



Title: Consideration of 2021 Budget Comments from the City of Greenwood

Resolution number: 20-092

Prepared by: Name: James Wisker
Phone: 952.641.4509
Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org

Recommended action: Adopt the resolution documenting MCWD's consideration of Greenwood Comments, and the MCWD Board of Managers decision to not amend its 2021 budget.

Summary:

Beginning in July 2020, the City of Greenwood has engaged the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) to request 2021 funding for aquatic invasive species (AIS) programming. MCWD has given thoughtful consideration to these comments and responded throughout the year in writing, and in digital meetings between Board Liaisons and City Councilmembers.

Most recently the City of Greenwood requested final consideration of its request for funding in 2021, through MCWD's truth in taxation comment period on November 19.

The accompanying resolution, for Board consideration, summarizes the chronology of correspondence, the consideration given to the City of Greenwood's comments, and determines to not adjust MCWD's 2021 budget for AIS programming.

Supporting documents (list attachments):

- Greenwood – MCWD correspondence – Attachment A



RESOLUTION

Resolution number: 20-092

Title: Consideration of 2021 Budget Comments from the City of Greenwood

WHEREAS, in a July 10, 2020 letter the City of Greenwood posed questions regarding the efficacy of downstream water quality improvements, and requested that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) either grant an extension to its capital improvement plan (CIP) comment period or reallocate \$600,000 from its annual CIP to aquatic species prevention, detection and control efforts.

WHEREAS, in a July 24, 2020 letter responding to the City of Greenwood, MCWD:

- Granted the City of Greenwood an extension to the comment deadline, noted that Greenwood's requests were not capital improvements eligible for inclusion in the CIP, and that the District would like to meet with the City to discuss further.
- Summarized the results of a multijurisdictional partnership between private businesses, local, regional and state agencies to restore the most degraded sections of Minnehaha Creek, including the measured improvements in water quality for Minnehaha Creek and downstream Lake Hiawatha.
- Outlined its focused strategy for protecting and improving Lake Minnetonka, detailed with broad community support in its 2017 Watershed Management Plan and consistent with the EPA approved TMDL for the upper watershed, which has MCWD uniquely positioned to address the largest outside pollutant sources to Lake Minnetonka (Six Mile – Halsted, Long Lake – Tanager, Painter – Jennings).
- Communicated its rationale for sun-setting former AIS pilot programs, over a three-five year period in close coordination with partners, while developing focused efforts to control species that have a demonstrable impact on system water quality and have proven control methods developed by researchers (e.g. common carp).

WHEREAS, in an August 5, 2020 letter the City of Greenwood requested that the MCWD adjust its CIP and timetables to shift \$600,000, while controlling its levy, towards AIS funding in support of existing projects such as boat inspections, monitoring for AIS in boat launches, AIS rapid response, AIS control, and AIS research.

WHEREAS, in an August 17 response MCWD thanked the City of Greenwood for its shared commitment to protect and enhance Lake Minnetonka, and requested a meeting to discuss MCWD's adopted strategy for Lake Minnetonka and the role of AIS programming in that work.

WHEREAS, on August 27, 2020 the Board approved resolution 20-065 adopting its CIP, without adjustment to reflect the City of Greenwood's \$600,000 request, on the basis that:

- Unspecified one-time allocations, derived as a percent of the overall budget, were not fiscally prudent and would disrupt long planned and well-coordinated partnerships targeted to provide measurable benefit to Lake Minnetonka and other resources across the watershed.
- MCWD had sunset prior AIS pilot programs through a thoughtful evaluation of their efficacy, over a three year period, in close coordination with funding partners.

WHEREAS, following a 2021 budget planning process that began in earnest in April 2020, and having moved through five months of broad prioritization and detailed budget discussions, on August 27, 2020 the Board of Managers conducted a duly noticed public hearing for the MCWD's 2021 proposed budget and levy.

WHEREAS, on September 10, 2020, pursuant to requirements outlined in Minnesota Statute §103D, the MCWD Board of Managers adopted a 2021 budget and certified a 2021 levy to Hennepin and Carver Counties.

