

**MEETING DATE:** February 9, 2017

**TITLE:** Approval of MCWD's Strategic Direction and Adoption of the 2017 Strategic Alignment Report

**RESOLUTION NUMBER:** 17-007

**PREPARED BY:** James Wisker

**E-MAIL:** Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org

**TELEPHONE:** 952-641-4509

**REVIEWED BY:**  Administrator       Counsel       Program Mgr. (Name): James Wisker  
 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): <b>FINAL ACTION ON FEBRUARY 9, 2017</b>	

**PURPOSE or ACTION REQUESTED:**

1. Approve the strategic direction for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
2. Accept and adopt the February 9, 2017 Strategic Alignment Report
3. Direct the Administrator to incorporate and implement the strategic direction and priorities, most immediately through MCWD's:
  - a. Comprehensive Plan
  - b. Budget and financial plans
  - c. Human resources plans
  - d. Information Technology investment plans

**PAST BOARD ACTIONS and REPORTS:**

Below is a summary timeline of the strategic planning milestones including PPC meetings, Board briefings, actions and delivery of written reports. All PPC meetings included minutes and a verbal committee report to the full Boards. Underlined meetings denote a written report distributed to the full Board.

- October 8, 2015 – Board adoption of strategic planning process
- October 15, 2015 – PPC strategic budget framework
- November 19, 2015 – PPC Himle Rapp Vision, Mission, Goals Presentation
- December 17, 2015 – PPC Draft Vision, Mission, Goals
- January 14, 2016 – Board Workshop on Draft Vision, Mission, Goals
- January 21, 2016 – PPC MCWD strategic framework
- January 28, 2016 – Board adoption of Draft Vision, Mission, Goals
- February 18, 2016 – PPC program evaluation process and timeline
- March – June – Staff led program evaluations
- June 6, 2016 – PPC prioritization framework
- July 14, 2016 – PPC Preparation for program evaluations. Reinforce culture.
- August 25, 2016 – Executive Summary of Program Evaluations and Issues
- September 8, 2016 – Strategic Planning – Phase II Process Memo
- September 22, 2016 – PPC Permitting and Operations/Support Services
- October 13, 2016 – PPC Planning, and Project Maintenance & Land Management
- October 27, 2016 – PPC Research & Monitoring, and Aquatic Invasive Species
- November 10, 2016 – PPC Education, Communications and Cost-Share Grants
- November 17, 2016 – PPC Program Evaluation recap and synthesis
- December 8, 2016 – PPC Aquatic Invasive Species #2, and Organizational Planning
- December 15, 2016 – PPC Education, Communications and Cost-Share Grants #2
- December 15, 2015 – Board briefing on conclusion of program evaluations
- January 26, 2017 – Draft Strategic Alignment Report
- February 2, 2017 – Board Retreat to discuss Strategic Alignment Report

## SUMMARY:

### Background:

In January 2014, the Board of Managers adopted the policy, *In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed*, as a statement of the District's fundamental philosophy and way of doing business. It established the goal of integrating the District's work with the built environment using the guiding principles of partnership, focus, and flexibility. The Board directed that this policy guide the development of the District's update to its Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (Plan).

In early 2015, as part of the Plan update process, staff began a self-assessment to evaluate the District's progress and performance over the last plan cycle. This included a series of staff and Board discussions to identify past accomplishments and challenges, and to look forward at how programs can be organized to support the Balanced Urban Ecology Policy. Findings corroborated prior organizational evaluations, and included a need to improve focus, prioritization, clarity of mission and goals, and program alignment and coordination.

During the review of the 2016 budget and work plans, Managers raised a number of questions regarding the merit of particular program initiatives, prioritization of District activities, resource allocation, and measures of success. It was noted that, while all of the District's programmatic efforts are well intentioned and have value, it was unclear whether certain activities should be the focus of the District's finite personnel and financial resources.

These various discussions signaled a need to strategically evaluate and align the District's programs under a clear and focused mission and set of goals. At the direction of the Board staff responded by developing a strategic planning framework with the goals of:

1. Evaluating existing programs to provide meaningful change, alignment and prioritization of resources.
2. Establishing a framework to evaluate new initiatives and opportunities for organizational priority and alignment, and to revisit existing work on an ongoing basis
3. Providing a foundation for clear communication and the engagement of constituents in the District's work.

Following adoption of the strategic planning process on October 8, 2015, the MCWD Board and staff engaged in an intensive and iterative process of organizational and programmatic evaluation.

This process moved through the following levels of analysis (**bold not yet complete**):

1. Organization Strategic
2. Program Strategic
3. Program Operational
4. **Organization Operational**

Moving through these levels of analysis the District Board and Staff:

1. Developed and adopted statements for the organization's, Vision, Mission, Goal and Guiding Principles
2. Identified a list of specific issues for each program to address
3. Evaluated each individual program from a strategic to operational level
4. Developed MCWD's overarching organizational strategy and program priorities

Recommendation:

The results of this strategic planning process are encapsulated in the attached document *Strategic Alignment Plan*.

Staff recommends this resolution be approved to:

1. Approve the strategic direction for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
2. Accept and adopt the February 9, 2017 Strategic Alignment Report
3. Direct the Administrator to incorporate and implement the strategic direction and priorities, most immediately through MCWD's:
  - a. Comprehensive Plan
  - b. Budget and financial plans
  - c. Human resources plans
  - d. Information Technology investment plans



## RESOLUTION

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**RESOLUTION NUMBER: 17-007**

**TITLE: Approval of MCWD's Strategic Direction and Adoption of the 2017 Strategic Alignment Report**

WHEREAS, in January 2014, the Board of Managers adopted the policy, *In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed*, as a statement of the MCWD's fundamental philosophy and way of doing business; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers directed the Administrator to utilize the philosophy of this policy to guide the development of the District's update to its Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (Plan) and to develop further recommendations for the implementation of this approach in the District's planning process; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers conducted several organizational analyses, including the 2015 Self-Assessment which highlighted a need for the MCWD to improve focus, prioritization, clarity of mission and goals, and program alignment and coordination; and

WHEREAS, through the review of the 2016 budget and work plans, the Managers raised questions regarding the merit of particular program initiatives, prioritization of District activities, resource allocation, and measures of success; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to resolution 15-085 the MCWD Board of Managers initiated an organizational strategic planning process with the goals of:

1. Evaluating existing programs to provide meaningful change, alignment and prioritization of resources.
2. Establishing a framework to evaluate new initiatives and opportunities for organizational priority and alignment, and to revisit existing work on an ongoing basis
3. Providing a foundation for clear communication and the engagement of constituents in the District's work.

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers authorized the Planning and Policy Committee (PPC) to conduct the strategic planning and program evaluation process, with clear reporting to the Board; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers, PPC, and staff have engaged in a deliberate and transparent strategic planning process, between October 2015 and present, with clear reporting to the Board including meeting minutes, verbal briefings, presentations and written reports at key milestones; and

WHEREAS, the findings and conclusions of the strategic planning and program evaluation process were presented, discussed and supported at the February 2, 2017 Board of Managers' Annual Retreat; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers finds that the conclusions of the strategic planning and program evaluation process provide clear and focused direction forward for the organization and individual programs, that will engender ongoing levels of success for the MCWD; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Managers wishes to utilize these strategic planning conclusions to guiding all future operational decisions regarding budget/finance, human resources plans and strategies, and information technology investments;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers hereby approves the summary of strategic direction (Attachment 1) for the organization and individual programs, to guide the MCWD Board and staff in aligning programs and their operations with the MCWD's mission and organizational strategy

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MCWD Board of Managers hereby accepts and adopts the attached report, 2017 *Strategic Alignment Plan*, to provide further background and guidance in this alignment process;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MCWD Board of Managers directs the Administrator to proceed to incorporate and implement these strategic program priorities into the District's new Comprehensive Plan, and in the development of budgeting and financial planning, human resources plans and strategies, and information technology investment plans.

Resolution Number 17-007 was moved by Manager \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Manager \_\_\_\_\_.  
Motion to adopt the resolution \_\_\_ ayes, \_\_\_ nays, \_\_\_ abstentions. Date: \_\_\_\_\_.

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

# Attachment 1

**MINNEHAHA CREEK**



**WATERSHED DISTRICT**

QUALITY OF WATER

QUALITY OF LIFE

## **MCWD Organizational Strategy:**

1. The MCWD has established the *Balanced Urban Ecology* as its fundamental philosophy and way of doing business.
2. *Balanced Urban Ecology* emphasizes the social and economic value created when built and natural systems are planned to work in harmony, and prioritizes partnerships with the land-use community as the principal strategy to achieve the District's mission.
3. Pursuant to *Balanced Urban Ecology* the MCWD's overarching organizational strategy to accomplishing its mission is to:
  - Develop high impact capital projects integrated with non-water initiatives through multi-jurisdictional partnerships.
  - Change the land-use and water policy environment to increase early value added partnership with private development, public infrastructure, and public policy/planning.
4. All MCWD programs will be developed to work in support of these highest organizational priorities.

*We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*

## Strategic Direction for MCWD Programs:

1. Projects: The MCWD's highest priority is to plan and implement capital projects through partnerships. The MCWD must accurately predict, prioritize, and mobilize its financial and human resources needed to execute this work.
2. Planning: To proactively maintain organizational alignment and focus, the MCWD's Planning Department priority will be to scan the external environment for opportunities and threats and to recommend policy, project, program, and resource deployment to the Administrator and Board of Managers.
3. Organizational Planning: While the MCWD has relied on the Planning Department for near-term strategic planning of program alignment, financial planning, and human resources assessment, the Operations and Support Services Department will have the ongoing responsibility to address finance, information technology, and human resources.
4. Communications: The MCWD's communications priority will be to support the planning and delivery of capital projects through partnerships, reflecting the policy vision of land-use water integration, while also supporting the other programmatic communication needs of the MCWD.
5. Education: The MCWD will prioritize Education program resources to support the planning and delivery of capital projects through partnerships, promoting the land-use and water policy integration, and will explore how to resource historic baseline functions.
6. Grants: The MCWD will explore how to restructure and resource its grant programs to address its strategic priorities, including evaluating relocating the Master Water Stewards grants and Community Engagement grants into the Education Program to replace the Cynthia Krieg grants; and relocating infrastructure grants into the Planning and Projects Department.
7. Research and Monitoring: The MCWD will strengthen the ability of the Research and Monitoring Department to align its data collection and information pathways for broader systems thinking and problem solving to support the planning and delivery of capital projects and other successful District programs. The MCWD will refocus its aquatic invasive species program to concentrate on managing AIS that have demonstrable water quality impact and address planning and project priorities, while also reducing MCWD investments in prevention programs and supporting partner efforts.
8. Permitting: The MCWD will improve the efficiency of its regulatory program through administrative, policy and rule changes, and will work to increase partnerships with the land-use community that bring benefits to land and water resources that exceed regulatory requirements.

*We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*

**MINNEHAHA CREEK**  
QUALITY OF WATER



**WATERSHED DISTRICT**  
QUALITY OF LIFE



# MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT 2017 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT PLAN

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## Introduction:

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On October 8, 2015, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) Board of Managers adopted a resolution initiating a strategic planning process to evaluate, focus, and align MCWD programs and resources toward redefined strategic goals and organizational mission (Appendix A).

More specifically, the Board identified the following objectives for the strategic planning process:

1. Evaluate existing programs to provide meaningful change, alignment and prioritization of resources.
2. Establish a framework to evaluate new initiatives and opportunities for organizational priority and alignment, and to revisit existing work on an ongoing basis.
3. Provide a foundation for clear communications and the engagement of constituents in the District's work.

The approved strategic planning framework delineated an iterative process to engage the MCWD Board and Staff in evaluation, discussion and decision making at all levels of the organization. The process proposed to move through the following areas of the organization:

1. Organizational Strategic – Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles
2. Program Strategic – Program purpose, priorities and alignment
3. Program Operational – Resource allocation at a program level
4. Organizational Operational – Organizational level decision making and decision implementation

In January 2016 the MCWD adopted a new statement of Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles, and in December 2016 the District's Planning and Policy Committee (PPC) concluded discussions on Program purpose, priorities, alignment and resource allocation.

In preparation for final organizational level decision making by the Board of Managers this report summarizes progress to date, and frames potential decision points and operational considerations for the organization.

The report will synthesize:

- Organizational Background and the Purpose of Strategic Planning
- Strategic Planning Goals and Framework
- Strategic Planning Process and Outputs
  - Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles
  - Program Issue Identification
  - Program Purpose, Priorities, Alignment and Resource Allocation
- Potential Decision Points and Operational Considerations



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## Organizational Background and Purpose of Strategic Planning

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The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District has enjoyed a long history of leadership within the water resource management community. One reason for this is the District's culture which emphasizes continuous improvement in all aspects of its operations. Below is a summary of MCWD's evolution leading up to the 2016-2017 Strategic Planning process.

### 2009-2012 – Planning and Partnership Models:

The MCWD's most recent evolution began in 2009 when the Board of Managers outlined the need for increased organizational prioritization, and a new model to cultivate public-private partnerships. Focused priorities and strategic partnerships were seen as essential building blocks in advancing the organization into a new era of success, supported by local communities. To support these goals, between 2010 and 2011, the Board engaged in a series of policy conversations including:

- Consultant facilitated organizational priority setting discussions
- Policy briefings regarding the 1994 Hennepin Community Works planning model
- Commissioned a white paper titled, *Watershed Partnerships: Breakthroughs in Collaboration to Create and Sustain Great Conservation Corridors*

Subsequently, the Board of Managers directed District staff to begin cultivating the District's own multi-jurisdictional partnership strategy to advance planning and implementation objectives in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway.

### 2012-2014 – Organizational Governance:

With efforts to develop its planning and partnership model underway, between 2012 and 2014, the Board of Managers turned its attention inward focusing on opportunities to achieve higher degrees of organizational effectiveness by improving the Staff-Board governance structure, administration and management.

