MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT
QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

Meeting: Board of Managers
Meeting date: 1/22/2026
Agenda Item #: 7.7
Board Consent Item

Title: Approval to Continue Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS for Gauging Stations and Technical Assistance in 2026 and 2027

Resolution number: 26-012

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Reviewed by: Name/Title: Brian Beck/R&M Manager

Recommended action: Board approval to continue a joint funding agreement with the Unites States Geological Survey

Schedule: USGS Fiscal Year:
10/1/25 – 9/30/26
10/1/26 – 9/30/27

Budget considerations: Fund name and code: R&M Contracted Services 5-5001-4320
Fund budget: $140,230
Expenditures to date: 0
Requested amount of funding: NTE $30,660 annually

Past Board action:

Res #: 24-008	Title: Approval to Continue Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS for Gauging Stations and Technical Assistance in 2024 and 2025
Res #: 21-072	Title: Approval to Continue Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS for Gauging Stations and Technical Assistance in 2022 and 2023
Res #: 20-019	Title: Approval to Continue Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS for Gauging Stations and Technical Assistance in 2020 and 2021
Res #: 18-017	Title: Approval of Continuing MCWD and USGS Agreement for Joint Funding of O&M of Gage Stations near Minnehaha Falls and Grays Bay Dam for 2018 and 2019
Res #: 16-048	Title: Approval of Continuing MCWD and USGS Agreement for Joint Funding of O&M of Gage Stations near Minnehaha Falls and Grays Bay Dam for 2016 and 2017
Res #: 15-007	Title: Authorization to enter into a Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS for the O&M of a Stage Gage on Lake Minnetonka

Summary:
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (District) staff are tasked with managing the water quantity, quality, and ecological integrity within the District's legal boundary. The District's role in managing water quantity requires obtaining and curating information about how water moves through the watershed. There are two locations within Minnehaha Creek Watershed District that are critically important for managing water quantity: Gray's Bay Dam and the outlet of Minnehaha Creek Watershed District at the Mississippi River. The water level at Gray's Bay Dam and the outlet of Minnehaha Creek in Minneapolis are used to inform our dam management, understand the District's water budget, and calculate pollutant loads.

In 2005, District staff initiated a partnership with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) at the Hiawatha gauging station on Minnehaha Creek. Following record flooding in 2014, the partnership between the District and USGS was extended to include the gauge on Lake Minnetonka at the Gray's Bay Dam. The USGS is the national leader in the field of discharge measurement and water level gauging techniques, which ensures that critical flow measurement accuracy and precision is held to the highest standard.

The District's partnership with USGS to obtain highly accurate water level and flow data have allowed District staff to improve dam management, forge partnerships with other agencies on water quantity management, and communicate current water level conditions to the public. Stormwater sampling conducted at the Hiawatha gauging station provides data necessary to calculate pollutant loads at the outlet of the Creek. The requested board action would simply extend this collaboration for two further years under the same terms as have governed this data collection work to date.

The benefits of this partnership agreement extend beyond the stream gauging stations. As key initiatives like the real-time sensor network and 2D modeling work are carried forward, staff will utilize the expertise available at the USGS. The contract includes hours for technical support to provide subject matter expertise relating to groundwater and surface water modeling.

The monitoring partnership remains a joint project where each agency pays a portion of the cost for operation, maintenance, and distribution of the data. The USGS owns, operates, and maintains equipment, and publishes data from both stations. Projected costs for the gauging stations and technical support tasks are outlined in Table 1, with MCWD's share paid on a quarterly basis. Costs associated with the two gauging stations include sensor operations and maintenance, daily discharge computation, continuous specific conductance and water temperature measurement, and stormwater collection and analysis. The USGS contributes funds toward the gauging stations, lowering the cost for the District. Technical support in the form of review of the groundwater modeling approach used by MCWD will aid in the final stage of 2D model development in 2026.

Table 1. Annual Cost Breakdown

Task	Total	USGS Matching Funds	MCWD Share
Subtotal for Data Monitoring at Gray's Bay Dam and Hiawatha Avenue gauging stations	$45,110	$16,950	$28,160
Groundwater modeling technical support	$2,500	$0.00	$2,500
TOTAL FY26	$47,610	$16,950	$30,660
Subtotal for Data Monitoring at Gray's Bay Dam and Hiawatha Avenue gauging stations	$45,390	$16,950	$28,440
TOTAL FY27	$45,390	$16,950	$28,440

The Joint Funding Agreement between MCWD and the USGS needs to be renewed once every two years. MCWD governance policies state that the Administrator will not enter into a professional services contract exceeding $25,000 without using a competitive process. Staff has not obtained competitive quotes in this case under the rationale that the USGS is uniquely qualified for this scope of work based on its status as a national leader within the area of flow measurement, the effective collaboration to date and the value of continuity, and the willingness to defray portions of the cost. For the reasons listed above District staff recommend that the Board proceed without a competitive selection process.

The agreement renewal, which continues funding by USGS and MCWD is for the following timeframe: October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2026 and October 1, 2026 through September 30, 2027. MCWD's portion of the contract will not exceed $30,660 annually.