WHEREAS, on September 21, 2020, MCWD Board appointed liaisons (President White and Treasurer Loftus) met with Greenwood City Councilmembers Fletcher and Roy, where it was discussed that:

- After more than six years of implementation MCWD sunset its AIS pilot programs based on a review of their efficacy, and in close coordination with its funding partners.
- MCWD remains deeply invested in taking a data driven and focused approach to improving Lake Minnetonka, and has dedicated more than 60% of its CIP to addressing the highest polluting regional tributaries, a strategy it is uniquely positioned to address and one that will create an environment in which native species can more effectively compete against AIS.
- The integration of \$600,000 of unspecified funds into the 2021 budget, wasn't fiscally responsible, and would disrupt long planned projects and partnerships intended to benefit Lake Minnetonka and the watershed.
- The AIS program landscape had evolved considerably, since the initiation of MCWD's pilot programs, and was now better positioned to respond to the City of Greenwood's requests. For example:
 - The MN AIS Research Center is now the statewide leader in AIS research.
 - Hennepin County now receives state funding to support AIS prevention and detection.
 - The MN DNR is now the lead agency for rapid response in the state.
 - The LMCD is leading an AIS Master Plan, chaired by Greenwood Councilmember Cook.
 - The LMA and LIDs have taken a lead role in managing aquatic plants.

WHEREAS, in an October 16, 2020 email to the MCWD Administrator, Councilmember Fletcher noted that, while none of the itemized expenditures would assure success in stopping AIS, he request MCWD consider \$345,000 of programming as part of its 2021 budget process:

- \$50,000 – support applied research by MNAISRC
- \$30,000 – support U of M St. Anthony Falls Lab research on boat wake impact
- \$60,000 – lake management plan for use, shoreland development, AIS, vegetation, and fisheries
- \$100,000 – boat surveillance program, including camera installation
- \$10,000 – monitor high risk launches for starry stonewort, and rapid response
- \$75,000 – support bay plant surveys, for management and early AIS warning system
- \$20,000 – support rapid response to eradicate/control flowering rush and other AIS

WHEREAS, in an October 23, 2020 email response, following discussion with the MCWD Board of Managers, the District Administrator communicated to Councilmember Fletcher that:

- The 2021 budget and levy had been adopted and certified to Hennepin and Carver Counties.
- There was limited time to evaluate the request, or the significant feasibility considerations, for inclusion into the 2021 budget.
- The District would take time in 2021 to thoughtfully evaluate the suite of proposed activities.

WHEREAS, in a November 6, 2020 letter the City of Greenwood requested that the MCWD, as the only party in a position to support an AIS prevention and remediation program, consider the ideas raised by Councilmember Fletcher through the truth in taxation final comment period for MCWD's 2021 budget, scheduled for November 19.

WHEREAS, at the November 19, 2020 Board Meeting, Greenwood City Councilmember Fletcher requested the MCWD consider integrating the \$345,000 proposal for funding into the 2021 budget.

WHEREAS, the MCWD Board of Managers has received, thoughtfully considered, and responded to the City of Greenwood's requests throughout 2020.

WHEREAS, in response to the City of Greenwood's November 6 and 19 request, the MCWD Board of Managers has evaluated the \$345,000 suite of activities proposed by Councilmember Fletcher, and has given careful consideration to a variety of factors including but not limited to:

- The proposal's strategic framing
- Data supporting the projected effectiveness of the proposal
- Existing work by state-regional-local agencies:
 - The MN AIS Research Center's statewide leadership on AIS research
 - Hennepin County's state funding to support AIS prevention and detection
 - The MN DNR's statewide leadership on rapid response
 - The LMCD's development of an AIS Master Plan for Lake Minnetonka
 - The role of local non-profits in assessing and managing aquatic plants on a bay basis
- Multijurisdictional partnership and public support
- The level of regional consensus on the problem, strategy and programmatic solutions
- Greenwood's acknowledgment that the public expenditures cannot assure success
- MCWD's past years of experience implementing a suite of similar programs
- MCWD's decision to sunset prior programming based on an evaluation of its efficacy
- The multi-year communication of that decision to MCWD's historic funding partners
- MCWD's publicly developed strategic focus, its authority, limited resources and capabilities
- The impact of the proposal to other long-planned, partner-supported initiatives

WHEREAS, based on its analysis, the MCWD Board of Managers has concluded that it is not the only party in a position to support an AIS prevention and remediation program, and that it would be imprudent to integrate the City of Greenwood's proposal into its 2021 budget.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers hereby decides to not modify its 2021 budget in response to requests made by the City of Greenwood, and directs the Board President and District Administrator to communicate this decision to the Greenwood City Council.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board of Managers hereby reaffirms its decision to sunset its AIS pilot programs, and directs staff to continue monitoring statewide trends in AIS programming to ensure the MCWD remains situationally aware of opportunities or threats that may cause the Board of Managers to reevaluate its strategic position on the issue.