In 2012, at the direction of the Board of Managers, Himle Rapp was contracted to evaluate the organization and make recommendations. Conclusions and recommendations from this report included:

- The District has too many strategic goals to reasonably accomplish, resulting in a lack of clear organizational direction.
- Clarity is lacking regarding organizational priorities.
- The Board of Managers should increasingly focus on strategic planning and setting the direction and priorities of the organization.

In 2013, taking a first step in follow up to this analysis, the MCWD Board of Managers restructured its committee and meeting framework with the goals of developing a clear long range direction for the organization, focusing organizational priorities, and creating accountability for desired outcomes.

## 2014-2015 – Balanced Urban Ecology and MCWD Culture:

Carrying this momentum forward the newly formed Policy and Planning Committee (PPC) began work on crafting a vision policy that would set the long range direction of the organization. In January of 2014 the MCWD Board of Managers formally adopted the policy titled, *In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed* (Appendix B).

This balanced urban ecology policy built on the District's successful adaptation of 1994 Hennepin Community Works planning principles within the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, and memorialized the MCWD's vision for achieving its water resource mission through integration and partnership with the land-use community.

*Rather than viewing the natural and built environments as a clash of opposing forces, we recognize the interrelated and interdependent character of modern life; communities cannot thrive without healthy natural areas, and healthy natural areas become irrelevant without the interplay of human activity. This is the integrated setting in which we live.*

*Indeed, our quality of life and our economic wellbeing are inextricably linked. Any notion that land development and environmental protection are locked in a winner-take-all battle is sadly outdated.*

*Successful, sustainable, livable communities are built on a foundation of integrated planning – planning that recognizes communities as living organisms and takes into consideration all components of the urban ecology.*

*Our work will be strengthened through these collaborative efforts. Not only will they offer greater community impact, they will produce creative public-private funding opportunities that will leverage scarce resources and maximize benefits. Going it alone is no longer the best path forward.*

The balanced urban ecology (BUE) policy was adopted as the MCWD's fundamental philosophy and way of doing business. Staff was directed to use *Balanced Urban Ecology* to guide the development of the 2017 Comprehensive Plan, to center the District's communication platform, and to develop recommendations to incorporate the approach in the District's planning process.

The *Balanced Urban Ecology* policy articulated three guiding principles to drive MCWD actions in the future:

1. Partnering with others to pursue watershed management goals
2. Intensify and maintain focus on high-priority projects
3. Be flexible and creative in adapting to needs of partners

Following the establishment of this new direction for the organization, in the second quarter of 2014, the MCWD Board voted to change staff leadership, expressing a desire for new leadership to help the Board take the organization to a higher level of effectiveness in future years.

This decision for change catalyzed operational changes that improved organizational alignment. Under interim leadership, in 2014, the Board of Managers contracted with Springsted Incorporated to evaluate the job classifications and compensation of District staff. One major finding of this analysis was that aspects of the District's operations were misaligned, thereby impacting organizational effectiveness. Consequently, the Research and Monitoring and Permitting programs were relocated away from the District's Operations and Support Services Director through an organizational restructuring.

Also during this period of leadership transition MCWD program staff formed an interdisciplinary team called the Staff Collaboration Group. In a communication to the Board and the Management Team, the Collaboration Group outlined a desire to move away from a historic organizational framework that they perceived as limiting interdepartmental collaboration, suggesting that the organization embrace individual ingenuity, program alignment, common priorities, program and policy innovation, and leadership at all levels.

In their communications the Collaboration Group emphasized that the meaningful and passionate engagement of employees with the District's mission required an organizational culture that supports the questioning of status quo, reinforces the value of ideation and leadership at all levels, and facilitates interdepartmental collaboration outside of job descriptions to develop and implement innovative solutions by all staff.

To memorialize these values the Staff Collaboration Group produced an organizational culture document outlining a set of shared beliefs:

- We believe that a healthy, successful organization requires a strong organizational culture rooted in shared values of honesty, integrity and authenticity.
- We believe that a management culture supportive of a collaborative environment, where ideas from all staff are acknowledged and encouraged, created the foundation of a strong organization.
- We believe that an environment of idea-generation and innovation uninhibited by hierarchical (vertical) or inter-departmental (lateral) restriction, will promote professional development, creativity and the free flow of information, improving service delivery.
- We believe that an organization which empowers and celebrates leadership and accountability at all levels will enhance productivity and increase the successful execution of innovative ideas, serving to perpetually advance the organizational mission.

### 2015-2016 – Organizational Self-Assessment and Budget Forecasting:

In 2015, following input from MCWD staff, the Board filled the vacant Executive Director position with an emphasis on improving leadership, matrix management, accountability, and organizational alignment.

On a parallel track, at the start of the MCWD's Comprehensive Plan process, an organizational Self-Assessment was conducted. Using anonymous surveys and interviews of staff and the Board of Managers, the Self-Assessment revealed key findings including:

- Staff excitement in the Board's new direction for the organization
- Potential impediments to growth and success include:
  - Unclear mission and strategic goals
  - A lack of organizational focus and prioritization
  - Pervasive programmatic silos and lack of organizational alignment around mission
- Staff requested the Board work to cultivate increased program alignment and focus

In the second quarter of 2015, during the District's annual budget process for fiscal year 2016, staff highlighted a significant and growing gap between the organization's annual budgeted programming and ad valorem tax levy. It was illustrated that this gap had arisen from historic decisions to reallocate one-time capital project carryover funds towards the development of new programming that would incur ongoing operational costs.

Identifying a desire to keep 2016 tax levy increases minimal the Board discussed the need to reduce the 2016 budgeted expenditures by reducing or eliminating programs. Through subsequent budget discussions the Board determined to evaluate potential budget reductions through a lens of strategic organizational context, rather than making adjustments on a 12 month horizon. The Board of Managers then directed the Planning Department to develop and facilitate a strategic budget evaluation process for 2016 to accomplish its goals.

### 2016-2017 – Strategic Planning Purpose:

In 2016, recognizing the confluence of budget issues, the desire to operationalize the *Balanced Urban Ecology* vision policy, the recent leadership transition, and the organization's Self-Assessment findings, the Board of Managers directed the Planning Department to develop a long-range strategic planning process.

This process was designed to begin immediately following the 2016 budget process and was developed to address:

- The linkages of program activities, resources and outcomes to MCWD mission and goals
- The Self-Assessment findings, by:
  - Identifying desired alignment of programs towards MCWD mission
  - Clarifying departmental roles and responsibilities
- Resource allocation and optimization across the organization

This strategic planning process, including goals, expectations, framework, outputs and directional considerations are outlined in the remaining sections of this document.

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## Strategic Planning Goals and Framework:

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Preliminary discussions for the District's 2016-2017 Strategic Planning Process were initiated at the August 20, 2015 Planning and Policy Committee meeting, where attending Board Members discussed preliminary goals of the strategic planning process. Subsequent PPC discussions on September 17, 2015 focused on foundational goals, expectations, process and roles for the Strategic Planning Process.

On October 8, 2015 the MCWD Board adopted a resolution approving the Strategic Planning Process with the following goals:

### Strategic Planning Goals:

1. Evaluate existing programs to provide meaningful change, alignment and prioritization of resources towards common goals and mission.
2. Establish a framework to evaluate new initiatives and opportunities for organizational priority and alignment, and to revisit existing work on an ongoing basis.
3. Provide a foundation for clear communications and the engagement of constituents in the District's work.

### Strategic Planning Framework:

The approved Strategic Planning Framework outlined a collaborative approach for moving both the Board and Staff iteratively through four levels of organizational analysis:

1. Organization Strategic:
  - a. Review the organization's mission and strategic goals considering alignment with the Balanced Urban Ecology Policy, and a desire for improved focus and clarity.
  - b. Evaluate, clarify and prioritize individual program purpose, considering the role of each program in achieving the District's overarching mission and goals.
2. Program Strategic:
  - a. Evaluate and prioritize each program's tactical work elements (as identified in work plans) considering how they support the overall program purpose, align with other programs, and achieve the District's mission and goals.
3. Program Operational:
  - a. Evaluate and prioritize the allocation of resources within each program, considering the priority and projected outcomes of each tactic, alignment with other programs, and relation to District mission and goals.
4. Organizational Operational:
  - a. Evaluate and prioritize the allocation of resources across programs and program tactics, considering program priorities, alignment with other programs and relation to District mission and goals.

This process was intended be iterative and highly adaptive, focused ultimately on developing a package of strategic recommendations to support the end goals identified by the Board of Managers.

### Roles and Expectations:

The resolution establishing the strategic planning framework identified the Planning Department, in coordination with the District Administrator, as being responsible for developing and facilitating the process – which was to be inclusive, transparent, cross departmental, and weigh equally input from all levels of the organization.

The Planning and Policy Committee was established as the lead Board Committee responsible for overseeing the strategic planning process with clear reporting to the full Board of Managers to facilitate Board decision making.

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## Strategic Planning Process and Outputs:

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### Introduction:

This section of the document summarizes the strategic planning steps completed to date, the processes for these planning steps, and the outputs from this work.

The steps completed thus far include:

1. Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles
2. Organizational Strategy and Framework for Alignment
3. Program Issue Identification
4. Program Purpose, Priorities and Operational Considerations

### Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles:

The first step identified in the Strategic Planning Process was to revisit the District's Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles, to improve organizational focus and clarity, and to lay a strong foundation for the remaining steps in the process.

Two overarching reasons, beyond strategic planning, were identified for revisiting the MCWD's Vision Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles:

1. To ensure that the Vision-Mission statements reflect the evolution in Board policy towards a *Balanced Urban Ecology*, accurately describing the desired future direction of the organization.
2. To ensure that the Vision-Mission statements are clear, focused and memorable, supporting the organizational focus, clarity and prioritization desired by the Board and Staff.

Himle Rapp was contracted to work with the Board and Staff to develop revised Vision-Mission statements. On November 19, 2015, the Planning Department and Himle Rapp initiated this part of the process by facilitating a preliminary discussion with the Planning and Policy Committee, supported by:

- A memorandum on industry best practices for developing vision and mission statements
- An executive summary of MCWD's policy chronology regarding water and land-use integration
- A presentation of these ideas conceptually applied to MCWD's Vision-Mission

Following this meeting, individual Board Managers completed questionnaires and participated in verbal interviews with Himle Rapp. Themes and concepts were routed through All-Staff Meetings, the Staff Collaboration Group, and the Citizen Advisory Committee, before being assembled into draft statements.

These draft statements were reviewed at the January 14, 2016 Board Workshop, at which time the Board established a Task Force to work with staff, Himle Rapp and Louis Smith on developing final options that were compelling and unique to the organization.

On January 28, 2016, the MCWD Board adopted a final package of Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles, as outlined on the following page.





# MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

## *Vision*

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**A landscape of vibrant communities where the natural and built environments in balance create value and enjoyment.**

## *Mission*

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**We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.**

## *Guiding Principles*

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**Partnership** – We seek to understand the goals of others so that we can meaningfully integrate our work to add broader value to the community.

**Innovation** – We are flexible and creative in our approach and strive for continuous improvement.

**Excellence** – We commit to work that achieves outstanding results and honors our partners.

**Sound Science** – We are a trusted source of scientific data and analyses that provide the foundation for wise decisions.

**Service** – We are responsive and accountable to our communities and careful stewards of public funds.

## *Goals*

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**Water Quality** – To preserve and improve the quality of surface and ground waters.

**Water Quantity** – To manage the volume and flow of stormwater runoff to minimize the impacts of land use change on surface and ground waters.

**Ecological Integrity** – To restore, maintain, and improve the health of ecological systems.

**Thriving Communities** – To promote and enhance the value of water resources in creating successful, sustainable communities.



## Organizational Strategy and Framework for Alignment:

### Discussion of Strategic Alignment:

As outlined previously, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District engaged in a strategic evaluation of its programming to:

1. Improve the alignment of programs with the District's mission and strategic goals
2. Optimize and prioritize resources consistent with desired organizational alignment
3. Establish a framework to strategically evaluate new opportunities in the future

Strategic planning and deep dive self-assessments can span from abstract and visionary concepts to operational details, organizational models and processes. As a result strategic planning can, at times, seem confusing.

However, the MCWD Board and Staff have come to prize clarity. Therefore, it is important to remember that achieving the desired level of organizational alignment does not need to be confusing. Concepts for achieving alignment have been discussed from a variety of angles throughout the process, including as outlined below which draws from Advance! Strategic Alignment Process™:

1. Defining the purpose of the MCWD
  - a. Why does MCWD exist?
    - i. The answer to this question forms the organization's values and behavior in line with the purpose, and outline the MCWD's brand promise to its partners or "customers."
2. Aligning MCWD's strategic goals
  - a. What does MCWD want to achieve?
    - i. Strategic goals define the achievements the District plans on making to achieve the mission.
    - ii. Strategic goals should nest from the organizational level, overarching strategies, down into individual strategic goals for programs.
3. Aligning the District's operational model
  - a. How does MCWD want to achieve its goals?
    - i. Organizational structure, programs, operational processes, and resources must be aligned with the key purpose of the District and the strategic goals.
4. Aligning District culture
  - a. Company culture, leadership and staff must protect and support an organizational culture in-line with the District's purpose, values and brand promises that are defined.

Before outlining emerging strategic priorities for the District it is important to first review the overarching organizational strategy.

Below is a synthesis of MCWD's organizational strategy, drawing on the discussions throughout the process.

## MCWD's Organizational Strategy:

### Vision:

MCWD's vision is to establish a landscape of vibrant communities where the natural and built environments in balance create value and enjoyment.

### Mission:

MCWD's mission focus is protecting and improving the land and water, to produce measurable benefit in the following organizational strategic goals.

### Strategic Goals:

MCWD has established the following overarching goals, which translate into specific measurable targets within subwatershed geographies:

- Water Quality – preserve and improve the quality of surface and ground waters
- Water Quantity – manage the volume and flow of stormwater runoff to minimize the impacts of land use change on surface and ground waters
- Ecological Integrity – restore, maintain and improve the health of ecological systems
- Thriving Communities – promote and enhance the value of water resources in creating successful, sustainable communities

### Overarching Organizational Strategy:

A strategy is a plan of action for how an organization will achieve the overall organizational goals, listed above.

