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**Title:** Authorization to Implement Human Resource Adjustments

**Resolution number:** 26-029

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**Recommended action:** Authorize the District Administrator to make an adjustment to position classification within the Policy Planning program

**Past Board action:** Res #: 19-012 Adoption of MCWD Compensation Policy  
Res #: 23-041 Acceptance of Compensation Study Findings and Adoption of Pay Plan

**Summary:**

Background

In August 2017, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Board of Managers approved a revised organizational structure as part of a significant effort to strategically realign District operations around its vision of a Balanced Urban Ecology. In addition to structural changes, all new position descriptions were drafted, those positions were classified using a proprietary systematic evaluation tool from a human resources consultant, and then these classified and described positions were benchmarked against the regional market to establish a compensation framework and policy.

Recognizing that people are MCWD's most important assets, the purpose of the resulting Board adopted policy is to attract and retain the talent MCWD needs to achieve its mission, remain competitive with the public and private market, and reward employees on the basis of merit and mission driven performance, in ways that reflect and support the strategic priorities of the organization. To achieve these stated purposes, the policy contained the following provisions:

- The Administrator will routinely assess the District's human resource needs against the organization's strategic objectives, in coordination with program managers.
- The Administrator and Board will evaluate and prioritize recommendations through an organizational lens.
- Recommendations may range from individual position reclassification, the creation of new positions, or departmental/organizational realignment.
- Positions affected by any recommendations will be evaluated using the Systematic Analysis and Factor Evaluation (SAFE) system and placed within the District's compensation structure.
- The Board of Managers must approve the fiscal and organizational impact of recommended changes.

In working to retain proven, talented impact players within the team, so they can stay, grow, and continue to expand their contributions to the mission, an extension of the philosophies outlined in MCWD's compensation policy is the concept of building career ladders. Delineating pathways for advancement within the organization actively engages employees in expanding their capability, both to meet their individual goals for career growth, while also serving the evolving strategic needs of the organization. To support these goals, it is important to provide clear paths for professional development, career growth, and positional promotion into senior positions – while ensuring those growth opportunities support the strategic growth of MCWD.

Opportunities for promotion to a senior position are evaluated on a case-by-case basis, considering:

- The organizational merit and need:
  - The future strategic initiatives and corresponding needs of the department
  - The benefits inside and outside the department associated with the additional capacity
  - The need and benefit relative to other personnel needs across the organization
  - The short and long-term fiscal impact to MCWD's budget
  
- Individual merit and need:
  - Experience in current position, tenure, and rate of movement within salary range
  - High performance over the last two annual review cycles
  - Demonstrated alignment with core values and cultural performance
  - Trajectory of continuous improvement, growth and leadership
  - Skillsets that match the minimum requirements of the new role
  - Personal motivation and commitment to grow and adapt to changing responsibilities

### Proposed Changes

As discussed in recent Board meetings, 2025 was a year of growth in leadership capital across the organization, with 48 percent of the organization having over four years of experience at MCWD, and with second-in-command leaders emerging in Project Planning and Policy Planning in Gabe Sherman and Kate Moran, respectively.

Both Kate and Gabe have been recommended to move into senior positions in 2026 by their managers based on the considerations outlined above. These proposed changes would increase the expectations and responsibilities of the positions, allowing work that currently resides with the Policy and Projects Directors to be delegated down, thereby expanding the organization's capabilities.

In these senior positions, Kate and Gabe will serve as deputies for their Directors, playing a lead role in supporting the development, implementation, evaluation, and improvement of their program. They are also expected to set a leadership and cultural example, helping to train, coach, and motivate a high-performing team to consistently achieve the program and organization's strategic objectives.

The two senior roles have been evaluated through the SAFE system, and it is recommended that the Senior Policy Planner position be placed at a grade 15, requiring a reclassification from the current grade 14 (see Attachment 2). The Senior Planner-Project Manager position would remain at a grade 16. Per the Compensation Policy, a formal compensation and classification study is recommended to be completed every five years to revalidate and baseline the salary ranges and grade assignments. The next study is planned for 2028.

### Recommendation

At the March 12, 2026 Board Meeting, the Board of Managers will be asked to authorize the Administrator to implement the reclassification of one Policy Planning Coordinator position (Kate Moran) to a Senior Policy Planner, moving the position from grade 14 to grade 15 in the compensation plan.