Resolution Number 20- 092 was moved by Manager _____, seconded by Manager _____. Motion to adopt the resolution ___ ayes, ___ nays, ___ abstentions. Date: 12/3/2020

_____ Date: _____

Secretary



July 10, 2020

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board
Attn: Michael Hayman
15320 Minnetonka Blvd
Minnetonka, MN 55345

SENT VIA EMAIL
mhayman@minnehahacreek.org

Re: Comments Regarding MCWD 10-Year CIP

Dear MCWD Board,

The city of Greenwood received the request for comments regarding the MCWD 10-year CIP.

The city of Greenwood is not aware of any MCWD support for programs to prevent, detect, or control aquatic invasive species other than a common carp control program that is funded by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. While efforts to monitor and prevent the introduction of invasive species into Lake Minnetonka may not be as visible as the MCWD's capital projects, it is possible that they may do as much or more to protect the natural lake and creek environment. It is quite conceivable that ongoing MCWD support for existing and new programs such as flowering rush control, monitoring for stary stonewort, public launch monitoring and inspections, and milfoil control would take the watershed to new levels and have a dramatic long-term positive affect on lake and creek environments.

City Councilmember Tom Fletcher contacted MCWD Project Planning Manager Michael Hayman on 06.29.20 and asked if the MCWD had any data available on downstream water quality improvements from prior projects. Michael stated that the MCWD did have data available, which he would provide. As of our 07.07.20 city council meeting this data has not been received. Therefore, we respectfully request that the MCWD extend its CIP comment period to 08.06.20 to allow the Greenwood city council to review the requested MCWD data and discuss CIP comments at our next council meeting on 08.05.20 or that MCWD reallocate 10% (\$600,000) from its approximately \$6M annual capital project spending (not including \$2.75M in capital financing) to existing and new aquatic species prevention, detection, and control efforts in the watershed.

Thank you for providing the city of Greenwood with the opportunity to provide comments regarding the 10-year CIP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra J. Kind".

Debra J. Kind
Mayor, City of Greenwood
on behalf of the Greenwood City Council

CC: LMCD Board, LMA Board



July 24, 2020

The Honorable Debra Kind
Mayor of City of Greenwood
20225 Cottagewood Rd.
Deephaven, MN 55331

Re: Comments Regarding MCWD 10-Year CIP

Dear Mayor Kind,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District’s (MCWD) 10-Year capital improvement plan (CIP). MCWD is committed to protecting and improving the health of Lake Minnetonka, one of the state's treasured water resources, which underpins the quality of life of its surrounding communities. We recognize that our work is only possible in close collaboration with our communities, and value our partners' input, including on the annual review of our CIP.

I am writing to respond to the following points and questions raised in your letter:

1. Request for data on the effectiveness of MCWD's work in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway
2. MCWD's strategy for protecting and improving Lake Minnetonka
3. MCWD’s work in managing aquatic invasive species for ecological health
4. Request for an extension on the comment period deadline for the CIP

Request for data on the effectiveness of MCWD's work in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway

As your letter notes, on June 29, 2020, councilmember Fletcher contacted MCWD Project Planning Manager Michael Hayman seeking data from MCWD’s website regarding the Minnehaha Creek Greenway. Mr. Hayman promptly responded that, while raw data wasn’t available on the website, he was happy to provide any data that would be useful if Mr. Fletcher could be more specific in his request. While we remain happy to provide any data that the council would find educational on this topic, below is information related to your question regarding the District’s sustained effort to restore the most degraded section of Minnehaha Creek.

Minnehaha Creek appears on Minnesota’s §303(d) list of impaired waters due to impaired fish and macroinvertebrate communities, low dissolved oxygen, chloride, and fecal coliform bacteria. The downstream receiving water body, Lake Hiawatha, is impaired for excess nutrients. The total maximum daily load (TMDL) study approved by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identifies that the most pronounced increases in total phosphorus come from the stretch of creek between West 34th Street and Excelsior Boulevard in Hopkins and St. Louis Park.

For those reasons MCWD has focused in this geography, now known as the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, to achieve the following goals: (1) improve water quality by building systems to treat urban stormwater from the surrounding region; (2) improve biological communities and stream function by restoring channel geomorphology and habitat; (3) expand, connect and enhance riparian greenspace for the benefit of the Minnehaha Creek system and the surrounding communities.

