



Title: 2027 Watershed Management Plan: Evaluation Framework Approach

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Purpose:

At the March 18, 2026, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, staff will introduce the proposed evaluation framework for the 2027 Watershed Management Plan (Plan) and facilitate discussion on how the Plan should define and track progress toward MCWD's strategic goals.

Background:

MCWD is a data-driven organization that tracks project implementation, modeled outcomes, monitoring trends, and regulatory reporting associated with Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and other requirements. These data sources provide valuable information about MCWD's work and the condition of the watershed.

The 2017 Plan established a strong foundation for watershed management, including integrating MCWD's Balanced Urban Ecology (BUE) vision; establishing four strategic goals; defining water resource issues, drivers, management strategies, and land use context for each subwatershed; and framing two modes of project implementation through its focal geographies and opportunity-driven projects. Currently, project implementation and monitoring trends are tracked and reported; however, they are presented separately, making it difficult to clearly demonstrate how MCWD's actions contribute to measurable watershed progress over time (i.e., MCWD's impact).

As part of the 2027 Plan update, staff are proposing an evaluation framework that builds on the strengths of the 2017 Plan while providing a clearer structure to connect implementation activities with measurable advancement during the plan cycle as well as longer-term watershed outcomes.

Summary:

The proposed framework distinguishes between advancement expected during each 10-year plan cycle and longer-term watershed condition trends that unfold across multiple plan cycles. By organizing implementation tracking and monitoring data within this structure, MCWD can more clearly evaluate near-term progress while also understanding how watershed conditions change over time.

To support this approach, the evaluation framework organizes progress tracking into five components:

- **Strategic Goals** – Define what MCWD is trying to achieve over the long term for water quality, water quantity, ecological integrity, and thriving communities.
 - *What are we ultimately trying to achieve as a watershed?*
- **10-Year Objectives** – Define the advancement expected during a 10-year plan cycle.
 - *What progress should occur during this plan period to advance MCWD's four strategic goals?*
- **Core Indicators** – Provide a set of watershed-scale signals, drawing on monitoring data and related information, that show how conditions are changing over time within and across plan cycles.
 - *How are watershed conditions changing over time?*
- **Integrated Context** – Provide narrative interpretation of watershed trends by considering implementation progress alongside other drivers such as climate variability, land use change, and watershed dynamics.
 - *What factors help explain the trends we are seeing in the watershed?*

- Supporting Metrics – Track project and program implementation to document the actions taken by MCWD and its partners.
 - *What actions did MCWD and its partners take to advance these outcomes?*

This approach to evaluation is intended to support clearer communication of progress toward MCWD’s four strategic goals while recognizing that watershed conditions often change gradually and are influenced by many factors. The evaluation framework builds on MCWD’s existing monitoring program and implementation tracking while introducing additional structure to connect implementation metrics (e.g., project and program outcomes), monitoring data, and narrative interpretation within a single framework. This structure helps evaluate both near-term advancement during a plan cycle and longer-term watershed condition trends under MCWD’s BUE vision.

The evaluation framework will guide how progress toward MCWD’s goals is described in the 2027 Plan’s evaluation section, while the subwatershed implementation plans will reference relevant objectives and supporting metrics tied to specific geographies.

March 18, 2026 CAC Meeting:

At the March 18, 2026, CAC meeting, staff will provide an overview of the proposed evaluation framework and seek input on the proposed approach as well as facilitate discussion on how the 10-year objectives should function within the framework. The discussion will focus on the level of specificity that objectives should include and how different approaches may influence accountability, flexibility during the plan cycle, and MCWD’s ability to track watershed progress over time. To support this discussion, staff will present options for defining 10-year objectives, ranging from directional advancement statements to more specific numeric targets. The CAC will be asked to consider how these options align with MCWD’s planning needs, regulatory requirements, and long-term learning. The CAC’s feedback will help refine the proposed evaluation framework as part of the 2027 Plan.

To seek input on the proposed approach, the CAC will be asked to consider the following questions:

- Is the purpose of the evaluation framework and the proposed approach clear?
- How does this proposed approach compare to evaluation frameworks used elsewhere? Are there changes or additions MCWD should consider?
- How should MCWD approach its 10-year objectives in terms of scope and specificity? What are the tradeoffs among different approaches?
- Does the proposed evaluation framework clearly connect implementation activities with watershed condition trends?