### **Supporting documents:**

Attachment 1 – MCWD Compensation Policy

Attachment 2 - Proposed Compensation Plan



**RESOLUTION**

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WHEREAS, in 2017, the Board of Mangers approved an organizational restructure to align program, people and resources in support of a Balanced Urban Ecology;

WHEREAS, in 2018, the Board of Managers directed the development of a comprehensive classification and compensation plan for the organization;

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Board of Managers adopted a Compensation Policy, outlining a requirement to routinely asses the District’s human resource needs against strategic objectives;

WHEREAS, to promote the retention of high-performing and tenured staff members, the Administrator has delineated a pathway for considering promotion to a senior position where there is both organizational need and individual merit;

WHEREAS, within both the Policy Planning and Project Planning programs, second-in-command leaders have emerged and been recommended to move into senior positions in 2026 by their managers to expand organizational capacity;

WHEREAS, the two senior roles have been evaluated through the Systematic Analysis and Factor Evaluation (SAFE) system, and it is recommended that the Senior Policy Planner position be placed at a grade 15, requiring a reclassification from the current grade 14; and

WHEREAS, the MCWD’s Compensation Policy states that the Board of Managers must approve the fiscal and organizational impact of recommended human resource changes;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers hereby authorizes and directs the Administrator to reclassify one of the Policy Planning Coordinators, Kate Moran, to a Senior Policy Planner.

Resolution Number 26-029 was moved by Manager \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Manager \_\_\_\_\_. Motion to adopt the resolution \_\_\_ ayes, \_\_\_ nays, \_\_\_ abstentions. Date: 3/12/2026

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

## MCWD Compensation Policy

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### 1. Compensation Philosophy

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) strives to be an elite organization, and envisions a landscape of vibrant communities where natural and built environments exist in balance to create value and enjoyment.

The District has set high standards of excellence, and is committed to achieving outstanding results that honor its partners in protecting and improving land and water for future generations. MCWD is guided in this pursuit of a balanced urban ecology for the watershed, by sound science, service, partnership, and a spirit of innovation where flexibility and creativity combine to create a culture of continuous improvement.

To achieve its audacious goals, the District recognizes that its most important assets are its people.

In order to attract and retain the talented people needed to accomplish its mission, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is committed to establishing and maintaining a compensation package that is both competitive with the public and private market within the region, and reflects the organization's standards of excellence and unique strategic priorities.

MCWD's compensation policy is designed to:

- Attract and retain the talent the District needs to achieve its mission
- Remain competitive with public and private market
- Reflect the organization's strategic priorities
- Provide for internal equity by consistently evaluating jobs and pay programs
- Reward employees on the basis of mission driven performance
- Maintain a plan that is clear and easy to communicate
- Comply with all state and federal laws and regulations

MCWD also believes that compensation is more than just a salary, and is committed to maintaining a total compensation package that considers how salary and employee benefits combine to competitively position the organization in the market for talent.

### 2. Administration of the Compensation Plan

The District's Compensation Plan (Plan) consists of systematically classified positions, and corresponding salary ranges for each position that are derived from a market analysis of comparable positions from benchmark organizations (Attachment A).

The Board of Managers maintains overarching authority over the Plan, as outlined in the District's Governance Policies, by providing approval of the Plan, any periodic re-baselining of the Plan, and any significant adjustments to the Plan to meet the strategic needs of the organization.

The District Administrator oversees the implementation and administration of the plan as approved and directed by the Board of Managers, and in a manner consistent with this policy.

### **3. Maintaining the Compensation Plan**

Salary ranges within the Plan are developed based on an analysis of market data of comparable positions from benchmark organizations. The mid-point of the salary ranges will be competitively set based on the mid-point of the market data.

Salary ranges will be reviewed and updated annually as part of the District's budget process, to ensure that the ranges remain competitive with market variation over time. The District will utilize the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Cost Index (ECI), wages and salaries for state and local government workers (not seasonally adjusted), all workers group to maintain the salary ranges.