The District's overarching organizational strategy is *A Balanced Urban Ecology* (BUE). This policy was established by Board resolution 14-009 as "MCWD's fundamental philosophy and way of doing business", guiding the 2017 Comprehensive Plan and "future planning and watershed management activities".

*A Balanced Urban Ecology* describes how the District will achieve its mission of protecting and improving land and water, and its measurable goals listed above.

The BUE strategy outlines the need to cultivate partnerships to support the integration of land use and water policy, planning and implementation as a principal strategy to achieve MCWD's mission with greater degrees of success.

This strategy is in recognition that, to achieve the mission of protecting and enhancing land and water, the District must work closely with those in the land-use change community that present the greatest strategic threat and opportunity to the District's goals.

*"Land-use activities continue to be primarily the focus of private enterprise as well as the various planning, zoning, public works and job creation agencies in several layers of government. Meanwhile, other interests, mainly non-profits and other government agencies are focused on conserving natural assets and protecting them from the damage that development can inflict. No single entity has the*

*authority or the resources to cope with all of these questions, or to strike a reasonable balance. That's why collaboration is so important."*

BUE contemplates integrating with "government agencies, private landowners and developers, and philanthropic partners" in multi-jurisdictional partnerships, emphasizing the economic and social value natural systems generate for the built environment

*"Our work will be strengthened through these collaborative efforts. Not only will they offer greater community impact, they will produce creative public-private funding opportunities that will leverage scarce resources and maximize benefits. Going it alone is no longer the best path forward."*

*"Successful, sustainable, livable communities are built on a foundation of integrated planning – planning that recognizes communities as living organisms and takes into consideration all components of the urban ecology."*

BUE outlines three guiding principles to guide the District's actions:

1. We will join with others in pursuing our watershed management goals
2. We will intensify and maintain our focus on high-priority projects
3. We will be flexible and creative in adapting our practices to those of our partners

#### Overarching Mission Driven Programmatic Strategies:

The District's strategic framework contemplates two primary modes of action for MCWD programs to achieve the mission of protecting and improving land and water:

1. **Direct action.** Direct investment in capital projects and land conservation. By integrating this work into the plans and projects of partners, the District can generate increased support for its investments, maximize the public return on investment, and leverage partnership resources to increase the scale of implementation.
2. **Influence.** MCWD can influence others in a variety of ways that achieve the mission of protecting and improving land and water:
  - i. Creating awareness and providing knowledge of MCWD's value proposition can create policy and financial support for MCWD's direct action, and support within the broader land-use community to change policy that supports land-use and water integration by promoting proactive coordination of development, infrastructure and planning.
  - ii. Providing financial, policy and technical assistance incentives to encourage public and private actions that support MCWD's mission
  - iii. Requiring public and private projects that effectuate land-use change to meet minimum impact standards through regulation

#### Support Programs:

A variety of programs are needed to support the mission driven programming of the MCWD, including: project maintenance and land management, research and monitoring, organizational operations, and organizational planning.

### Identification of Program Issues:

Before initiating individual program discussions with the Planning and Policy Committee, an issue identification process was completed to identify specific areas of operations requiring focus and attention through the strategic alignment process.

This process included the following steps:

1. Programs developed informational materials and presentations to staff
  - a. Workflow diagrams, program purpose statements, program summaries, outline of program initiatives, current priorities and allocation of resources.
2. Three focus groups were facilitated for each program, led by independent facilitators, to collect information verbally. These meetings were open to all staff members
3. Online written surveys were completed to collect written comments. These surveys were open to all staff members.
4. Facilitators aggregated focus group and survey information, and synthesized into executive summaries, which highlighted thematic issues for each program.

This Issue Identification Report was delivered to the Board on August 25, 2016 (Appendix C). The document divided thematic issues into the following general categories.

- Program Purpose
- Program Priorities
- Program Linkages and Program Support
- Operational Considerations

### Program Summaries:

This section aggregates information discussed through the individual program discussions with the PPC. This information includes:

- Program Issues
- Program Purpose
- Program Priorities
- Potential Strategic Priorities and Decision Points
- Operational Considerations

Programs are outlined in the order in which they were discussed:

- Permitting
- Operations and Support Services
- Planning and Project Maintenance and Land Management
- Research and Monitoring
- Aquatic Invasive Species
- Education and Communications
- Cost-Share Grants

## Permitting:

### Issue Identification Themes:

- Increase efficiency of rule administration by prioritizing activities according to potential natural resource impact
- Need to improve coordination with external partners, specifically the land-use community
- Enhance Permitting Program communication channels for program and organizational benefit

### Program Purpose and Priorities:

To protect natural resources from degradation associated with land use change, and to partner with local land use authorities and the development community to generate greater natural resource outcomes than those achieved through regulation alone.

This is accomplished through the following priorities:

- Permit Administration – plan review and permit issuance
- Compliance – field inspections and compliance generation
- Partnership – creating public-private partnerships to achieve benefit greater than regulation
- Branding and Education – promoting MCWD's value proposition (Balanced Urban Ecology)

### Program Priorities:

The Permitting Program must identify operational adjustments according to the following priorities:

1. Permit Administration – based on environmental risk at a plan review level
2. Compliance – based on environmental risk during construction
3. Partnership – #1 & 2 must be made more efficient to support the overriding goal of partnership for environmental benefits greater than regulation
4. Branding and Education – Obtaining support from Education and Communications to promote MCWD's value proposition through Permitting's unique distribution channels, and improving early permit coordination to increase #3 – Partnerships

Potential Strategic Priorities and Decision Points:

1. Increase efficiency of Permitting Department's baseline work by refining departmental structure and human resources philosophy, investing in technology upgrades, and making administrative, policy and rule changes.
2. Reinforce, enhance and resource the Permitting Department's role in cultivating public-private partnerships that result in land-use change investments that exceed regulatory requirements

Operational Considerations:

- Evaluate the cost-benefit of fulfilling the Department's technology needs
- Evaluate the cost-benefit of fulfilling the Department's human resource needs
- Project and evaluate the policy, financial, intra-departmental and human resource needs to enhance public-private partnerships with the land-use community

## Operations and Support Services:

### Issue Identification Themes:

- Need clarity regarding (1) The primary purpose of the program; (2) The program priorities and how they are accomplished; and (3) Allocation of staff and budget to program priorities
- Need to improve intra-departmental coordination and clarity of planning processes for Operations program initiatives
- Evaluate opportunities to consolidate certain District administrative policies in Operations (vehicles, safety, etc.).
- Evaluate opportunities to improve departmental efficiency by evaluating departmental structure and clearly defining clear project objectives, roles, responsibilities and accountability for Operations priorities.

### Program Purpose and Priorities:

Operations and Support Services exists to provide direct support and resources needed by District programs to achieve the organizational mission, by managing operational and support functions including:

- Finances
  - Bill pay, audit, debt service management, budget, financial planning
- Human Resources
  - Benefits, payroll, human resources planning and philosophy
- Information Technology
  - Maintain stable environment, IT planning and project management
- Office Building
  - Vendor management and facilities management

Potential Strategic Priorities and Decision Points:

- Determine the roles and responsibilities of the Operations and Support Services and Planning in the administration versus strategic planning of MCWD finances, human resources, and information technology.
- Develop a financial strategy (debt capacity, financial instruments, and budget-levy implications) to support the mid-long range capital improvement goals of the organization
- Develop a human resources plan and philosophy that identifies and meets the strategic needs of the organization.
- Develop a strategic plan for investment in information technology to meet program needs of spatially integrating (GIS) permit administration, asset (project, land, grants) management, water quality data, and human resource networks.
- Develop a plan, outlining the timing and costs, for facilities maintenance for the MCWD office.

Operational Considerations:

- Evaluate and adjust department and intra-departmental linkages, through human resources planning, to support strategic priorities.



## Planning and Project Maintenance & Land Management (PMLM):

### Issue Identification Themes:

- The Department is trusted and respected by staff
- Increase collaboration and coordination with other programs on Planning initiatives
- Enhance the use of technology (GIS)
- Improve process for measuring and documenting outcomes and success of projects

### Program Purpose and Priorities:

1. Planning and implementation of capital project and land conservation initiatives that protect and enhance the landscape
2. Influencing the plans and policies of others to protect and enhance the landscape
3. Manage and maintain the District's capital improvement and land conservation assets
4. Developing organizational plans to create a framework for MCWD to best achieve its mission
  - Developing directional policy
  - Managing the Comprehensive Plan
  - Participating in state and regional planning
  - Conducting strategic planning and maintaining organizational alignment
  - Coordinating and prioritizing focal and responsive planning and implementation
  - Assessing, evaluating and reporting organizational progress
  - Developing financial strategies to support organizational priorities
  - Developing human resource strategies to support organizational priorities

### Potential Strategic Priorities and Decision Points:

- Establish clear short and mid-term planning-project priorities and expectations, and then develop corresponding funding, partnership, intra-departmental, and human resource strategies to support planning-project objectives.
- Prioritize and resource the growth of MCWD's role in the development of conservation easements, expanding current public partnership framework to include non-governmental organizations (e.g. Trust for Public Land, Land Trust, Nature Conservancy, etc.)
- Concentrate planning and partnership efforts, with internal program support, to:
  - Develop legislative support for MCWD's value proposition to proactively (1) address legislation that would reduce MCWD effectiveness (2) build legislative support for 2-5 year capital project funding requests.
  - Cultivate change in local-regional-state policy, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, to support the integration of land-use and water planning; facilitating increased public-private partnerships on areas of development, infrastructure investment and planning.
- Determine the roles and responsibilities of the Operations and Support Services and Planning in the administration versus strategic planning of MCWD finances, human resources, and information technology.

### Operational Considerations:

- Evaluate department structure, staffing, needed to support planning and project priorities.
  - Specifically evaluate future human resources needs to:
    - Develop and deliver projects
    - Implement land conservation priorities
    - Cultivate and maintain community support
    - Influence other public plans to achieve land-use water integration
    - Develop and implement financial strategies
    - Coordinate organizational planning
- Determine level of intra-program support needed to support planning and project priorities.

## Research and Monitoring:

### Issue Identification Themes:

- Need to establish clear program purpose and priorities
- Need to evaluate department structure, with regards to the role of the Director, program management, and program staff.

### Program Purpose:

The Research and Monitoring program collects data primarily to support MCWD planning and implementation, and secondarily to inform and educate stakeholders, anchoring the District's brand value of science driven watershed management. This is accomplished by:

- Broadly characterizing ecological health
- Diagnosing drivers and stressors of water resource issues
- Collaborating to identify management strategies
- Communicating analyses of data and recommendations

### Program Priorities:

The program's priority is to optimize data collection to inform planning and implementation, while maintaining baseline data for broad system assessments and long-term trend analysis. The priorities are as follows:

1. Diagnostic monitoring – smaller scale, higher resolution monitoring to identify the cause of water resource impairment to inform planning and implementation.
2. E-Grade – broadly characterizing ecosystem health at a subwatershed/system scale to support planning and public communications.
3. Anchor and Performance Monitoring – maintaining longterm data sets across the watershed, at select representative sites, to monitor watershed scale trends over time and to monitor priority projects to demonstrate efficacy.

#### Potential Strategic Priorities and Decision Points:

- Optimize departmental allocation of resources to increasingly focus on moving efficiently from broad systems understanding to issue and solution identification, to inform and directly support planning and implementation.
- Increase intra-departmental linkages between Research and Monitoring and Planning, to improve:
  - Feedback loops between data collection, analysis and data driven planning and implementation, and communication with stakeholders.
  - Increase direct involvement of Research and Monitoring staff in advancing the planning and implementation priorities of the organization.
- Operationalize the integration of the aquatic invasive species program into the Research and Monitoring program.

#### Operational Considerations:

- Develop operational plans that optimally allocate funding and staff time to accomplish the stated program priorities and facilitate the integration of AIS into the Research and Monitoring Program.
  - Given the supporting role of the program, identify opportunities to accomplish the program purpose and priorities with fewer resources than currently being utilized.
- Evaluate department structure, staffing, and intra-departmental linkages to support program priorities and the integration of AIS and Research and Monitoring, while strengthening the linkage with the Planning Department.

## Aquatic Invasive Species

### Issue Identification Themes:

- The role of the organization in the field of aquatic invasive species (AIS) remains an area in need of clarification and direction.
- Need Board decision on the District's role in the area of Aquatic Invasive Species

### Program Purpose:

The Aquatic Invasive Species Program (AIS) has been proposed to be absorbed and integrated fully into the Research and Monitoring Program, whose purpose is defined as:

The Research and Monitoring program collects data primarily to support MCWD planning and implementation, and secondarily to inform and educate stakeholders, anchoring the District's brand value of science driven watershed management. This is accomplished by:

- Broadly characterizing ecological health
- Diagnosing drivers and stressors of water resource issues
- Collaborating to identify management strategies
- Communicating analyses of data and recommendations

### Program Priorities:

AIS Program priorities are proposed to be recalibrated as follows:

1. Management and control of AIS when criteria are met (e.g. common carp) to effectuate improvements in water quality and ecological integrity
  - a. Prioritized and coordinated with organizational planning and project priorities
  - b. Manage high ecological impact species
2. Early Detection and Rapid Response
  - a. Baseline monitoring to identify recent introductions and respond with management and control when specific criteria are met, directly managing to improve ecological integrity by preventing new infestations.
3. Promoting Research
  - a. Encouraging the development of low-cost, low-risk, strategic partnerships to facilitate the use of Minnehaha Creek Watershed aquatic systems as a living laboratory to advance AIS science and inform MCWD management planning and implementation.
4. Supporting Prevention Efforts
  - a. Developing optimal cost solutions to support partner led efforts to implement prevention programs

Potential Strategic Priorities and Decision Points:

- Focus program on diagnosing where high ecological impact AIS are driving water quality responses in MCWD systems, and collaborating with the Planning Department to develop management strategies integrated with MCWD planning and project priorities.
- Identify strategies to reduce direct prevention costs to the District while supporting the strategic prevention initiatives of MCWD partners
- Operationalize the absorption of the reprioritized AIS Program into the Research and Monitoring, identifying opportunities for optimal staff and budget allocations.

