

MEETING DATE: February 28, 2019

TITLE: Authorization to Renew the Contract with Freshwater Society for the Watershed Association Initiative

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 19-020

PREPARED BY: Kim LaBo, Education and Engagement Coordinator

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REVIEWED BY: Administrator Counsel Program Mgr. (Name): Telly Mamayek
 Board Committee Engineer Other

WORKSHOP ACTION:

<input type="checkbox"/> Advance to Board mtg. Consent Agenda.	<input type="checkbox"/> Advance to Board meeting for discussion prior to action.
<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to a future workshop (date): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to taskforce or committee (date): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Return to staff for additional work.	<input type="checkbox"/> No further action requested.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): Seeking approval of contract at February 28, 2019 Board Meeting	

PURPOSE or ACTION REQUESTED: Authorization to renew the contract with Freshwater Society for the Watershed Association Initiative (WAI).

PROJECT/PROGRAM LOCATION: Minnehaha Creek Watershed

PROJECT TIMELINE: January 1, 2019 – December 31, 2019

PROJECT/PROGRAM COST:

Fund name and number: Education - 4002
Current budget: \$25,000
Expenditures to date: \$0
Requested amount of funding: \$25,000
Is a budget amendment requested? No
Is additional staff requested? No

PAST BOARD ACTIONS:

- April 6, 2006 The MCWD Board of Managers approved resolution 019-06, Authorization to Hire Minnesota Waters to Execute a Lake Association Initiative.

- July 12, 2007 The MCWD Board of Managers approved the 2008 Communications and Education Work Plan, which contained the following item for 2008:

Lake Association Initiative: This is an extension of the initiative started in summer 2006.

Lake associations provide increased community involvement on a subwatershed level, and interest in high profile lakes in the District, resulting in better stewardship of those lakes and subsequent improvement in water quality. The District has provided a grant to Minnesota Waters, who is hiring a person that will carry out the initiative with District support and oversight.

October 2008 – November 2012 The MCWD Board of Managers approved the Watershed Association Initiative contract with Minnesota Waters annually.

June 2012 MN Waters Organization dissolved and the 2012 MN Waters contract was transferred per approval of the MCWD Administrator to Freshwater Society, to continue the WAI contracted work.

November 2013 - January 2018 The MCWD Board of Managers approved the Watershed Association Initiative contract with Freshwater Society annually.

SUMMARY:

Request for Contract Renewal with Freshwater Society:

Since June of 2012, Freshwater Society (Freshwater) has contracted annually with MCWD to service the Water Association Initiative (WAI). Freshwater’s contract for \$25,000 covers the cost of services provided by Freshwater Society staff as described in the attached WAI plan and covers the period of January 1, 2019 – Dec. 31, 2019. The contract payments will be made in quarterly installments as identified in the below schedule:

\$6,250	March 2019
\$6,250	June 2019
\$6,250	Sept. 2019
<u>\$6,250</u>	<u>Dec. 2019</u>
\$25,000	

Overview of Water Associations within MCWD:

The MCWD currently has 18 active lake associations disbursed throughout the District. While some of these associations formed on their own, many developed with assistance from the District through the WAI. Over the years, the District’s lake associations have engaged in a number of activities to improve local lakes such as creating lake management plans and completing shoreline restorations and other projects to improve lake quality.

The first study of its kind to examine lake associations in Minnesota was conducted by Concordia College in 2017. The study found Minnesota has 450 lake associations and determined they are one of the largest volunteer bodies in the state, volunteering an average of 1.2 million hours and contributing \$6.2 million annually toward the improvement of area lakes. For the past twelve years, MCWD has cultivated this volunteer base through the District’s WAI.

WAI Program Background:

In 2006, MCWD partnered with the non-profit organization Minnesota Waters to form the WAI. The primary purpose of WAI was to support lake association members in activities that protect and improve their local lake’s water quality. While the District oversaw the initiative, Minnesota Waters was under contract to carry out the program. During the six years Minnesota Waters staffed the initiative, the focus of the program was on forming new lake associations, helping them create lake management plans, providing funding for association

projects, and holding educational forums. In June of 2012, after Minnesota Waters ceased to exist as an organization, Freshwater stepped in to run the program and has continued in that role to this day.

WAI Program Assessment:

The MCWD's Strategic Plan that was adopted in February 2017 directs the District's staff to focus their work on the organization's strategic priorities of building high impact capital projects and changing policy to integrate land use and water planning. As part of this effort, Education staff have been working to improve the WAI's alignment with the District's strategic goals, starting with an analysis of the initiative's history, evolution and the overall role of lake associations in the state. The analysis reinforced the value lake associations can provide in the protection of their local lakes and also some of the challenges in working with volunteer organizations whose priorities can differ from the District's.

