest in pursuing external funding, including Clean Water Fund (CWF) grants administered by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), to support internal lake nutrient load management strategies for Cedar Lake;
- WHEREAS eligibility and competitiveness for CWF grant funding require that proposed projects be included in an approved water management plan;
- WHEREAS MCWD has offered to lead the development of the Cedar Lake Management Unit Plan, support amendments to the District's Watershed Management Plan as needed, and serve as a fiscal agent for potential state grant funds, while MPRB would lead grant applications and project implementation;
- WHEREAS in accordance with discussion of existing condition drivers and management strategies in the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed plan, the proposed Minor Plan Amendment would add internal nutrient load management as a potential action within the Subwatershed implementation plan;
- WHEREAS inclusion in the implementation plan does not commit MCWD to project implementation, funding, or any specific project timeline;
- WHEREAS on February 12, 2026, by Resolution 26-023, the Board of Managers authorized the distribution of a proposed minor plan amendment for review by agencies and interested parties in accordance with Minnesota Statutes §103B.231 and Minnesota Rules 8410;

WHEREAS on February 18, 2026, in accordance with MN Rules 8410, the District distributed the proposed minor plan amendment to city, county and agency partners and commenced a 30-day comment period on a proposed amendment to the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed capital improvement program (CIP);

WHEREAS on March 12, 2026, the Board of Managers held a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed WMP amendment; one resident and one MPRB staff member attended to express their support for the amendment;

WHEREAS on March 20, 2026, the minor plan amendment comment period closed with MCWD receiving comments from six public agencies/organizations – Hennepin County, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), MPRB, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Department of Health’s Source Water Protection Unit. Each agency noted appreciation of MCWD’s approach and the opportunity to review the proposed amendment, with none of the agencies voicing concern or opposition to the proposed amendment;

WHEREAS prior to Board consideration of the minor plan amendment, BWSR will provide its review of the proposed revision and formally determine whether the revisions constitute a minor plan amendment;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers adopts the proposed minor plan amendment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the District Administrator is to distribute the revised pages to the required review agencies and otherwise incorporate the amendment into the District WMP in accordance with MN Rules 8410.

Resolution Number 26-035 was moved by Manager \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Manager \_\_\_\_\_.  
Motion to adopt the resolution \_\_\_ ayes, \_\_\_ nays, \_\_\_\_\_ abstentions. Date: March 26, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Table 3.12 Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed CIP

Project	Stormwater Volume and Pollutant Load Reduction
Description	<p>Implementation of opportunities to reduce stormwater volumes and nutrient loading to Minnehaha Creek and Lake Hiawatha, including but not limited to construction of infiltration or filtration basins and devices, reforestation, revegetation, <del>and</del> stormwater detention or redirection, <u>and internal sediment load management.</u></p>
Need	<p>Minnehaha Creek is listed as an impaired water for multiple parameters, including fecal coliform bacteria, chloride, low dissolved oxygen, and fish and macroinvertebrate communities. Further, due to the sediment and nutrient loads transported by Minnehaha Creek, downstream receiving waterbody Lake Hiawatha is impaired for excess nutrients, and, along with Minnehaha Creek, has an approved Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study.</p> <p>The Minnehaha Creek-Lake Hiawatha TMDL report identifies the need to reduce phosphorus and bacterial (E. coli) loading to meet water quality targets for Lake Hiawatha and Minnehaha Creek. The TMDL draft report calls for a reduction of 1,907 lbs/year throughout the subwatershed in order for Lake Hiawatha to meet an in-lake nutrient concentration of 50 ug/L. The TMDL draft report also identifies a need to reduce bacterial (E. coli) loading in order to meet the standard of 126 organisms/100 ml. At this time with our current understanding, the best approaches for addressing excess bacteria loads appear to be source reduction or volume control practices.</p> <p>In addition, the 2003 and 2012 Minnehaha Creek Stream Assessment(s) identified two major issues impacting water quality and biotic integrity in the Creek: flashy storm event flows that often result in streambank erosion; and low base flows, which reduce habitat and limit biotic integrity. The high percent of impervious surface in this urbanized subwatershed has reduced the amount of stormwater that naturally infiltrates to surficial groundwater and which helps sustain base flow. This stormwater is efficiently conveyed to the creek through stormsewers, which results in the flashy flows.</p> <p><u>Previous diagnostic and water quality studies within the Minnehaha Creek subwatershed indicate that internal sediment phosphorus release is a substantial contributor to water quality in select lakes, including Cedar Lake and Lake Nokomis. In these systems, legacy phosphorus stored in bottom sediments can continue to drive algal blooms and reduced water clarity even after watershed nutrient inputs are reduced. Internal load management represents a potential long-term strategy to address these internal nutrient sources in conjunction with upstream work.</u></p> <p>Specific project locations and methods will be identified and implemented to reduce nutrient and bacterial loading to Minnehaha Creek and thus to Lake Hiawatha; decrease peak discharge rates in Minnehaha Creek to reduce streambank erosion; and increase baseflow in the Creek to improve its biotic integrity. These projects are intended to reduce annual volume and peak flows discharged to the Creek; increase infiltration to surficial groundwater; and reduce nutrient and bacterial export to the Creek.</p> <p>Identifying specific implementation sites under this capital project element will be an ongoing process informed by refined technical knowledge of pollutant sources and geomorphological phenomena, available land and willing public or private partners. Priorities are set foremost by diagnosing the spatial distribution of pollutant loading to Minnehaha Creek.</p>