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

In aggregate, this work will treat stormwater from 520 acres of the surrounding region and reduce pollutant loading by over 300 pounds per year. When finished, almost 9,000 lineal feet of Minnehaha Creek will have been restored from a ditched condition to a more historic and natural alignment, with the integration of hundreds of habitat features. The restored stream system has been reconnected to its floodplain and 38 acres of restored wetlands, with over 5,000 cubic yards of new floodplain storage created to mitigate flooding. The entire system is connected by more than 66 acres of newly accessible greenspace that includes more than 100,000 new native plantings, and serves to also connect housing, transit, and jobs.

There has been a measurable increase in the quality of Minnehaha Creek and downstream Lake Hiawatha since work began a decade ago. Phosphorus concentrations at sampling sites within the Greenway have significantly improved relative to those directly upstream. In Lake Hiawatha, the downstream receiving water body of Minnehaha Creek, phosphorus concentrations have improved by 19 percent and the average chlorophyll-a concentrations have improved to meet the state standard over the same period. Because there is a predictable lag between management inputs and system response, we anticipate these outcomes will compound in the coming years.

More granular information is available through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website, which is the centralized database for water quality monitoring data in the Twin Cities, including data collected by MCWD: <https://webapp.pca.state.mn.us/surface-water>

These results were made possible by a diverse coalition of public and private partners that provided more than \$7.5 million in outside funding to advance the goals for this restored corridor, which has recently been profiled by the National American Planning Association, the National Stream Restoration Symposium, and others.

Building off of the success and lessons learned in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, MCWD is excited to be actively working with partners to implement a parallel data-driven strategy to protect and improve Lake Minnetonka.

MCWD's strategy for protecting and improving Lake Minnetonka

As detailed in our 2017 Watershed Management Plan, which received broad support from our communities and partners, our strategy for protecting and improving Lake Minnetonka is two-fold: 1) Focusing on addressing the most significant sources of pollution to achieve long-term measurable results; and 2) Responding to partnership opportunities to integrate clean water benefits into public and private investments in the built environment.

Addressing the most significant sources of pollution

The largest and most focused source of pollution in Lake Minnetonka is not the immediate surrounding landscape that drains into the lake. It is the major tributaries that flow into the lake. As a regional agency, MCWD is uniquely positioned to address these upstream sources of pollution.

The data shows that the three largest outside pollutant sources for Lake Minnetonka are the Six Mile Creek, Long Lake Creek, and Painter Creek systems. These systems bring nearly three times as much nutrient pollution into Lake Minnetonka as the entire direct drainage area of the lake combined. As such, we have focused our Capital Improvement Plan largely around addressing these principal sources. This strategy is consistent with the EPA-approved TMDL for the upper Minnehaha Creek watershed, which identified upstream lakes as a significant source of downstream pollutant loading. To reflect these needs, 60% of the funds in MCWD's 10-year CIP are dedicated to addressing issues in these three systems to directly improve the water quality and ecological health of Lake Minnetonka.

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

Our first area of sustained focus is in the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay subwatershed, a complex system of 14 lakes that represents one of the largest sources of pollutants into Lake Minnetonka, in an area experiencing rapid development and land-use change. Work to date has included restoring 104 acres of wetlands, treating 22 acres of regional stormwater, reducing carp populations by 142,000 pounds, and creating 30 acres of newly-accessible public green space.

By 2021 the work is projected to reduce nutrient loading by 545 pounds per year throughout the system. We're already seeing results: In the past 10 years, nutrient concentrations at the outlet of Six Mile Creek into Lake Minnetonka have improved by 25 percent. The work has been supported by a strong partnership of local communities, Hennepin and Carver counties, Three Rivers Park District, the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, and others, and has leveraged more than \$1 million in outside capital for work to date.

Responding to opportunities

In addition to proactively addressing the main drivers of Lake Minnetonka's issues through long-term planning of our capital project spending and program activities, we also recognize that land-use change can happen quickly. Therefore, the District has positioned itself to remain responsive to opportunities to integrate clean water infrastructure into public and private investments in the built landscape. In recent years we have responded to a number of such opportunities within the Lake Minnetonka direct drainage area, on projects and plans to improve water quality, including:

- Integrating stormwater improvements into transportation and development in the City of Wayzata
- The preservation and restoration of Big Island in partnership with the City of Orono
- Collaboration with Hennepin County to enhance the shoreline of the Highway 101 causeway
- Integrating stormwater infrastructure into transit projects and development in the City of Mound
- Implementing numerous shoreline restoration demonstration sites across the Lake
- Working to develop conservation easements that preserve the natural environment
- Collaborating with municipal partners on long-range infrastructure planning

MCWD's work in managing aquatic invasive species for ecological health

In addition to landscape-driven water quality issues, MCWD recognizes aquatic invasive species as one of many factors that influence the ecological health of water resources. In cases where a species is identified as a driver of poor water quality in a system, and science-backed, cost-effective measures exist to manage it with a predictable response, we have pursued these management activities in coordination with, and funding from, our partners.