Adjustments will be based on the percent change for the 12 month period ending in June of each year. The percent adjustment will be made to the minimum, mid, and maximum amount for each range. An example follows for a minimum range adjustment:

$$\text{Percent Change} \times \text{Minimum Range} = \text{Adjustment Amount}$$

$$\text{Minimum Range} + \text{Adjustment Amount} = \text{New Minimum Salary}$$

These annual adjustments to salary ranges, to maintain market competitiveness, shall be approved by the Board of Managers as part of the annual budget process. Downward adjustments will not be made to the pay scale. If a negative percent change is realized, the salary scale will remain the same as the previous year.

Adjustments to the salary ranges does not guarantee an annual salary adjustment for individual employees. Salary adjustments for individuals will be based on performance, as detailed in Section 5.

A formal compensation and classification study will be conducted as needed, and is recommended to be completed every five years, to revalidate and baseline the salary ranges and grade assignments. Authorization to initiate this work shall be provided by the Board of Managers.

### **4. New Hire Salary Placement**

Starting salaries for new employees will be set within the salary range for that position, based on the individual's skills, knowledge and experience in relation to the proficiency requirements of the position. The starting salary will be recommended by the Department Manager, and approved by the District Administrator, before any offer of employment is made.

A new hire will not be eligible for a salary adjustment until after 180 days of employment. Department managers will complete 90 and 180 day performance reviews of newly hired employees. If a new hire demonstrates consistent and steady growth, cultural alignment, and is performing at a level equal to, or exceeding expectations of, the position at the 180 day review, the Manager may recommend a salary adjustment to the District Administrator.

### **5. Movement through Salary Ranges**

To achieve its strategic priorities the District is committed to investing in and retaining high quality people that meet the District's standards of excellence. In addition to aligning individuals with meaningful mission driven work, and providing a culture of collaboration, camaraderie and accountability, a component of the District's retention strategy is compensation.

To effectively incentivize the retention of employees that meet or exceed the District's performance standards, adjustments to compensation will be made annually to move individuals through the salary range for their respective position.

The District recognizes that it is important that its employees not only understand what they are being paid, but also understand the reasons why. As stated in the goals of this compensation policy, the District provides compensation to retain the talent it needs to accomplish its mission, reward mission driven performance that meets the organization's standards of excellence, remain competitive with the market, and ensure internal pay equity.

#### Performance Considerations:

Employee performance will play a key role in guiding the implementation of the District's philosophy regarding range penetration, and the pace at which employees move through a position's salary range.

The District recognizes that performance is multi-faceted, and is committed to providing employees with operational frameworks that clearly articulate and evaluate key performance indicators and priority initiatives. In assessing whether performance is met or exceeded, and its influence on range penetration and pace of movement, the District will consider\*:

- Mastery of the required knowledge, skills, abilities to meet proficiency
- Achievement of key performance indicators for the year, and record of continuous improvement
- Independence and autonomy
- Initiative and proactivity
- Strategic critical thinking, problem and solution identification, creativity and innovation
- Engagement and dedication
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Contribution to departmental or organizational strategic priorities, organizational impact
- Cultural alignment – growth mindset, transparent, idea meritocratic, receptive to critique, positivity, mentorship and leadership at all levels

\*This list serves as policy guidance and is not intended to be an exhaustive or metric based list on which performance will be assessed at an operational level.

#### Salary Range Penetration:

Regarding salary range penetration, the District has established the mid-point of its salary ranges as market competitive for comparable positions, from benchmark organizations, for individuals that have demonstrated market competitive proficiency, and a consistent track record of performance.

Therefore, it is the District's intent to move employees towards the mid-point of the salary range for their grade in an efficient and timely manner consistent with work performance and demonstrated proficiency (knowledge, certifications, skills, abilities, etc.). Salary adjustments beyond mid-point of the salary range will be taken at a more gradual and deliberate pace, for individuals consistently performing at a level higher than what the position requires.

### Compensation Ratios:

To synchronize the District's philosophy regarding range penetration and the use of performance criteria, the District will consider an employee's compensation ratio. Compensation ratio is defined as the percentage obtained by dividing the actual salary paid to an employee by the midpoint of the salary range for that position.

$$\text{Compensation Ratio} = \frac{[\text{Employee Salary}]}{[\text{Midpoint of Pay Range}]} \times 100$$

An individual with a compensation ratio of 100% is paid at midpoint and is viewed as being competitive with an individual in the market who is proficient and has a track record of consistently meeting expectations.