<b>Outcome</b>	Improve ecological integrity of the stream corridor through this reach; improve stream channel stabilization; intercept and remove storm sewer outfalls; address existing stormwater management issues; minimize new pollutant loads conveyed by runoff and generated within Minnehaha Creek; minimize new volumes generated by new development; protect stream base flows and wetland and surficial groundwater hydrology; enhance riparian habitat and native vegetative communities; <a href="#">work with district partners to address internal loading due to legacy phosphorus.</a>
<b>Estimated Cost and Potential Funding Sources</b>	\$2,450,000; District levy, partner contributions, grant opportunities
<b>Schedule</b>	2018-2027

Central Region Headquarters  
1200 Warner Road  
Saint Paul, MN 55106

March 16, 2026

Michael Hayman, Director of Project Planning  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District  
15320 Minnetonka Blvd  
Minnetonka, MN 55345

**Re: Minnehaha Creek Watershed District's Watershed Management Plan Minor Amendment**

Dear Mr. Hayman,

DNR appreciates this opportunity to review the Minnehaha Creek Watered District (MCWD) Plan Minor Amendment. We commend your adaptive management approach that seeks the ability to utilize a variety of appropriate tools to address water resource issues in the jurisdiction. Treatment of internal loading can be an important tool when it is a substantial factor affecting water quality. Please consider the [Minnesota State and Regional Government Review of Internal Phosphorus Load Control](#) a valuable reference in management and project planning. In addition to a variety of planning considerations, the document includes information on which treatments require what permits. Please note that some treatments may require individual DNR public waters work permitting due to activities that are not covered under DNR's General Permit 2001-6009 with MCWD or may require DNR water appropriation permitting if dewatering volumes exceed 10,000 gallons per day or 1 million gallons per year.

If you have questions regarding the content of this letter or would like to discuss specifics, please do not hesitate to contact your Area Hydrologist, Ryan Toot ([ryan.toot@state.mn.us](mailto:ryan.toot@state.mn.us); 651-259-5822). The DNR looks forward to our continued partnership.

Sincerely,



Christine Hokkala-Kuhns

North District Manager – Ecological and Water Resources

cc: Jen Dullum, BWSR  
Dan Lais, DNR  
Jack Gleason, DNR  
Ryan Toot, DNR

HENNEPIN COUNTY  
MINNESOTA

March 11, 2026

Michael Hayman, Director of Project Planning  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District  
15320 Minnetonka Blvd.  
Minnetonka, MN 55345

**Re: MCWD Minor Plan Amendment**

Dear Michael Hayman:

Hennepin County staff received notice of MCWD's proposed Minor Plan Amendment (MPA). We appreciate the opportunity to review the proposed changes and provide feedback.

Our staff reviewed the plan changes, and we feel that the proposed plan aligns with the county's goals of keeping waters clean and healthy and protecting natural resources.

Thank you for considering Hennepin County's feedback. We look forward to continuing our work with your great organization.

Sincerely,



**Amy Riegel**

Senior Water Resources Specialist  
612-348-6604 (office)  
Amy.Riegel@hennepin.us

Cc: Karen Galles, Hennepin County  
Jen Dillum, BWSR

Hennepin County Environment and Energy  
300 South Sixth Street, MC 679, Minneapolis, MN 55487