Informed by this analysis, the District's Education staff engaged in a strategic planning process with Freshwater and other District staff to re-orient the WAI program. This planning process resulted in a new WAI plan that advances the District's mission and priorities (see attached plan).

MCWD Services to WAI Members

The following is a summary of the support MCWD staff provide to lake associations in coordination with Freshwater staff

Data and Analysis - MCWD staff provide natural resource analysis to help lake associations understand the issues and drivers impacting local lakes. Staff also provide technical assistance to associations and local governmental units when there is a coordinated response needed to address identified issues impacting area lakesheds.

Policy-Planning Assistance – MCWD staff are developing the District's responsive program which will establish a framework for how the District evaluates and responds to requests for District assistance. Staff also assist in the convening of multiple partners to ensure responses are coordinated.

Coordination and Outreach – Education Coordinator Kim LaBo led the 2018 WAI assessment and re-alignment process involving MCWD and Freshwater staff. LaBo will oversee the WAI plan implementation and evaluate progress in reaching the identified goals.

MCWD staff will continue to support the WAI program by developing shareable content, such as newsletter articles, blogs, fact sheets and other materials, which can be republished by association leadership. Staff will also lead the crafting of messages on the District's goals, responsive program and other key initiatives and assist in the distribution of these messages to local associations.

WAI Plan Summary

The proposed WAI plan advances MCWD's strategic plan by building support among associations for District capital projects within focal geographies while remaining responsive to associations outside the District's focal geographies. The plan advances these goals by targeting resources to lake associations in focal geographies while also supporting lake associations in other parts of the District. Freshwater's consultant will play a key role in supporting lake associations Districtwide, allowing District staff to work more closely with lake associations in priority areas.

Freshwater staff will increase the capacity of District staff by handling association requests and inquiries and providing a range of support services for associations that are pursuing activities to improve lake conditions. Additional plan activities include supporting association capacity by connecting Master Water Stewards to lake associations and increasing collaboration among lake associations. Association connection to District projects will be strengthened via MCWD-focused trainings and other outreach (see attached plan for additional details)

MCWD staff are recommending that the Board of Managers authorize the renewal of the Freshwater contract for the Water Association Initiative for the following reasons:

- The WAI program is being re-aligned to ensure that its activities advance the goals of the District while also remaining responsive to the needs of lake associations across the watershed. Under the new WAI plan, local water associations will gain an increased understanding of the District's water quality goals, improve their capacity to effectively interface with local governments and the District, and advocate on the District's behalf to increase support for the District's work in their communities. These activities will ultimately aid the District in meeting its established water quality goals.
- WAI members are an important volunteer base in the District and provide value by dedicating time and money toward the protection of the District's water resources. Lake associations play an important role in their communities by modeling a water stewardship ethic for others to follow. When associations engage collaboratively with government, they strengthen civil society by facilitating citizen-based problem solving and institutional partnerships.
- Over the past six years, Freshwater has developed relationships with association leadership and demonstrated their ability to assist associations in reaching their objectives, improve relationships with area partners, and increase the effectiveness of groups in accomplishing identified goals. Freshwater's experience working with water associations in the District will aid in the effective implementation of the new WAI plan.

ATTACHMENT:

1. Water Association Initiative Plan

RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 19-XXX

TITLE: **Authorization to Renew the Contract with Freshwater Society for the Watershed Association Initiative**

WHEREAS, the Watershed Association Initiative was first formed in 2006 to improve stewardship of lakes within the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (District) and currently has 18 active lake associations in the District; and

WHEREAS, Freshwater Society has been running the program for the District since June 2012; and

WHEREAS, the District's Strategic Plan, adopted in February 2017, directs Education staff to realign their work in support of the District's strategic priorities of building high impact capital projects and changing policy to integrate land use and water planning; and

WHEREAS, the MCWD Board of Managers approved the 2019 Education Budget, which includes \$25,000 for the Watershed Association Initiative; and

WHEREAS, the Watershed Association Initiative is being re-aligned to advance the District's mission and priorities while remaining responsive to association needs, thereby enhancing community capacity to reach the District's water quality goals; and

WHEREAS, the District recognizes the importance of an informed and involved citizenry in managing aquatic resources; and

WHEREAS, active lake associations provide the District with a mechanism to work directly with informed and involved citizens on local water stewardship activities; and

WHEREAS, based on its past work with the Watershed Association Initiative, Freshwater Society is uniquely qualified to run the program, and has expertise in organizational capacity building and assisting citizens with the management of effective lake associations and partnerships;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers authorizes the District Administrator to enter into a contract not to exceed \$25,000 with Freshwater Society to continue the Watershed Association Initiative.