MCWD's philosophy regarding range penetration, combined with performance and the following compensation ratios\* will be used to holistically guide an individual's movement through the established pay ranges:

- 83 – 89% - new, limited experience, not proficient, or unsatisfactory performing incumbent
- 90 – 96% - gaining experience, consistent performance, not fully proficient
- 97 – 103% - consistent performance and fully proficient
- 104 – 110% - consistently performing at a higher level than required
- 111 – 116% - universally recognized as outstanding performers, inside and outside MCWD

\*Compensation ratios are not intended to provide a prescriptive or formulaic approach to the implementation of the District's compensation plan, but as overarching guidance.

### **6. Position Classification and Reclassification**

The MCWD uses the Systematic Analysis and Factor Evaluation (SAFE®) system to consistently evaluate the classification of positions, and the placement of positions within the District's Compensation Plan.

The District seeks to maintain the alignment of its organizational structure and human resources in a manner that directly supports its strategic priorities. In accordance with the District's Governance Policies, the Administrator will routinely assess the District's human resource needs against the organizations strategic objectives, and make recommendations to the Board of Managers. These recommendations will be informed by Department Managers, and evaluated and prioritized by the District Administrator and Board of Managers through an organizational lens.

Recommendations may range from individual position reclassification, the creation of new positions, or departmental/organizational realignment. Positions affected through these recommendations will be evaluated using SAFE®, and placed within the District's compensation structure. The District Administrator will advise, and the Board of Managers must approve, of the fiscal and organizational impact of the recommended changes.

## Proposed MCWD 2026 Compensation Structure\*

Title**	Grade	Min	Mid	Max
Research and Monitoring Field Assistant	8	\$ 50,277.59	\$ 60,333.11	\$ 70,388.63
Permitting Assistant	9	\$ 53,796.92	\$ 64,556.52	\$ 75,316.12
Research and Monitoring Technician	11	\$ 61,591.96	\$ 73,910.13	\$ 86,228.31
Permitting Technician	12	\$ 65,903.65	\$ 79,083.94	\$ 92,265.33
Outreach Coordinator	13	\$ 70,516.15	\$ 84,619.60	\$ 98,723.05
Office Manager	13	\$ 70,516.15	\$ 84,619.60	\$ 98,723.05
Project Maintenance Technician	13	\$ 70,516.15	\$ 84,619.60	\$ 98,723.05
Sr. Project Maintenance Coordinator	14	\$ 75,452.36	\$ 90,543.27	\$ 105,633.08
GIS Coordinator	14	\$ 75,452.36	\$ 90,543.27	\$ 105,633.08
Policy Planning Coordinator	14	\$ 75,452.36	\$ 90,543.27	\$ 105,633.08
<b>Senior Policy Planner</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>\$ 80,734.07</b>	<b>\$ 96,881.10</b>	<b>\$ 113,028.13</b>
Water Resources Scientist	15	\$ 80,734.07	\$ 96,881.10	\$ 113,028.13
Planner-Project Manager	16	\$ 86,385.26	\$ 103,662.53	\$ 120,939.79
<b>Senior Planner-Project Manager</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>\$ 86,385.26</b>	<b>\$ 103,662.53</b>	<b>\$ 120,939.79</b>
Operations Manager	17	\$ 93,084.94	\$ 114,028.67	\$ 134,973.49
Outreach Program Manager	17	\$ 93,084.94	\$ 114,028.67	\$ 134,973.49
Permitting Program Manager	17	\$ 93,084.94	\$ 114,028.67	\$ 134,973.49
Project Maintenance Program Manager	17	\$ 93,084.94	\$ 114,028.67	\$ 134,973.49
Research and Monitoring Program Manager	17	\$ 93,084.94	\$ 114,028.67	\$ 134,973.49
Policy Director	18	\$ 102,392.78	\$ 125,431.32	\$ 148,469.86
Project Director	19	\$ 112,631.40	\$ 137,974.01	\$ 163,315.53
District Administrator	21	\$ 136,284.65	\$ 166,948.21	\$ 197,612.85

\*Adjusted 3.9% from adopted 2025 pay structure based on Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Cost Index, per MCWD Compensation Policy

\*\*Table reflects all positions that have been classified since 2018. Not all positions currently exist or are filled within the organizational chart.