As you mentioned in your letter, we are in the midst of implementing one of the most comprehensive carp management strategies in the state within the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay subwatershed. This program was launched after the EPA-approved TMDL identified carp-driven internal nutrient loading as a major driver of water quality impairment across the system. Using evidence-based management techniques developed at the University of Minnesota, MCWD has invested more than \$1 million to sustainably reduce populations of this invasive fish throughout the system by more than 142,000 pounds, over half of the reduction goal for the subwatershed. This work has enjoyed broad support from Hennepin and Carver Counties, Three Rivers Park District, surrounding communities, and \$567,000 in legislative funding provided by the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council.

As part of its holistic and data-driven approach to ecological health, MCWD has sunset its former AIS pilot programs for activities such as watercraft inspection grants, rapid response, and applied research. Funding from these programs has been refocused and aligned to more directly address the biggest sources

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

of pollutants degrading Lake Minnetonka. This shift has been conducted gradually and in close coordination with our partners on the work.

These efforts have judiciously aligned MCWD's resources with organizational capabilities, and have maximized effectiveness and overall watershed benefit, while also thoughtfully responding to the statewide framework that has evolved since we first launched our AIS pilot programs. As MCWD has adjusted its approach, research has since been centralized through the University of Minnesota's Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center, rapid response activities are led and coordinated by the Department of Natural Resources, and grants for prevention and inspection are funded annually by the state legislature and distributed locally through counties.

Request for an extension on the CIP comment period deadline

Your letter requests an extension on the 10-year CIP comment period until August 6, 2020, in order to allow for further council discussion at its next meeting. MCWD will grant that extension.

Please note that most activities listed in your letter are not capital improvement projects, and thus would not be candidates for inclusion in the CIP. As we value open dialog with our communities, we will also be reaching out to pursue a meeting between MCWD and the City of Greenwood.

Lake Minnetonka is a complex system that requires the earnest effort of multiple agencies, institutions, and individuals working together to protect and improve its natural qualities, and we are committed to playing a key role in that stewardship. On behalf of the MCWD Board of Managers, I look forward to continuing our science-driven work in partnership with our communities to enhance this iconic resource.

Sincerely,



Sherry White
President, Board of Managers
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

CC: Lake Minnetonka Conservation District
Lake Minnetonka Association

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



August 5, 2020

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board
Attn: Michael Hayman
15320 Minnetonka Blvd
Minnetonka, MN 55345

SENT VIA EMAIL
mhayman@minnehahacreek.org

Re: Comments Regarding MCWD CIP

Dear MCWD Board,

This is a follow up to our 07.10.20 letter requesting an extension of time to prepare comments on the MCWD CIP and the extension until 08.06.20 that Greenwood received in the letter dated 07.24.20 from MCWD Board of Managers President Sherry White. Thank you for the extension and the information provided in her letter and the information provided in District Administrator James Wisker's email of 07.31.20 to Greenwood Councilmember Tom Fletcher.

The Executive Summary of the MCWD 2017 Watershed Management Plan states that Lake Minnetonka with 22 square miles is the 10th largest and one of the most heavily recreated waterbodies in Minnesota. The Plan further indicates that the upper watershed contains 104 square miles and the lower watershed contains 52 square miles for a total of 156 square miles. Thus, Lake Minnetonka occupies roughly 14% of the total watershed area and is the dominant water body in the watershed. With the exception of the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay-Jennings Bay area, the MCWD 2017 Management Plan shows that virtually all of Lake Minnetonka's bays are not degraded as their water quality meets or more typically significantly exceeds state standards.