Operational Considerations:

- Develop operational plans that optimally allocate funding and staff time to accomplish the stated program priorities and facilitate the integration of AIS into the Research and Monitoring Program.
  - Given the supporting role of the program, identify opportunities to accomplish the program purpose and priorities with fewer resources than currently being utilized.
- Evaluate department structure, staffing, and intra-departmental linkages to support program priorities and the integration of AIS and Research and Monitoring, while strengthening the linkage with the Planning Department.

## Educations and Communications:

### Issue Identification Themes:

- Program activities are too broad and the distribution of resources and staff time to these activities is diffuse
- Focus and align activities around the District's *Balanced Urban Ecology*
- Improve coordination and support of other MCWD organizational priorities
- Need Board decision on whether to reallocate existing program resources to organizational priorities, or increase staff and budget resources to accomplish programmatic support and coordination while maintaining baseline activities

### Program Purpose:

- Communications operates primarily in a supporting role to increase awareness and generate support for the District's value proposition and strategic priorities.
- Education operates primarily in a supporting role, engaging strategically selected stakeholder groups (policy makers, business community, land-use community, lake associations) to support the planning, implementation and long-term goals of MCWD priority programs and projects; and secondarily to engage the broader community generating awareness of watershed issues, and providing educational tools to move people to action at a grass roots level.

### Program Priorities:

- Education and Communications will move from a current program orientation prioritizing baseline programming towards prioritizing support of MCWD strategic project and program priorities.
- To support baseline programming efforts, the Education Program has recommended replacing the Cynthia Krieg Grant Program with the Community Engagement Grant Program and Master Water Stewards Grant awards currently located in the Cost-Share Grant Program.

### Potential Strategic Priorities and Decision Points:

- Develop a Comprehensive 2-3 year Communications-Education Plan, leveraging all available communication channels, to accomplish the top strategic priorities of the organization:
  - Legislative support for MCWD's value proposition to proactively (1) address legislation that would reduce MCWD effectiveness (2) build legislative support for 2-5 year capital project funding requests.
  - Community support for MCWD's value proposition to achieve unanimous municipal support for MCWD's 2017 Comprehensive Plan.
  - Cultivate change in local-regional-state policy, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, to support the integration of land-use and water planning; facilitating increased public-private partnerships on areas of development, infrastructure investment and planning.
  - Determine the scale, priority, and resources needed to support a repurposed Community Engagement Grant within the Education Program.

### Operational Considerations:

- Develop specific action plans to accomplish organizational priorities, and evaluate the financial and staff resources necessary to accomplish the desired outcomes.
- Strengthen operational linkages between Education-Communications and Planning, to align Education-Communication efforts with planning-project priorities.
- Evaluate resources needed by Education Program to increasingly focus on internal program support while maintaining baseline activities and developing a new Community Engagement Grant Program.



## Cost-Share Grants:

### Issue Identification Themes:

- The Cost-Share Program lacks a clearly defined purpose and priorities
- Need clarity and a Board decision on the program's purpose and goals
- A majority staff felt that Cost-Share should provide funding based on water resource benefit
- Need to prioritize grant dollars to best align with determined program purpose and priorities
- Homeowner grants are excessively time consuming

### Program Purpose:

Grants support capital improvement opportunities that MCWD could not implement on its own, due to a lack of land control, authority and resources.

Grants also provide financial incentive for grass roots level behavior change.

### Program Priorities

To address issues and refocus the Cost-Share Program, Education and Communications staff have proposed the following priorities

1. Green Infrastructure
  - a. Public and private infrastructure investments to improve water quality, relocated to the Planning Department.
2. Community Engagement
  - a. Best management practices and educational programming, absorbed into baseline of Education Program.
3. Homeowner
  - a. Master water stewards capstone projects, absorbed into baseline of Education Program
4. Cynthia Krieg
  - a. Eliminate and replace with Community Engagement

### Potential Strategic Priorities and Decision Points:

Grants have been discussed as a tool within the context of the Comprehensive Plan to remain responsive to local community water resource opportunities that are not suited to direct capital investment. Grants have also been discussed as a tool to catalyze grass roots level citizenry and community group action on the landscape.

- MCWD must determine its strategic position on the use of grant dollars, versus direct capital investment and partnerships to effectuate its mission.
- Decision on:
  - Keeping grants for Master Water Stewards, relocated to Education
  - Relocating Community Engagement Grants to Education to replace Cynthia Krieg
  - Relocating infrastructure grants to Planning

### Operational Considerations:

1. Evaluate staff time and financial resources impact of relocating grants into the Education Program and Planning Program. These programs previously were unable to be fully realized by one full time employee.

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## Recommendations for Strategic Alignment:

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### Introduction:

This section synthesizes information aggregated to date, and outlines recommendations for strategic alignment at an organizational and programmatic level. Action plans to facilitate operational decisions and the implementation of these recommendations will need to be developed and presented to the Board of Managers

### Organizational Strategy:

1. The MCWD has established the *Balanced Urban Ecology* as its fundamental philosophy and way of doing business.
2. *Balanced Urban Ecology* emphasizes the social and economic value created when built and natural systems are planned to work in harmony, and prioritizes partnerships with the land-use community as the principal strategy to achieve the District's mission.
3. Pursuant to *Balanced Urban Ecology* the MCWD's overarching organizational strategy to accomplishing its mission is to:
  - Develop high impact capital projects integrated with non-water initiatives through multi-jurisdictional partnerships.
  - Change the land-use and water policy environment to increase early value added partnership with private development, public infrastructure, and public policy/planning.
4. All MCWD programs will be developed to work in support of these highest organizational priorities.

## Strategic Direction for MCWD Programs:

### Planning and Projects:

Over the last 3-5 years the District has invested significant organizational effort into developing new policy models for planning and partnerships, with the goal of improving the success of capital project implementation in partnership with the local land-use community.

As a result of this concerted effort, the District currently finds itself at a juncture where project partnerships are increasing in volume, the success rate of project implementation is increasing, projects are becoming larger and more complex in scale, requiring larger and more sophisticated investment strategies.

These planning and project initiatives represent the largest capital outlays for the District, the most visible work in the community, require the most sophisticated level of partnerships, and constitute the most significant point of risk for the organization.

In the coming 24-48 months the District will need to prepare to successfully implement a multitude of projects that it has already prioritized and pipelined, in addition to responding to new opportunities presented by community partners responding to the District's new model of business.

- **The MCWD's highest priority is to plan and implement capital projects through partnerships. The MCWD must accurately predict, prioritize, and mobilize its financial and human resources needed to execute this work.**

### Strategic Planning and Organizational Alignment:

As discussed repeatedly throughout the strategic planning process, the Planning Department will be responsible for ongoing organizational planning at the direction of the Board of Managers, including:

- Developing policy
- Managing the Comprehensive Plan
- Participating in state and regional planning
- Conducting strategic planning and maintaining organizational alignment
- Operationalizing focal and responsive planning and implementation
- Feedback loops that assess, evaluate and report

Specifically regarding strategic planning, the Planning Department will be principally responsible for implementing operational models that:

- Maintain today's desired alignment, integration and mission focus
- Scans the environment to anticipate changes (threats and opportunities)
- Innovates, adapts and promotes continuous improvement.
- **To proactively maintain organizational alignment and focus, the MCWD's Planning Department priority will be to scan the external environment for opportunities and threats and to recommend policy, project, program, and resource deployment to the Administrator and Board of Managers.**

### Operations and Support Services:

Operations and Support Services exists to provide direct support and resources needed by District programs to achieve the organizational mission, by managing:

- Finances
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Office Building
  
- **While the MCWD has relied on the Planning Department for near-term strategic planning of program alignment, financial planning, and human resources assessment, the Operations and Support Services Department will have the ongoing responsibility to address finance, information technology, and human resources**

### Communications:

Communications plays a critical role in supporting the District's strategic priorities, including:

- Legislative support for MCWD's value proposition to proactively (1) address legislation that would reduce MCWD effectiveness (2) build legislative support for 2-5 year capital project funding requests.
- Community support for MCWD's value proposition to achieve unanimous municipal support for MCWD's 2017 Comprehensive Plan.
- Cultivate change in local-regional-state policy, as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan, to support the integration of land-use and water planning; facilitating increased public-private partnerships on areas of development, infrastructure investment and planning.
  
- **The MCWD's communications priority will be to support the planning and delivery of capital projects through partnerships, reflecting the policy vision of land-use water integration, while also supporting the other programmatic communication needs of the MCWD.**

### Education:

The Education Program serves a critical role in supporting the District's strategic priorities:

- **The MCWD will prioritize Education program resources to support the planning and delivery of capital projects through partnerships, promoting the land-use and water policy integration, and will explore how to resource historic baseline functions.**

The MCWD will need to evaluate and address the potential resource conflict between this directional priority, while maintaining baseline programming and implementing new grant initiatives.

### Grants:

Grants have played a historic role in supporting opportunity based partnerships to implement clean water initiatives within projects outside of MCWD's direct control.

- **The MCWD will explore how to restructure and resource its grant programs to address its strategic priorities, including evaluating relocating the Master Water Stewards grants and Community Engagement grants into the Education Program to replace the Cynthia Krieg grants; and relocating infrastructure grants into the Planning and Projects Department.**

The MCWD will need to evaluate and address the potential resource conflict posed by this proposed restructuring.

### Research and Monitoring

Research and monitoring is the foundation of the District's "sound science" brand identity, which supports its mission of protecting and enhancing landscape change.

- **The MCWD will strengthen the ability of the Research and Monitoring Department to align its data collection and information pathways for broader systems thinking and problem solving to support the planning and delivery of capital projects and other successful District programs. The MCWD will refocus its aquatic invasive species program to concentrate on managing AIS that have demonstrable water quality impact and address planning and project priorities, while also reducing MCWD investments in prevention programs and supporting partner efforts.**

### Permitting:

Permitting is a foundational MCWD program with a first point of contact with externally driven land-use change.

- **The MCWD will improve the efficiency of its regulatory program through administrative, policy and rule changes, and will work to increase partnerships with the land-use community that bring benefits to land and water resources that exceed regulatory requirements.**

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## Conclusions and Next Steps

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This document encapsulates the strategic planning discussions to date, which were discussed at the February 2, MCWD Board Retreat, and outlines strategic priorities for the organization and individual programs.

Moving forward it is important that the MCWD Board of Managers and Staff immediately begin developing clear action plans to both implement the strategic recommendations, and to provide operational level analysis for decisions in areas of potential resource constraint.

To facilitate operational decisions, and to inform and implement these action plans the District will need to utilize the following processes:

1. Budgeting and financial planning
2. Human resources plans and strategies
3. IT investment plans

Timelines for the development of action plans, and the finance, human resource and IT planning, will be provided by staff to the Board of Managers at upcoming meetings.

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**Appendices:**

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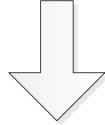


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## Program Evaluation Process

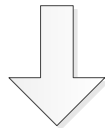
### Organization - Strategic

- 1. Define District mission and goals:**
  - Note - This process is underway based on direction from PPC, and refined mission and goal statements will be brought back for review.
- 2. Review program missions:**
  - Consider the purpose and role of each program in achieving the District's overarching mission and goals.
  - Do the program mission statements accurately reflect the Managers' understanding of each program's purpose?
- 3. Evaluate strategies:**
  - Review the primary strategies of each program and how they align to achieve the District's and program's mission and goals.
  - Are these the right strategies for each program to be focused on?
  - For each strategy, identify priority level (high, medium, low) with respect to the District's mission and goals.



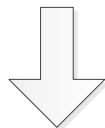
### Program - Strategic

- 4. Evaluate Tactics:**
  - Review the program's current activities (tactics) as defined in the work plans.
  - Do the tactics all have a clear link back to the program strategies and mission?
  - Do the tactics have clearly defined outcomes and metrics that will allow for evaluation of program success?
  - For each tactic, identify priority level (high, medium, low) with respect to the program's mission, strategies, and projected outcomes.



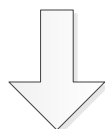
### Program - Operational

- 5. Evaluate Resources Within Program:**
  - Review allocation of resources within program.
  - Is the distribution of resources across the strategies and tactics appropriate with respect to priority level and projected outcomes?
  - Consider whether a given strategy could be achieved in a more efficient/effective way (use of different tactics, redistribution of resources across tactics, external partnerships, improved technology, etc.).
  - Flag any areas that need further attention or more information.



### Organization - Operational

- 6. Evaluate Resources Across Programs:**
  - Review allocation of resources across programs and strategies.
  - Is the distribution of resources across the strategies and tactics appropriate with respect to priority level and projected outcomes?
  - Consider whether a given strategy could be achieved in a more efficient/effective way (use of different tactics, redistribution of resources across tactics, external partnerships, improved technology, etc.).