Supporting documents (list attachments):
USGS Statement of Work FY26-FY27

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RESOLUTION

Resolution number: 26-012

Title: Approval to Continue Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS for Gauging Stations and Technical Assistance in 2026 and 2027

WHEREAS, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District ("District") staff are tasked with managing water quantity, quality, and ecological integrity;

WHEREAS, the District's role in managing water quantity requires obtaining and curating information about how water moves through the watershed;

WHEREAS, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) is the leader in the field with regards to stream gauging techniques;

WHEREAS, the District has partnered with the USGS in managing, operating, and publishing stream gauging information since 2005, by means of a biannual joint funding agreement;

WHEREAS, continuing the operation of the Hiawatha Avenue and Gray's Bay Dam gauging stations is critical for dam operations, nutrient load calculations, and model development;

WHEREAS, the District will benefit from USGS expertise on an as-needed basis to help carry key initiatives forward and has included technical support in the scope of services;

WHEREAS, the present joint funding agreement extended through 2025 and requires renewal;

WHEREAS, MCWD governance policies specify a competitive process for selection of professional services for a scope exceeding $25,000, however, the USGS is uniquely qualified for this scope of services based on its history of effective collaboration with the District, its status as a national leader in gauging techniques, and its cost-sharing framework;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers authorizes the Administrator, on advice of counsel, to extend the joint funding agreement with the USGS for services from October 1, 2025 through September 30, 2027 with a total cost not to exceed $30,660 annually.

Resolution Number 26-012 was moved by Manager _____, seconded by Manager _____. Motion to adopt the resolution ___ ayes, ___ nays, ___abstentions. Date: 1/22/2026

_____ Date: _____
Secretary

U.S. Geological Survey
Statement of Work
In Cooperation with
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

The scope of work is identical for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027, as described narratively below in tasks (1) - (3) and Tables 1 and 2. Funding from MCWD and USGS is presented by individual Federal Fiscal Years and for the entire agreement in Table 2 and the following the narrative.

Data collected and computed in tasks (1) - (2) will be posted online at the links provided below in provisional format immediately after preliminary quality-assurance, and in approved format each fiscal year; except as noted for precipitation.

1) At Lake Minnetonka Dam in Grays Bay

The U.S. Geological Survey will operate and maintain a gaging station for publication of continuous water level (stage) for head- and tail-water pools at Grays Bay Dam. At both stations USGS will compute and publish stage record. At 05289100 (tailwater) USGS will make 1 or 2 discharge measurements per water year upon request. Stations specifically:

(A) Lake Minnetonka at Grays Bay outlet in Minnetonka, MN (station ID 05289000)
https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/inventory/?site_no=05289000
(B) Minnehaha Cr below Grays Bay Dam in Minnetonka, MN (station ID 05289100)
https://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/inventory/?site_no=05289100

2) Minnehaha Creek at Hiawatha Avenue

The U.S. Geological Survey will maintain a stream gage for computation of continuous gage-height, streamflow, specific conductance, water temperature and precipitation; and collect and analyze water-quality samples from streamflow runoff. Data for each component below will be published in provisional and approved formats at
http://waterdata.usgs.gov/mn/nwis/nwisman/?site_no=05289800

(A) Streamgage operation and maintenance and streamflow computation

A streamgage will be maintained and operated. Discharge measurements will be made to define changes to the stage-discharge rating over the range of flows that occur to compute an accurate record of streamflow.

(B) Continuous specific conductance and water temperature

In-stream sensors will be maintained and operated to provide a record of continuous specific conductance and water temperatures. Sensors will be cleaned and calibrated monthly or as needed to ensure an accurate record of data.

(C) Runoff-triggered auto-samples (8)

A refrigerated autosampler will be used to collect samples from up to 8 runoff events (dependent on weather). For each event, a discharge-weighted sample will be composited from discrete samples obtained during the rising limb and peak of the runoff hydrograph, and analyzed for the constituents in Table 1. To minimize nutrient degradation, chilled samples will be processed,

preserved, and shipped to the laboratory within 48-72 hours of sample collection. The MCWD may authorize additional samples to allow for unusually frequent runoff during wet years at a cost of approximately $1,690 per sample, as noted in item (5) of funding tables. Note, 1% cost increase is added for MCWD in FY27 to cover anticipated analytical laboratory cost increases.

(D) Tipping bucket precipitation gage

A tipping bucket rain gage will be operated and maintained during the open-water season. Precipitation data will be available only in provisional format for 120 days before being purged from the USGS data base. Additional quality assurance and costs would be required to publish and archive approved data.

Table 1. Laboratory analyses and physical measurements to be obtained from composited samples

Laboratory Analyses	
Nutrients	Dissolved chloride
Total phosphorus	Total suspended solids
Dissolved phosphorus	Volatile suspended solids
Dissolved ortho-phosphate	Suspended sediment concentration
Total ammonia plus organic nitrogen	**Physical measurements from composite samples**
Dissolved ammonia nitrogen	Specific conductance
Dissolved nitrite plus nitrate nitrogen	pH
Dissolved nitrite nitrogen	--

Upon request by MCWD staff, activities described in items (3)-(5) also may be undertaken. The USGS is to be paid for completed activities. Costs negotiated prior to work; below are estimates for budgeting.

3) USGS technical assistance for groundwater and/or surface-water, water-quality.

Table 2. Tasks and Costs, Federal Fiscal Year 2026

Task Number	Task	Total	USGS Matching Funds	MCWD Share
1, 2	**Subtotal for Data Monitoring (1A – 2D)**	**$45,110**	**$16,950**	**$28,160**
3	**Up to 16 hr of time of a GS-13 hydrologist for a high-level review of the proposed groundwater modeling approach by MCWD. Review comments will be provided through meeting(s) between USGS and MCWD and potentially in written form.**	**$2,500**	**$0.00**	**$2,500**
	TOTAL FY26	**$47,610**	**$16,950**	**$30,660**
1, 2	**TOTAL FY27**	**$45,390**	**$16,950**	**$28,440**