Resolution Number 19-020 was moved by Manager _____, seconded by Manager _____.
Motion to adopt the resolution ___ ayes, ___ nays, ___ abstentions. Date: _____.

Secretary Date: _____

WAI 10 YEAR PLAN

	Objective	Strategy	Tactics
Districtwide	Increase the ability of groups outside focal geographies to effectively work on local water issues	<p>Work with association members to create plans for achievable goals</p> <p>Build networks and partnerships between water associations and with decision makers</p> <p>Use the Master Water Steward program to train members and connect trained Master Stewards with water associations</p>	<p>Focus association members on strategies which match their resources and ability to execute i.e. shoreline BMPs, etc.</p> <p>Connect associations with each other, appropriate community partners, resources and expertise</p> <p>Hold association networking events</p> <p>Coach association members on how to build effective relationships with decision makers and city staff</p> <p>Recruit new MWS within water association geographies</p>
	Increase capacity of MCWD staff to focus on focal geographies	<p>Handle association requests and inquiries</p> <p>Continue to build relationships and trust with association leadership</p> <p>Manage association expectations of MCWD</p>	<p>Freshwater staff serves as main point of contact for association members /MCWD staff loop in Freshwater when contacted</p> <p>Update contact list annually (master list of key areas of work and contacts)</p> <p>Check in annually with association members to identify goals, needs and opportunities</p> <p>Freshwater organizer is grounded in MCWD's 10 year plan and contributes to development of messaging for communities outside focal geographies (elevator speech, fact sheet, presentation, newsletter articles, etc.)</p> <p>Connect association members to appropriate decision makers</p> <p>Educate members on which entities to contact for specific issues via multiple communication channels</p>

Focal Geography	<p>Create support for district projects by building internal understanding and support of projects among water association members</p>	<p>Incorporate water association members into project community engagement and communications plans</p> <p>Offer training on MCWD</p>	<p>Provide “exclusive” advance notice of planned district projects to members</p> <p>Conduct a briefing or training on common project questions/answers and messaging for members</p> <p>Create and conduct a training for members on MCWD</p>
	<p>Increase community understanding and support for projects by engaging association members in external methods of support</p>	<p>Connect association members to public opportunities to shape and/or support MCWD projects</p>	<p>Connect members to opportunities to speak at public hearings and meetings</p> <p>Recruit members to serve on project or area related citizen advisory committee</p> <p>Assist members with writing letters to the editor, contribute quotes in press releases, and using other communication channels to support projects</p>
	<p>Increase associations’ ability to effectively engage in water issues by expanding their knowledge base</p>	<p>Use the Master Water Steward program to train members and connect trained Master Stewards with water associations in priority areas</p>	<p>Connect trained MWS to water associations to serve as a resource</p> <p>Recruit new Master Water Stewards from association membership</p> <p>Increase the number of MWS capstone projects connected to associations</p>
	<p>Members promote and engage in district programming</p>	<p>Establish a process for association members to contribute to MCWD programming development</p>	<p>Members promote district programming among association membership and within the community</p> <p>Increase member participation in district programming and district co-sponsorship of association events</p>

WAI 2019 General Workplan	Q1			Q2*			Q3*			Q4		
Focus on Non-focal Geography Programming	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Goal: Increase the ability of groups outside focal geographies to effectively work on local water issues												
Hold annual check in meetings with association leadership to identify goals, needs, opportunities												
Facilitate strategic and project planning conversations around achievable goals (as needed)												
Provide coaching and guidance for groups (as needed)												
Run master water steward recruitment effort in association communities												
Link master water steward graduates to associations												
Hold 3 events to build networks and partnerships between associations and decision makers												
Communicate monthly with associations via email and social media												
Update District and Freshwater webpages for WAI												
Goal: Increase capacity of District staff												
Collaborate with district staff at bi-monthly meetings												
Handle association requests and inquiries												
Quarterly progress reports												

2020: build on nonfocal progress and advance focal geography elements, dependent on internal discussions.

* Based on past experience, it is anticipated that coaching will be more required during quarters two and three, given that these months tend to be the most active for groups.