### All

- 7. Identify Program Adjustments:**
  - Identify any area where further information is needed.
  - Identify any recommended program adjustments for Board consideration:
    - Elimination of activities
    - Increase, decrease, or reallocation of resources

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## RESOLUTION

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RESOLUTION NUMBER: 14-009

**TITLE: Adopt Policy Framework *In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed* to Guide Future Planning and District Initiatives**

WHEREAS as a watershed district, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) is charged pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 103D.201, subdivision 1, “to conserve the natural resources of the state by land use planning, flood control, and other conservation projects by using sound scientific principles for the protection of the public health and welfare and the provident use of the natural resources;” and pursuant to Section 103B.201 of the Metropolitan Water Management Act, the MCWD is charged to develop a ten year plan to:

- protect, preserve, and use natural surface and groundwater storage and retention systems;
- minimize public capital expenditures needed to correct flooding and water quality problems;
- identify and plan for means to effectively protect and improve surface and groundwater quality;
- establish more uniform local policies and official controls for surface and groundwater management;
- prevent erosion of soil into surface water systems;
- promote groundwater recharge;
- protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities; and
- secure the other benefits associated with the proper management of surface and ground water;

WHEREAS a fundamental challenge in watershed management arises from the traditional segregation of land use and water resource planning; while activities on the landscape can often create negative impacts on water resources through stormwater runoff, erosion, and draining or filling of wetlands, most of those activities are planned, implemented and regulated by other units of government or private property owners;

WHEREAS watershed capital improvement programs are traditionally developed through an intensive feasibility study and design process where solutions to water quality and flooding problems are assessed and sited in preferred locations best suited to achieve their water management goals; while the MCWD has successfully implemented many such projects, the District is continuing to find greater opportunities to integrate water resource objectives into the development activities that are planned and implemented by other public and private land owners; these opportunities are best identified through the development of strong relationships, sharing of technical expertise, and integrated planning;

WHEREAS the MCWD has a history of partnership and collaboration with both municipalities and private partners to pursue improvement and protection of water resources and other mutual objectives; the MCWD has learned through these partnership initiatives that sustained concentration in a

specific area and a commitment to deeper relationships with partners yields more opportunities and produces better water resource outcomes;

WHEREAS the MCWD seeks to build on that tradition and express the District's commitment to integrating our work with that of other governmental and nongovernmental partners in order to realize the protection and improvement of natural systems, wise investments in public infrastructure, and development of vibrant, healthy communities;

WHEREAS in refining this partnership approach, the MCWD has found important inspiration from the Hennepin Community Works program, developed by Hennepin County in 1994 through an initial analysis that concluded that the County retained its strongest residential property tax base adjacent to lakes, parks or parkways, and that "well designed and carefully integrated parks and public works projects maintain and enhance the long term-tax base of neighborhoods while improving their quality of life;"

WHEREAS Hennepin Community Works seeks to enhance how communities work together to create jobs, provide access to employment, and build long term community value by investment in infrastructure, public works, parks and the natural environment; in this model, natural systems are seen as the underlying structure of communities, which build local identity, provide recreational amenities, and reduce the costs of long term infrastructure; the Hennepin Community Works model emphasizes the need to bridge across various public jurisdictions to create regional collaboratives; these collaboratives are necessary because no single agency has the full range of legal authority or political capacity to address important cross-boundary problems; and

WHEREAS building on strategic discussions by the board of managers on May 19, 2013, the Policy and Planning Committee has worked to develop a statement to guide the MCWD's future planning and watershed management activities consistent with the these objectives;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that in accordance with the foregoing, the District hereby adopts the attached document, "In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed," as a statement of the MCWD's fundamental philosophy and way of doing business;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Board of Managers directs the administrator to utilize this statement to guide the development of the District's update to its Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Managers directs the administrator to utilize this statement to communicate with Hennepin and Carver Counties, municipalities, and other potential partners in order to invite exploration of mutual opportunities for collaboration;

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Board of Managers requests that the Policy and Planning Committee continue to develop further recommendations for the implementation of this approach in the District's planning process.

Resolution Number 14-009 was moved by Manager \_\_\_\_\_, seconded by Manager \_\_\_\_\_.  
Motion to adopt the resolution \_\_\_ ayes, \_\_\_ nays, \_\_\_ abstentions. Date: \_\_\_\_\_.

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

## **IN PURSUIT OF A BALANCED URBAN ECOLOGY IN THE MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED**

**WHAT:** Everyone who lives and works in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed is part of an intricate urban ecological system of natural and man-made parts. Finding ways for these parts to work in reasonable harmony is the key to achieving the balanced, sustainable and ultimately successful communities we seek. Rather than viewing the natural and built environments as a clash of opposing forces, we recognize the inter-related and inter-dependent character of modern life; communities cannot thrive without healthy natural areas, and healthy natural areas become irrelevant without the interplay of human activity. This is the integrated setting in which we live.

***As caretakers of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed, we aim to manage our natural resources within this broader ecological context.*** Recognizing the integrated relationships of our surroundings, we seek also to integrate our work with that of other partners in the public, private and civic sectors. This kind of genuine community collaboration provides our best hope for protecting and improving our water resources while attaining the economic growth and high-quality built environment that will work to the benefit of all.

**WHY: *We will be more effective if we work in partnerships.*** A healthy natural environment is in everyone's best interest. Adopting that truth as an over-arching principle will help us to protect and sustain the lakes, streams, wetlands, wildlife habitat and public green spaces that are the signature of our metropolitan area while also helping to grow our economy in responsible ways. Indeed, our quality of life and our economic wellbeing are inextricably linked. Any notion that land development and environmental protection are locked in a winner-take-all battle is sadly outdated.

Unfortunately, government structures haven't quite caught up with that reality. Land-use activities continue to be primarily the focus of private enterprise as well as the various planning, zoning, public works and job-creation agencies in several layers of government. Meanwhile, other interests, mainly non-profits and other government agencies are focused on conserving natural assets and protecting them from the damage that development can inflict. No single entity has the authority or the resources to cope with all of these questions, or to strike a reasonable balance. That's why collaboration is so important.

Successful, sustainable, livable communities are built on a foundation of *integrated* planning – planning that recognizes communities as living organisms and takes into consideration all components of the urban ecology. Our work will be strengthened through these collaborative efforts. Not only will they offer greater community impact, they will produce creative public-private funding opportunities that will leverage scarce resources and maximize benefits. Going it alone is no longer the best path forward.

**HOW:** Three guiding principles will drive our actions:

- ***We will join with others in pursuing our watershed management goals.*** Success will be built on collaborative efforts among multiple partners in various sectors. The aim will be to develop a deeper understanding of the needs and desires of communities in order to design watershed projects that are more broadly conceived and appreciated, and that enhance social and economic viability as well as environmental benefit. To accomplish this, the MCWD will work with other government agencies, private landowners and developers, and philanthropic partners in cross-jurisdictional settings. We can serve in any number of roles in seeking to improve land development decisions, enhance water and natural resources planning, advance job creation or expand recreational activities. In this way, watershed initiatives are more likely to contribute to the broader project of building successful, sustainable communities.
- ***We will intensify and maintain our focus on high-priority projects.*** While our approach will broaden, our focus will not weaken, nor will our attention span diminish. Complex water management issues require perseverance as well as a cooperative and creative spirit. Our aim will be to develop high-impact projects through a sound public process, one that is transparent and open to the contributions of community stakeholders. At the same time, we will not neglect the more routine needs of the entire watershed. It is through the trust and depth of human relationships that organizations perform best. Our aim is to focus and to sustain: to seek new projects but not to forget our responsibility to operate and maintain that which we've already built.
- ***We will be flexible and creative in adapting our practices to those of our partners.*** MCWD will provide a safe harbor for bold, creative thinking among all partners. Rather than erect barriers, we will encourage projects that incorporate the investment plans and the capital improvement programs of our partners, recognizing the greater potential benefits that can come from leveraging various assets. With our partners, we will seek new ways to forge effective public, private and civic sector collaborations that benefit the environment, the economy and the social wellbeing of our communities.

DRAFT





**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** MCWD Board of Managers  
**Date:** August 25, 2016  
**Re:** August 25<sup>th</sup> Policy & Planning Committee Materials

Enclosed are the materials to be discussed at the August 25<sup>th</sup> Policy & Planning Committee.

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*We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*



**MINNEHAHA CREEK**

QUALITY OF WATER



**WATERSHED DISTRICT**

QUALITY OF LIFE

Item 1:  
Facilitator Group Recommendations  
For  
Organizational Evaluation

*We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*



## Facilitator Group Recommendations for Organizational Evaluation

Group members: Sarah Fellows, Mike Hayman, Darren Lochner, Brett Eidem, Kailey Cermak, Renae Clark, Maddie Johnson, Katherine Sylvia, Matt Cook, Becky Christopher

8-25-16 Draft

### General guidelines:

- The process must remain open, transparent, and inclusive. Issues identified through the process, particularly those that emerged as themes, should be addressed on an organization-wide basis through the use of cross-departmental teams.
- A consistent and structured process should be used to evaluate and address issues identified through the program evaluation process.
- The first step is to group the feedback into categories and prioritize the order in which to address, starting with policy level decisions followed by operational decisions. Categories and order are as follows:
  1. Program Purpose/Direction – determining the fundamental purpose for the program and its general policy orientation
  2. Coordination – exploring how programs support and complement each other and ways to improve cross-departmental communication and collaboration
  3. Operational – analyzing issues related to resource allocation, program structure and staffing, operational efficiencies, and resource needs
  4. New Priorities/Initiatives – evaluating new program or organizational initiatives
- Analysis will be conducted using Bardach's 8-fold path to policy analysis:
  1. Define the problem
  2. Assemble some evidence
  3. Construct alternatives
  4. Select criteria to evaluate alternatives
  5. Project outcomes of alternatives
  6. Confront the trade-offs
  7. Board decision
  8. Communicate

### Categories:

1. Program Purpose/Direction
2. Coordination (program linkages/support, communication, collaboration)
3. Operational (resource allocation, staffing, efficiencies, resource needs)
4. New Priorities/Initiatives

### Program Themes (color-coded by category):

#### Cost Share:

- Need for clarity and Board decision on program purpose and goals
- Prioritize grant dollars to best fulfill program purpose
- Need to find efficiencies for homeowner grant process

#### Ed & Comm:

- Focus and align activities with District mission of improving the landscape
- Need to improve coordination with other District programs

#### Ops and SS:

- Improve clarity & completeness of materials provided
- Need for increased coordination & communication in decisions affecting staff
- Need to centralize more HR policies
- Need for increased efficiency within department structure, potentially through consolidation of staff & vendors

#### Permitting:

- Rule administration needs to be more time and resource efficient
- Coordination with internal and external partners should be improved
- Permitting should message the District mission through its communication channels
- Prioritize program activities on impact to the watershed

#### Planning & PMLM:

- Respect and trust in the Planning Department and its staff
- Increase collaboration with all staff on District initiatives
- Increase coordination and communication with other departments
- Improve the use of technology such as GIS
- Improve the process for measuring and documenting outcomes and success of projects

#### R&M:

- Programmatic purpose - Need for clarity on how the department establishes priority tasks in relation to the needs of the overall organization (Data needs, Research, E-grade)
- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) - Need to define the organization's role in AIS and improve focus and clarity
- Roles and resources - Need for increased efficiency within department structure – linked with prioritization and new initiatives (Director role, Management structure, New staff proposal)

**MINNEHAHA CREEK**



**WATERSHED DISTRICT**

QUALITY OF WATER

QUALITY OF LIFE

## Item 2: Strategic Planning Process Chronology

*We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*



2009-2010

- Board initiated discussions on partnership models and the need for prioritization and focus
  - Board adopted resolution authorizing participation in a Minnehaha Creek Regional Partnership
  - Hennepin Community Works partnership model – presented by Larry Blackstad
    - The Board passed a motion to direct staff to move toward creation of a Hennepin Community Works style partnership to advance planning in the urban corridor
  - Strategic planning and priority-setting discussions – facilitated by Jim Brimeyer
    - Sought to achieve:
      - Focus
      - Measurable results
      - Program accountability

2010-2011

- Watershed Partnerships: Breakthrough in Collaboration to Create and Sustain Great Conservation Corridors – Louis Smith
  - Emphasized the value of partnership strategy to advance watershed initiatives.

2012

- Organization Evaluation and Recommendations – Himle Rapp
  - MCWD leadership engaged in self-evaluation to ensure and achieve maximum organizational efficiency
  - Conclusions:
    - The Board has appropriate governance policies in place to focus on strategic planning and goals but does not adhere to said policies
    - MCWD has too many strategic goals to reasonably accomplish resulting in a lack of clear organizational direction
    - Staff is overwhelmed with meetings, meeting preparation and projects outside of established work plans, leading to staff frustration and burnout
    - The number of committees and meetings is neither effective nor necessary to support the excellence of the organization – again causing burnout and a lack of focus on strategic goals that could eventually undermine the MCWD’s mission and excellence
  - Recommendations:
    - The Board and Management should clearly define roles
    - The Board should further refine and prioritize strategic goals to
      - Give staff clear direction
      - Create measurable accountability for outcomes
      - Reduce frequency of “special projects” that deter from accomplishing the goals
    - The Board should streamline the committee structure and reduce the number of meetings
    - MCWD leadership should evaluate staff workloads
    - MCWD leadership should provide ongoing training opportunities to staff to maintain organizational excellence

- The Board should revisit goals and governance practices on a regular basis

### 2013

- Restructuring proposal – Himle Rapp
  - Developed to address ongoing issues related to:
    - Lack of clarity and organizational priorities
    - Need for Board to spend more time on long term organizational planning, which is essential to continued effectiveness
    - Expand and increase frequency of strategic planning discussions
- BWSR Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP)
  - Develop strategies for improving relationships with District Cities
    - Develop strategies for improving relations...delivering district programs and projects in areas of the most critical resource needs
  - Continue growing staff capacity
    - Improve the alignment of staff roles and enhance cross-departmental coordination
    - Ensure the MCWD culture is understood and shared

### 2014

- Balanced Urban Ecology
  - Hennepin Community Works as a model for the integration of natural and built environments
  - Identified guiding principles:
    - Focused and sustained attention
    - Mutual pursuit of shared partner interests and goals
    - Flexibility and creativity
  - Adopted as MCWD's fundamental philosophy and way of doing business
  - Directed staff to operationalize, use policy to guide development of 2017 Plan and communicate to counties, cities and other potential partners
- Board decision on District leadership
  - "The MCWD Board concluded we needed new leadership to take the organization to a higher level of effectiveness in future years."
- Formation of staff collaboration group
  - Memo to Management Team – three action items
    - We will finalize the framework to define and reinforce the culture of the organization, thereby memorializing the importance of collaboration, innovation and leadership throughout the District.
    - We will provide a unified message to the Administrator and the Management Team that, in the best interest of the organization, the search for the new administrator should be advanced.
    - We request formal discussions related to historic internal issues be initiated with the Administrator and the Management Team; e.g. pathways for clear communication, departmental collaboration, and idea sharing.
  - Organizational Culture: A Foundation of Core Values
    - Building upon Board direction to operationalize the Balanced Urban Ecology policy

- Highlighted that historically, the operational framework of the MCWD has often limited inter-departmental collaboration, individual initiative, program alignment, common priorities, entrepreneurialism, program and policy innovation, and leadership at all levels.
- Emphasized that meaningful and passionate engagement of employees with the District's mission requires a culture that supports the questioning of status quo, reinforces the value of ideation and leadership at all levels, and facilitates interdepartmental collaboration outside of job descriptions to develop and implement innovative solutions by all staff
- Staff desire to establish and operate in an environment that supports professional and personal growth at individual and team levels, cultivating an exciting, entrepreneurial, team oriented place of employment. Therefore,
  - We believe that a healthy, successful organization requires a strong organizational culture rooted in shared values of honesty, integrity, and authenticity;
  - We believe that a management culture supportive of a collaborative environment, where ideas from all staff are acknowledged and encouraged, creates the foundation of a strong organization;
  - We believe that an environment of idea-generation and innovation, uninhibited by hierarchical (vertical) or inter-department (lateral) restriction, will promote professional development, creativity and the free flow of information, improving service delivery;
  - We believe that an organization which empowers and celebrates leadership and accountability at all levels will enhance productivity and increase the successful execution of innovative ideas, serving to perpetually advance the organizational mission;
  - We have identified our shared values and are dedicated to the integration of our core values as a way of professional life, creating a foundation for a transformed philosophy and a strong, respected organization.
- Listed and defined 11 core values:
  - Dedication, Humility, Humor, Innovation, Leadership, Respect, Passion, Perseverance, Positivity, Service, Teamwork

## 2015

- New leadership (hiring process)
  - Staff called for a leader with business acumen to guide and direct the organization rather than a natural resources professional. It was repeatedly noted that the organization historically lacked proper management and leadership, and reliable business practices to create the most efficient and effective District.
  - Staff involvement in development of criteria, hiring materials and interview process, including formal and non-formal interactions with candidates
  - Program staff retained influence throughout process and provided hiring recommendation to Board
- District Self-Assessment (Staff and Board involvement)
  - Anonymous surveys and department interviews
  - Identified impediments to growth and success based on:



- Unclear mission and goals
    - A lack of organizational focus and prioritization
    - Programmatic silos and lack of alignment around a common mission
  - Staff stressed excitement in new direction and called for Board to cultivate more program alignment and focus
- Budget process
  - To alleviate budget issues, Board began preparing to make decisions about programs and initiatives somewhat absent of overall organizational needs and/or impact, leading staff to consider development of a more holistic approach – the beginning of strategic planning process.
- Draft framework
  - Developed in response to budget issues to provide context for Board decisions
    - Link program activities to mission, goals, outcomes, and resources
  - Respond to staff's self-assessment comments
    - Remove silos: Improve program alignment and understanding of roles
    - Show how all programs work together to achieve mission using variety of strategies
  - Allocate resources to highest and best use
    - Facilitate prioritization and improve focus
  - Aims to evaluate and align programs under refocused mission and goals
- Board direction (adopted strategic planning framework)
  - Resolution 15-085: Approval of process to evaluate and align District programs using strategic framework
  - Stated objectives of the process are to:
    - Evaluate existing programs to provide meaningful change, alignment and prioritizations of resources
    - Establish a procedural framework to evaluate new initiatives and opportunities, as well as revisit existing work on a recurring five year basis
    - Provide a valuable communication tool to engage constituents in the District's work
  - Tasked Planning department with leading initiative, in coordination with PPC

## 2016

- New vision, mission, goals and guiding principles
  - Developed in response to continuous calls for prioritized goals, organizational focus and clarity, and program alignment
  - Vision:
    - A landscape of vibrant communities where the natural and built environments in balance create value and enjoyment.
  - Mission:
    - We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.
  - Guiding Principles:
    - Partnership - We seek to understand the goals of others so that we can meaningfully integrate our work to add broader value to the community.
    - Innovation - We are flexible and creative in our approach and strive for continuous improvement.

- Excellence - We commit to work that achieves outstanding results and honors our partners.
- Sound Science - We are a trusted source of scientific data and analyses that provide the foundation for wise decisions.
- Service - We are responsive and accountable to our communities and careful stewards of public funds.
- Goals:
  - Water Quality – To preserve and improve the quality of surface and ground waters.
  - Water Quantity – To manage the volume and flow of stormwater runoff to minimize the impacts of land use change on surface and ground waters.
  - Ecological Integrity – To restore, maintain, and improve the health of ecological systems.
  - Thriving Communities – To promote and enhance the value of water resources in creating successful, sustainable communities.
- Initiated internal portion of strategic planning process
  - Defined goals of a process: open, inclusive, transparent
  - Based on feedback and input staff created standardized process documents, formed a facilitator group to drive open and inclusive process (focus groups and anonymous survey), provided updates at all staff meetings and staff collaboration group meetings

**MINNEHAHA CREEK**



**WATERSHED DISTRICT**

QUALITY OF WATER

QUALITY OF LIFE

Item 3:  
Resolution 15-085  
Approval of Strategic Framework

*We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*

**Minnehaha Creek Watershed District**

**REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

**MEETING DATE:** October 8, 2015

**TITLE:** Approval of process to evaluate and align District programs using strategic framework

**RESOLUTION NUMBER:** 15-085

**PREPARED BY:** Becky Christopher

**E-MAIL:** bchristopher@minnehahacreek.org

**TELEPHONE:** 952-641-4512

**REVIEWED BY:**  Administrator       Counsel       Program Mgr. (Name): James Wisker  
 Board Committee       Engineer       Other

**WORKSHOP ACTION:**

<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____	

**PURPOSE or ACTION REQUESTED:**

Approval of a process to evaluate and align District programs using a strategic framework

**PROJECT/PROGRAM LOCATION:** N/A

**PROJECT TIMELINE:**

October–December 2015: Utilize framework to facilitate 2016 budget discussions

January–December 2016: Utilize framework to evaluate and align programs

**PROJECT/PROGRAM COST:** N/A

**PAST BOARD ACTIONS:** N/A

**SUMMARY:**

Background

In January 2014, the Board of Managers adopted the policy, *In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed*, as a statement of the District’s fundamental philosophy and way of doing business. It established the goal of integrating the District’s work with the built environment using the guiding principles of partnership, focus, and flexibility. The Board directed that this policy guide the development of the District’s update to its Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (Plan).

In early 2015, as part of the Plan update process, staff began a self assessment to evaluate the District’s progress and performance over the last plan cycle. This included a series of staff and Board discussions to identify past accomplishments and challenges, and to look forward at how programs can be organized to



support the Balanced Urban Ecology Policy and two-track approach. Findings included a need to improve focus, prioritization, clarity of mission and goals, and program alignment and coordination.

During the recent review of the 2016 budget and work plans, Managers raised a number of questions regarding the merit of particular program initiatives, prioritization of District activities, resource allocation, and measures of success. It was noted that, while all of the District's programmatic efforts are well intentioned and have value, it is unclear whether certain activities should be the focus of the District's finite personnel and financial resources.

These various discussions signaled a need to strategically evaluate and align the District's programs under a clear and focused mission and set of goals. Staff responded by developing a draft framework and process that could be incorporated into the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

#### Development of Strategic Framework

A draft strategic planning framework was introduced at the August 20, 2015 Planning and Policy Committee (PPC) meeting. At this meeting, the six attending Board Members expressed interest in advancing the framework proposed by staff as a means to: (1) evaluate existing programs to provide meaningful change, alignment and prioritization of resources, (2) establish a procedural framework to evaluate new initiatives and opportunities, as well as revisit existing work on a recurring five year basis, and (3) provide a valuable communication tool to engage constituents in the District's work.

Following the August PPC Meeting, the strategic framework was reviewed and discussed at an All Staff meeting and with the Management Team and Staff Collaboration group.

At the September 17, 2015 PPC meeting, staff facilitated further discussion with the four attending Managers focused on establishing a strong foundation for the program evaluation process including the identification of objectives, expectations, roles, timeline, and procedural steps.

#### Strategic Framework and Process

The framework provides a visual representation of the linkages between the District's mission, goals, strategies, tactics, outcomes, and resources. It is a tool to help the Board and staff evaluate existing programs and new initiatives in a broader context to ensure that the District is allocating its resources to their highest and best use. It is also intended to improve program focus and alignment under a common mission and set of goals.

The proposed process, as reviewed by the PPC and outlined below, involves analysis at four levels using a series of flow diagrams (attached):

1. Organization Strategic:
  - a. Review organization's mission and goals considering alignment with the Balanced Urban Ecology Policy and a desire for improved focus and clarity.
  - b. Review program missions considering the purpose and role of each program in achieving the District's overarching mission and goals.
  - c. Evaluate the primary strategies employed by each program and assign a priority level (high, medium, low) with respect to the District's mission and goals.
2. Program Strategic:
  - a. Evaluate each program's tactics (as identified in work plans) considering how they support program strategies and mission and the outcomes and metrics that will be used to measure success.
  - b. Assign a priority level for each tactic with respect to the program's mission, strategies, and projected outcomes.

3. Program Operational:

- a. Review allocation of resources within each program considering the assigned priority level and projected outcomes of each tactic.
- b. Consider whether a given strategy could be achieved in a more efficient/effective way (use of different tactics, redistribution of resources, external partnerships, improved technology, etc.).

4. Organization Operational:

- a. Review allocation of resources across programs and strategies considering the assigned priority level and projected outcomes of each strategy.
- b. Consider whether a given strategy could be achieved in a more efficient/effective way.
- c. Identify any areas where further information is needed or any program adjustments to be recommended for consideration by the full Board.

The PPC also discussed the roles and responsibilities of various groups that will be involved in the process. It was agreed that the process would be developed and facilitated by the Planning Department, in coordination with the District Administrator. It was also agreed that the internal staff process would be inclusive, transparent, cross-departmental, and would weigh equally input from all levels of the organization.

The Committee discussed that the PPC would be the appropriate venue for these strategic planning discussions and that consistent and clear reporting back to the Board would be needed to facilitate the Board decision making. The Committee recommended that a presentation be provided to the full Board along with a resolution approving the proposed framework and process.



## RESOLUTION

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**RESOLUTION NUMBER: 15-085**

**TITLE: Approval of process to evaluate and align District programs using strategic framework**

- WHEREAS, in January 2014, the Board of Managers adopted the policy, *In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed*, as a statement of the MCWD's fundamental philosophy and way of doing business; and
- WHEREAS, the Board of Managers directed the Administrator to utilize the philosophy of this policy to guide the development of the District's update to its Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan (Plan) and to develop further recommendations for the implementation of this approach in the District's planning process; and
- WHEREAS, the District is in the process of developing its next generation Plan and conducted a self assessment to evaluate the District's progress and performance over the last plan cycle; and
- WHEREAS, findings of the self assessment included a need to improve focus, prioritization, clarity of mission and goals, and program alignment and coordination; and
- WHEREAS, through the review of the 2016 budget and work plans, the Managers raised questions regarding the merit of particular program initiatives, prioritization of District activities, resource allocation, and measures of success; and
- WHEREAS, through the self assessment, budget discussions and previously adopted policy, the Board has signaled a need to focus and align programs around the organizational mission to protect and improve natural resources through partnership, integrated planning, and innovation to support sustainable communities; and
- WHEREAS, in response to this need, staff developed a strategic planning framework (framework) as a tool to clarify mission and goals, and facilitate evaluation and reshaping of District programs to ensure that the District is allocating its resources to their highest and best use to achieve the organization's mission;
- WHEREAS, at the August 20, 2015 and September 17, 2015 Planning and Policy Committee (PPC) meetings, staff presented the framework and an associated process through which it could be used to evaluate program alignment, prioritization of strategies and tactics, measureable outcomes, and allocation of resources; and
- WHEREAS, the PPC supported the use of the framework and process as a means to: (1) evaluate existing programs to provide meaningful change, alignment and prioritization of resources, (2) establish a procedural framework to evaluate new initiatives and opportunities, as well as revisit existing work on a recurring five year basis, and (3) provide a valuable communication tool to engage constituents in the District's work; and
- WHEREAS, the PPC discussed that the process would be developed and facilitated by the Planning Department, in coordination with the District Administrator, and would be inclusive, transparent, cross-departmental, and weigh equally input from all levels of the organization; and
- WHEREAS, the PPC recommended that these evaluations be conducted by the PPC with consistent and clear reporting and recommendations to the Board of Managers; and

WHEREAS, the PPC recommended that a presentation be provided to the full Board along with a resolution approving the process to use the framework for program evaluation; and

WHEREAS, the framework and process was reviewed by the Board of Managers at the October 8, 2015 Board Workshop;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers establishes the attached strategic planning framework and process to evaluate and align programs and to focus District resources towards common goals and mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the strategic planning process and program evaluation will be conducted by the Planning and Policy Committee with clear reporting to the full Board of Managers to facilitate Board decision making.

Resolution Number 15-085 was moved by Manager Shekleton, seconded by Manager Rogness.  
Motion to adopt the resolution 6 ayes, 0 nays, 1 abstentions. Date: 10/8/2015.

Kurt Rogness  
Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 10/8/2015



## Program Evaluation Process

### Organization - Strategic

- 1. Define District mission and goals:**
  - Note - This process is underway based on direction from PPC, and refined mission and goal statements will be brought back for review.
- 2. Review program missions:**
  - Consider the purpose and role of each program in achieving the District's overarching mission and goals.
  - Do the program mission statements accurately reflect the Managers' understanding of each program's purpose?
- 3. Evaluate strategies:**
  - Review the primary strategies of each program and how they align to achieve the District's and program's mission and goals.
  - Are these the right strategies for each program to be focused on?
  - For each strategy, identify priority level (high, medium, low) with respect to the District's mission and goals.



### Program - Strategic

- 4. Evaluate Tactics:**
  - Review the program's current activities (tactics) as defined in the work plans.
  - Do the tactics all have a clear link back to the program strategies and mission?
  - Do the tactics have clearly defined outcomes and metrics that will allow for evaluation of program success?
  - For each tactic, identify priority level (high, medium, low) with respect to the program's mission, strategies, and projected outcomes.



### Program - Operational

- 5. Evaluate Resources Within Program:**
  - Review allocation of resources within program.
  - Is the distribution of resources across the strategies and tactics appropriate with respect to priority level and projected outcomes?
  - Consider whether a given strategy could be achieved in a more efficient/effective way (use of different tactics, redistribution of resources across tactics, external partnerships, improved technology, etc.).
  - Flag any areas that need further attention or more information.



### Organization - Operational

- 6. Evaluate Resources Across Programs:**
  - Review allocation of resources across programs and strategies.
  - Is the distribution of resources across the strategies and tactics appropriate with respect to priority level and projected outcomes?
  - Consider whether a given strategy could be achieved in a more efficient/effective way (use of different tactics, redistribution of resources across tactics, external partnerships, improved technology, etc.).



### All

- 7. Identify Program Adjustments:**
  - Identify any area where further information is needed.
  - Identify any recommended program adjustments for Board consideration:
    - Elimination of activities
    - Increase, decrease, or reallocation of resources

**MINNEHAHA CREEK**



**WATERSHED DISTRICT**

QUALITY OF WATER

QUALITY OF LIFE

Item 4:  
MCWD  
Mission, Vision,  
Guiding Principles, and Goals

*We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*



# MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

## ***Vision***

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**A landscape of vibrant communities where the natural and built environments in balance create value and enjoyment.**

## ***Mission***

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**We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.**

## ***Guiding Principles***

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**Partnership** – We seek to understand the goals of others so that we can meaningfully integrate our work to add broader value to the community.

**Innovation** – We are flexible and creative in our approach and strive for continuous improvement.

**Excellence** – We commit to work that achieves outstanding results and honors our partners.

**Sound Science** – We are a trusted source of scientific data and analyses that provide the foundation for wise decisions.

**Service** – We are responsive and accountable to our communities and careful stewards of public funds.

## ***Goals***

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**Water Quality** – To preserve and improve the quality of surface and ground waters.

**Water Quantity** – To manage the volume and flow of stormwater runoff to minimize the impacts of land use change on surface and ground waters.

**Ecological Integrity** – To restore, maintain, and improve the health of ecological systems.

**Thriving Communities** – To promote and enhance the value of water resources in creating successful, sustainable communities.

**MINNEHAHA CREEK**



**WATERSHED DISTRICT**

QUALITY OF WATER

QUALITY OF LIFE

Item 5:  
Executive Summaries of  
Program Evaluation Input, by Program

*We collaborate with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.*





**Staff Evaluation of the Cost Share Program**

**Facilitator: Kailey Cermak, Research and Monitoring**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following notes represent staff's review of the Cost Share Program. The input represented was collected from the discussions of three focus groups – which had 17 participants in total – and 13 anonymous survey respondents.

Through discussion and comment, 3 major themes emerged:

- Need for clarity and Board decision on program purpose and goals
- Prioritize grant dollars to best fulfill program purpose
- Need to find efficiencies for homeowner grant process

The following summary of these three topic areas is a synopsis of comments delivered related to each of the themes. Opinions commonly held by staff are identified in the Executive Summary section. All other information received throughout this process is memorialized in the "Input" portion of this document. The "Input" section contains the responses to each of the eight program evaluation questions. Responses from the focus groups and the surveys are displayed separately for each question. Survey input included in this document is a summary of the main themes assembled from respondents. Full survey responses can be found in Appendix A.

**Need for clarity and Board decision on program purpose and goals**

A common theme across focus groups, and oft mentioned from survey respondents, was that Cost Share needs a clearly-defined purpose. The lack of a discrete objective for administration of District grants make the prioritization of grant dollars and staff time difficult.

A strong majority of staff felt that Cost Share should provide funding based on water resource benefit. Staff noted that educational usage seems to be a priority for projects currently, but should become a secondary goal of Cost Share-funded projects. It was noted that this is a policy decision for the Board to make, which will guide the future direction of this program: To best align with the District vision and mission, should Cost Share grants remain focused on education or focus on immediate water resource benefit?

Program Evaluation: Cost Share  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

With a clear decision on program purpose, clearly-defined goals must be established. Staff felt that the current goals are somewhat abstract and could be better connected to the District's overall mission and goals, allowing for reallocation of staff time and resources to the program's highest and best use.

Prioritize grant dollars to best fulfill program purpose

Another common theme was the need to better prioritize which projects District grant funds are allocated to. Given the District's Vision, Mission, and other guiding documents, staff agreed that water resource improvement should be the main intent of the Cost Share program. With this in mind, staff stated that Cost Share grants should be awarded to green infrastructure projects over educational projects. Some staff noted that education efforts could be prioritized against one another for Cynthia Krieg funding, separate from Cost Share's green infrastructure funding.

There was agreement that Cost Share should become more proactive, seeking out ideal opportunities instead of only reacting to proposals.

Need to find efficiencies for homeowner grant process

All focus group participants underscored the apparent unbalance of time and resources allocated to grants for single family home projects. Most staff saw water resource benefit as the primary goal of the Cost Share program, and thus noted that single family home projects were inefficient – such projects tend to produce little water resource benefit per grant dollar spent. Single family homeowner grants tend to produce limited educational benefit, too, when positioned as demonstration sites. Given the burden to staff (35%), homeowner grants stand out as an opportunity to find efficiencies.

While staff found quick agreement that the administration of single family homeowner grants should be altered, opinions varied regarding how such grants should be administered. Some suggested decreasing staff time devoted to single family homeowner grants by implementing design standards and tapping Master Water Stewards to assist with the grant application process and help with project design and installation. Others felt that since the outreach and water resource benefits of single family homeowner projects are few, grants for such projects should be halted entirely.





## Staff Evaluation of the Education and Communications Programs

**Facilitator: Renae Clark, Planning and Projects**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following notes represent staff's review of the Education and Communications programs (Ed/Comm). The input represented was collected from the discussions of 3 focus groups – which had 15 participants in total – and 13 anonymous survey respondents.

Through discussion and comment, 2 major themes emerged:

- Focus and align activities with District mission of improving the landscape
- The need to improve coordination with other District programs

The following summary of these 2 topic areas is a synopsis of comments delivered related to each of the themes. Opinions commonly held by staff are identified in the Executive Summary section. All other information received throughout this process is memorialized in the "Input" portion of this document. The "Input" section contains the responses to each of the eight program evaluation questions. Responses from the focus groups and the surveys are displayed separately for each question. Survey input included in this document is a summary of the main themes assembled from respondents. Full survey responses can be found in Appendix A.

#### Focus and align activities with the District mission of improving the landscape

Staff noted that the scope of Ed/Comm activities is too broad and the distribution of resources and staff time to these activities is diffuse.

The program activities represent the current work of the programs without consideration of what the activities *should* be. The program activities should align with the District vision, mission, and goals as part of an organizational plan. Previous concentrated effort through media and broad based outreach has established awareness of the organization and basic knowledge of our work. Moving forward, Ed/Comm activities should be reoriented towards achieving meaningful engagement and action that improves the landscape. For example, while media relations is part of a multi-pronged approach to create general awareness of the District, such activities should be deprioritized in favor of a more targeted approach. Currently staff feels there is a lack of focus on activities that drive engagement and action.

Program Evaluation: Education and Communications  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

The Need to Improve Coordination with Other District Programs

Staff called for improved program coordination. Ed/Comm should be more strategically embedded within all District programs. It should also be determined how Ed/Comm relies on other programs to support its goals. A decision is needed on whether to reallocate existing Ed/Comm resources or increase staff and budget resources to accomplish real programmatic support and coordination.

Each District program plays a role in education and outreach, and each influences a different audience – policymakers, developers, agency staff etc. We need an organization-wide plan that maps out each program's role in education and outreach, who the programs reach, how programs interact with their audiences, and what the key messages should be.



**MINNEHAHA CREEK**



**WATERSHED DISTRICT**

QUALITY OF WATER

QUALITY OF LIFE

## **Staff Evaluation of the Operations & Support Services Program**

**Facilitator: Sarah Fellows, Education**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following notes represent staff's review of the Operations and Support Services program (Ops). The input represented was collected from the discussions of 3 focus groups – which had 18 participants in total – and 8 anonymous survey respondents.

Through discussion and comment, 4 major themes emerged:

- The need to increase the clarity in materials provided;
- The need for coordination with other departments; and
- The need to centralize and standardize more human resources policies
- Opportunities for increased efficiency of the department.

The following summary of these 4 topic areas is a synopsis of comments delivered related to each of the themes. Opinions commonly held by staff are identified in the Executive Summary section. All other information received throughout this process is memorialized in the “Input” portion of this document. The “Input” section contains the responses to each of the eight program evaluation questions. Responses from the focus groups and the surveys are displayed separately for each question. Survey input included in this document is a summary of the main themes assembled from respondents. Full survey responses can be found in Appendix A.

### **Need for Clarity in Materials Provided:**

Staff felt the materials provided by Ops needed more clarity regarding:

- The primary purpose of Ops
- Ops priorities and how those are accomplished
- Allocation of staff time and primary areas of responsibility
- Allocation of budgeted expenditures
- Outcomes of department work and corresponding metrics

Staff felt this lack of clarity made it unfeasible to evaluate tactics, priorities, resource distribution, and projected outcomes. It was recommended that Ops provide organizational framework materials consistent with every other department in order to facilitate the evaluation process.

Need for Cross-departmental Coordination:

Staff noticed an overwhelming need for increased coordination with other departments. Given that Ops decisions frequently impact staff across all or multiple departments, staff recommended that their input should be more consistently and comprehensively incorporated into decision making processes. One common example cited was the lack of staff engagement before the handbook was adopted, versus after.

Another prominent example was the need for increased communication and coordination with respect to the planning, prioritizing, and decision making of District-wide technology purchases. Staff consistently commented that despite being the ultimate end users of District technology, they felt their voices were unheard in the planning and decision making process. Staff overwhelmingly felt technology that staff needed to implement their programs effectively (such as GIS and a database) were not prioritized over purchases like the Mondopad or Laserfiche. Those decisions should be driven and prioritized by staff input and needs.

Need to Centralize and Standardize Human Resources Policies:

Staff cited a number of instances in which the responsibilities of certain HR policies (vehicle management, field safety, board packets, GIS functions, and onboarding) are delegated to department heads.

Currently, the manner in which these policies are administered varies between departments, and staff felt that these policies should be managed by the Ops program for the sake of consistency and clarity.

Opportunities for Increased Efficiency:

One recommendation by staff for increasing the efficiency of the department was with regards to clarity of department initiatives. Staff requested the need for improved communication and clearly defined planning processes when engaging staff. Ops needs to provide clear project objectives, roles, responsibilities, and accountability with regards to Operations initiatives to ensure projects are managed effectively and efficiently.

Staff also repeatedly observed the program structure as being overly reliant on specialized part time employees. It was recommended that Ops look for opportunities to increase efficiencies by transitioning towards a smaller number of full-time employees with broader job duties and expertise to consolidate responsibilities. The statement that the department has seen “constant staffing levels” seems to be contradicted by the hires over the past year. There are likely opportunities to consolidate contracts and vendors as well to lower vendor management time.

Regarding program improvements, staff frequently commented on the improvements to staff benefits packages in recent years, and the fact that the department is more organized now than in past years.





## Staff Evaluation of the Permitting Program

**Facilitator: Brett Eidem, Cost Share**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following notes represent staff's review of the Permitting program. The input represented was collected from the discussions of 3 focus groups – which had 11 participants in total – and 8 anonymous survey respondents.

Through discussion and comment, 4 major themes emerged:

- Rule administration needs to be more time- and resource-efficient.
- Coordination with internal and external partners should be improved.
- Permitting should message the District mission through its communication channels.
- Prioritize program activities on impact to the watershed.

The following summary of these 4 topic areas is a synopsis of comments delivered related to each of the themes. Opinions commonly held by staff are identified in the Executive Summary section. All other information received throughout this process is memorialized in the “Input” portion of this document. The “Input” section contains the responses to each of the eight program evaluation questions. Responses from the focus groups and the surveys are displayed separately for each question. Survey input included in this document is a summary of the main themes assembled from respondents. Full survey responses can be found in Appendix A.

### Rule administration needs to be more time- and resource-efficient

Focus group participants and survey respondents noted that the proportion of program resources and staff time devoted to rule administration and processing permits was too great, as other program priorities were being under-resourced as a result. In particular, inspection of permitted projects and corresponding compliance enforcement were flagged as areas that are currently neglected. Staff identified confusion regarding District rules and application materials as a driver of repeated back-and-forth communications between program staff and applicants. Staff called for an examination of rules, application materials, and permit review processes – especially legal and engineering review processes – to find opportunities to turn around permits more quickly and affordably.

Program Evaluation: Permitting  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

Staff underscored the utility of modernizing the Permitting program's database. It was noted that the basic query and recall functions of a typical geospatial database would help streamline administration, inspection, and compliance tasks, not to mention the potential benefits of being able to analyze accumulated land use change data. Such a tool could optimize program operations and analyze the impact of District rules. Staff added that an organization-wide geodatabase could allow other programs to consolidate inspection duties and identify overlapping areas of interest.

Coordination with internal and external partners should be improved

It was suggested that Permitting staff improve formal and informal coordination with city regulatory staff to avoid duplication of inspection and compliance efforts, and to identify opportunities for collaboration. The current burden on District staff from permit administration and inspections is unsustainable, and additional capacity must either be brought on internally or outsourced to partner agencies for the Permitting program to function at baseline capacity.

Staff explained that though Permitting staff are already overburdened, the program stands to realize organization-wide efficiencies by improving coordination with other programs, especially regarding the inspection of active construction sites as well as overlap of other District program initiatives. Interdepartmental coordination could also enhance the ability of Permitting staff to better act as a first point of contact for all the District initiatives, facilitating the identification and development of opportunities for partnership between applicants and the District.

Permitting should message the District mission

Staff noted that the Permitting program has unique access to a large and influential audience through its administration of the District's rules. Given this access, the program can deliver a clear and consistent portrayal of the District's brand as an innovative and effective partner. Application materials and Permitting staff could market District initiatives, highlighting opportunities for project applicants to partner with the District.

Prioritize program activities on impact to the watershed

The Permitting program has the potential to identify and develop opportunities to secure water resource outcomes greater than those possible through regulation alone. By proactively engaging existing and future partners, program staff can exceed baseline protection of the watershed.

To achieve this proactive arm of the department, program activities need to be re-prioritized to focus on those that have the greatest impact to the watershed. This would need further analysis on determining which activities need priority based on potential negative impact to the watershed if not followed through on, or benefit to the watershed if greater opportunities can be achieved.





## **Staff Evaluation of the Planning and Project Maintenance and Land Management**

**Facilitator: Darren Lochner, Education**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following notes represent staff's review of the **Planning and Project Maintenance and Land Management** program. The input represented was collected from the discussions of 3 focus groups – which had 12 participants in total – and 6 anonymous survey respondents.

Through discussion and comment, 5 major themes emerged:

- Respect and trust in the Department and its staff;
- Increase collaboration with all staff on District initiatives;
- Increase coordination and communication with other departments;
- Improve the use of technology such as GIS; and
- Improve the process for measuring and documenting outcomes and success of projects.

These themes were common responses throughout the focus group discussions and survey responses. The following “Input” section contains the responses to each of the eight program evaluation questions. Responses from the focus groups and the surveys are displayed separately for each question.

#### **Respect and trust in the Department and its staff:**

Staff expressed their respect for the Planning Department, citing trust and confidence in the Planning staff. Staff noted that the Department maintains high visibility within and beyond the District, and shoulders that responsibility well. One area of concern identified was the workloads and overtime of Planning staff.

#### **Increase collaboration with all staff on District initiatives:**

Staff felt that the Planning and PMLM programs play a key role in many District initiatives (i.e. strategic planning, budget planning, etc.), yet do not actively include staff from other programs. Updates from Planning staff come across as merely briefings, rather than opportunities for feedback that could inform the further development of the initiative.

Staff would like the Planning Department to extend invitations to other programs to participate in the early stages of project development or Planning activities that affect or represent all staff.

Increase coordination and communication with other departments:

Staff expressed that Planning staff tend to ask other programs for work products on short notice. Some staff feel that the Planning Department has predefined what they want from other programs, or at least has not left enough time for other program staff to co-develop the process or project that said work product pertains to.

Staff would like to stay informed about Planning's ongoing work surrounding a project (i.e. Six Mile Creek – Halsted), so that when requests come about, other program staff have sufficient context. Most importantly, Planning should flag areas where the Department will need support from other programs early on, and begin to coordinate with the respective programs at that point.

Improve the use of technology such as GIS:

Staff noted that there was an opportunity to streamline day-to-day operations of the Planning Department by augmenting the District's GIS capabilities. Staff added that utilizing GIS in an integrated, District-wide manner – in the form of a geospatial database, for instance – would likely help to lighten workload and / or improve the effectiveness of all programs. Being able to better map District projects and initiatives is important for documentation and telling our story to both internal and external audiences.

Improve the process for measuring and documenting outcomes and success of projects:

Staff discussed the possibilities for the Planning Department to develop more effective means of measuring and reporting the outcomes of capital projects. This discussion included “effectiveness monitoring” opportunities regarding water quality and other natural resource improvements, as well as the economic and social / community benefits.

By better defining the metrics of project success and measuring project benefits, staff hope that the Planning Department can more clearly evaluate the worth of certain projects to inform future decisions and outreach.



## Staff Evaluation of the Research & Monitoring Program(s)

**Facilitator: Michael Hayman, Planning & Projects**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The following notes represent staff's review of the Research and Monitoring programs (R&M). The input represented was collected from the discussions of 3 focus groups – which had 15 participants in total – and 9 anonymous survey respondents.

Through discussion and comment, 3 major themes emerged:

- Programmatic purpose – data needs, research and E-grade;
- Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS); and
- Department structure and management (roles and responsibilities).

The following summary of these 3 topic areas is a synopsis of comments delivered related to each of the themes. Opinions commonly held by staff are identified in the Executive Summary section. All other information received throughout this process is memorialized in the “Input” portion of this document. The “Input” section contains the responses to each of the eight program evaluation questions. Responses from the focus groups and the surveys are displayed separately for each question. Survey input included in this document is a summary of the main themes assembled from respondents. Full survey responses can be found in Appendix A.

### Programmatic Purpose: Data Needs, Research and E-grade

A common theme across all focus groups, and oft mentioned from survey respondents, was a need to clarify how the Research and Monitoring department establishes priority tasks in relation to the needs of the overall organization. Feedback consistently focused on three elements of the program – data needs, research, and the E-grade program – and the need to further evaluate programmatic efforts and determine the appropriate level of data collection and analysis to make the organization most effective in achieving its mission.

It was recommended that departmental goals be clarified and prioritized to provide a clearer framework under which departmental resources (staff and money) can be effectively aligned to produce programmatic outcomes that most benefit the organization's focus on protecting and improving the landscape. As previously stated, the



Program Evaluation: Research & Monitoring  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

overall purpose of the program and prioritization of efforts created three areas of refined discussion. A compilation of the discussions related to these three elements, and examples of comments that were received throughout the feedback process, are provided below as an example of main points of discussion related to program purpose.

- Data needs:
  - Historically the organization has monitored for long term data collection and trends, and has done a fine job at that task, but as we look to the future there is a greater need for refined data collection to diagnose, plan and analyze effectiveness. Water quality impairments take decades to occur and many more decades to reverse. Once water quality trends are established, the frequency of baseline “anchor” monitoring can be greatly decreased to reallocate resources towards identifying causal factors and solutions that would inform implementation strategies.
  - A refined and prioritized focus on diagnostics, analytics and effectiveness monitoring will be foundational for an organization that is rooted in implementation. This is an area of greatest organizational need and appears to be under resourced.
  - As proposed, rather than transitioning priorities to focus on the data needs most essential to the organization, the program is proposing a continuation of past practices while adding some level of these additional strategies as new initiatives requiring new resources. The focus should be on a reallocation of efforts based on priority need rather than growing the department based on past decisions.
- Research:
  - Questions remain as to what level of research the District should be involved in and how said involvement relates to the mission of the organization. What is the level of involvement in field research – lead, partner, etc.?
  - General feedback was that the organization should not be a lead agency in the area of field research, as this is not a priority, and is better suited in the area of hard science related to water quality and implementation.
  - Concern was raised regarding what level of expectations are being created by leading large research initiatives, particularly if the research project does not serve a tangible purpose that benefits our constituents. This is comparable to implementing a project that does not achieve water quality benefit and is therefore labeled as a demonstration project simple to justify its existence.
- E-grade:
  - The E-grade initiative is a move in the right direction as it relates to systems thinking but will require better understanding of its role within the organization and the impacts it will have on other programs such as communications, education and planning. The full range of long term costs and staffing implications have never been analyzed.
  - The genesis of the E-grade program was outreach, and the program is being constructed as such, absent of organizational priorities and needs. The program philosophy of monitoring baseline trends is evident in the development of the E-grade program – giving a baseline to new ecological parameters – thus identifying that there are high level issues, but not specifically diagnosing the problems.



Program Evaluation: Research & Monitoring  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

- This work will not thoroughly diagnose causal factors (stressors/drivers) in ecological health – it will merely characterize them.
- In order to utilize the program as a diagnostic tool, additional levels of cost and consulting time will be required and the program will require another phase, potentially more. The potential costs of the E-grade program, to function in the highest capacity and with the greatest value to the organization, are still unknown. The baseline program as being developed does not achieve this.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

The role of the organization in the field of aquatic invasive species (AIS) remains an area in need of clarification and direction. All participants throughout the process stressed the need for the Board of Managers to make a clear determination on the District's role in the area of AIS. The organization requires a decision as to where we are going to focus – regardless of the genesis of the program – in order to set a clear path forward from here. Will the organization continue prevention efforts, focus on education, dedicate time to research, conduct implementation, continue management efforts, create some combination of these efforts, or potentially remove itself from AIS and do nothing? And how will a final determination be made as it relates to organizational efforts and its impact on achieving our mission?

The Research and Monitoring department is challenged with integrating various elements of AIS without a clear understanding of priority or effort. Comments and discussions throughout the feedback process were generally positioned from the angle of not having clear expectations and direction, and that the proposed course does not set a clear path beyond ecological monitoring – indicated the District remains involved in implementation, prevention, education, etc. Some examples of the feedback received throughout the process includes:

- Role in AIS is still unclear – we have to answer the question of “why” is the District involved in AIS and “how” our involvement is defined. The Board needs to direct tools and resources amongst District priorities, not based on past decisions.
- Regarding AIS, it is noteworthy that comparable staff time and more financial resources are dedicated to rapidly responding to the presence of AIS in an emergency situation, than are dedicated towards cultivating partnerships.
- The AIS department lacks efficacy when structured as a prevention program – it is impossible to achieve 100% compliance.
- If the District determines that the program focus is actually behavior change, and the prevention/inspection model is one tactic used to invoke said change, than shouldn't the organization reorient efforts to be more effective in the behavior change model – connect with lake vendors, greater education, etc.
- The overall direction of AIS in the new program structure is still unclear. AIS appears as a slight evolution of the previous department but still nested with many of the existing efforts. These efforts are now sort of buried within the department rather than providing clarity as to what exactly is shifting and how it will work.

Program Evaluation: Research & Monitoring  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

- Monitoring AIS is biological and makes sense to incorporate into the new direction, but prevention, management and research efforts remain unclear

Department Structure: Roles and Resources

The proposal to restructure the department was met with abundant agreement – noting that the department is overdue for a course correction – but there was noteworthy discussion highlighting diverging opinions on how it is being restructured, and continued confusion as to why historic tendencies are being carried forward. Similar to the evaluation regarding programmatic purpose, comments focused on the tendency of the department to continue a growth trend without clearly defining the direction it is going, the efficiency that is to be gained with new initiatives such as WISKI, E-grade, and a blended program, and how all of these efforts rank in priority of the organization.

It was recommended that the department revisit job descriptions, time allocation, and work breakdown structures, as much of the information provided appears disproportionate when compared to other departments and organizational roles. This should be completed in coordination with clearly defined program priorities and strategies (see above section on programmatic purpose).

The majority of discussions and comments were again focused on three distinct areas – director role, management structure, and new staffing proposal – all of which relate to the proposed department structure and resourcing.

- Director role:
  - This position lacks clear expectations as to what the role within the department should be and how the position relates to the needs of the program and organization. A lack of clarity and direction within this position trickles down through the department in both structure and efficiency.
  - Numerous comments were made regarding the materials indicating the director position delegates the majority of said positions tasks down to program staff (highlighted in the job description material), and focuses 70%-80% of time allocation on coordination meetings.
    - Questions were raised as to the impact this has on programmatic staff time and efficiency – the delegation of nearly one full time position and the burden this places on staff.
    - Discussions and comments also focused on how the department would find greater efficiency in having a lead manager/director focused on programmatic direction, reporting, and coordination which would allow current staff to work more broadly and reduce the need for more full time staff and District representatives.
    - Can the director position take a more active role in department management (budget, reporting, data management, etc.), freeing up time for manager positions to do more data collection and analysis, thus reducing the need for additional full-time or temporary staff and providing the level of knowledge that the department desires?



Program Evaluation: Research & Monitoring  
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

- In a program where sound science is the foundation of all work, the director role should play an integral part in analysis, diagnosis and directing work and need – identifying the direction for data needs of the organization. Presently the director role focuses on administration rather than monitoring needs, data and effectiveness.
- Management structure:
  - Historic decisions on how the program could be managed are being carried forward into the restructure, rather than approaching the restructure as an opportunity to develop the most efficient and effective program based on organizational needs and priorities.
    - Three manager roles creates confusion related to decision making and appears to contain various duplicated efforts.
  - The proposed department structure appears to be built based on a “who is best at what” rather than addressing the needs required to conduct the work of an effective program. There is an appearance that new staff roles are largely a reflection of the people currently in the job and what they enjoy doing most, rather than the creation of positions that provide the optimal program design.
    - Related back to programmatic purpose, if a list of all of the current needs of the department was developed, one should be able to use that list to develop job descriptions that represent the organization need/duties of the department.
  - The structure of the permitting program was referenced as a similar structure that would make the most sense for an efficient department – one manager, two technicians, and then representatives.
- New staff:
  - The consensus across all focus groups was that growing staff in the department does not seem appropriate at this time – that it seems premature with all of the unknowns related to the shift in work and direction.
    - The department must determine the efficiencies achieved through Wiski, and the potentially reduced needs for monitoring as E-grade and anchor monitoring are better developed before creating more full time positions.
    - The added value of a full time position in this department does not rank as high of a need organizationally when compared to other programs in need – work can be sourced seasonally and still be successful
    - Seasonal staffing seems ideal for monitoring efforts rather than growing permanent staff as field work tends to be redundant monitoring and data collection and seems well suited for student workers and seasonal efforts.
    - There is also a time concern in keeping six permanent positions busy – historically Research and Monitoring representatives have looked to other departments for work during slow months throughout the winter.
  - Monitoring is a seasonal, rotational job, not a long term position. R/M managers should expect this as part of their position (training efforts) and should take more of a field presence as they are the positions of longevity and institutional knowledge – that level of institutional knowledge it is not required in every position throughout the organization.