We did not find numerical phosphorus concentration trend data in either the 2019 Annual Activity Report or 2017 Watershed Management Plan, but James Wisker's email did state that Lake Hiawatha's 19% phosphorus reduction from 2010 through 2019 was the greatest reduction of any of the 22 "anchor" lake monitoring substations throughout the watershed. The email did not indicate what portion of the 19% reduction should be attributed to City of Minneapolis Lake Hiawatha area stormwater improvements. According to an October 2013 Tetra Tech report to the MCWD, Lake Hiawatha, which currently occupies 53 acres, was a shallow wetland named Rice Lake before it was acquired by the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) in 1923. The lake had stands of wild rice that grew in the shallow waters before 1.25 million yards were dredged from the Rice Lake wetland area in 1929 to create the Hiawatha Golf Course.

The MCWD's 2017 Management Plan states that one of the four strategic goals of the District is "Ecological Integrity – To restore, maintain, and improve the health of ecological systems." Greenwood's position is that Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) such as starry stonewort and hydrilla are a major and constant threats to the health of ecological systems on Lake Minnetonka. Despite these and other threats, Board of Managers President Sherry White's letter states, "MCWD has sunset its former AIS pilot programs for activities such as watercraft inspection grants, rapid response, and applied

research. Funding from these programs has been refocused and aligned to more directly address the biggest sources of pollutants degrading Lake Minnetonka.” This is despite the fact that from a dollars standpoint with a \$15,350,000 2020 budget and a levy, which in the case of the City of Greenwood exceeds 10% of the City’s levy, the MCWD is the entity that is best positioned to bring financial resources to bear on watershed AIS research, prevention, and response.

MCWD’s sole focus on carp and refocusing away from any other AIS prevention, rapid response, and research has left Lake Minnetonka’s ecology in a precarious position. As a practical matter, there is not nor will there be funding at the State level (legislative or DNR) as stated in Sherry White’s letter to provide appropriate inspection or rapid response activities and the University of Minnesota’s AIS Research Center efforts are limited by its current funding. By comparison, other watersheds such as Pelican River and North Fork Crow River have active ongoing AIS programs.

MCWD’s refocusing away from AIS makes little sense given the fact that Lake Minnetonka is the dominant waterbody and ecological resource in the watershed. In comparison, Lake Hiawatha that James Wisker cited in his email is a manmade lake with less than .5% of Lake Minnetonka’s area. It is further not unreasonable to expect that any invasive species such as starry stonewort or hydrilla that establishes itself in Lake Minnetonka will find its way downstream to Lake Hiawatha and effectively negate any other improvements there as the invasives dominate and crowd out native species.

In a perfect world aquatic invasive species would wait for the MCWD to complete its other projects. However, we do not control AIS any more than we control the Coronavirus and we need to be prepared with prevention and response programs. The heavy recreational use of Lake Minnetonka dramatically increases the risk of AIS introduction into the lake and watershed. Conversely the heavy recreational use also increases the benefits of AIS prevention and remediation. The MCWD is the only party that is in a financial position to support an aggressive AIS prevention and remediation program. The lack of current support for AIS prevention and remediation efforts is a complete abdication of the MCWD’s responsibility as stated in its strategic goal to maintain the health of the watershed’s ecological systems.

In these times of tight budgets Greenwood also understands the need to control levies. We therefore respectfully request that the MCWD adjust its CIP plan and timetables to shift \$600,000 of the \$6,000,000 annual CIP budget to AIS funding in support of existing projects such as boat inspections, monitoring for AIS in boat launch and other high risk areas, AIS rapid response reserves, AIS control to strengthen native species, and AIS research that is relevant to the watershed. Without this type of commitment, the MCWD will continue to turn its back on the dominant water body in the watershed.

Thank you for your consideration and for listening to us.

Sincerely,



Debra J. Kind
Mayor, City of Greenwood
on behalf of the Greenwood City Council

CC: LMCD Board, LMA Board



August 17, 2020

The Honorable Debra Kind
Mayor of City of Greenwood
20225 Cottagewood Rd.
Deephaven, MN 55331

Re: Comments Regarding MCWD 10-Year CIP

Dear Mayor Kind,

Thank you for the thoughtful comments in your letter. It reflects a high level of engagement with our work and a commitment, which we share, to protect and enhance the health of Lake Minnetonka. These comments will be considered when the Board of Managers discusses MCWD's 10-year Capital Improvement Plan at its August 27 meeting.

There does appear to be a continued misunderstanding of the strategy behind our work, its measured effectiveness, and the role of aquatic invasive species programming in our goal of enhancing the ecological health of our water resources.

If it would be helpful, MCWD would be happy to meet and discuss these topics further. Please contact James Wisner at Jwisner@minnehahacreek.org if you would like to find time to connect, and we can align schedules to meet digitally in advance of the August 27 Meeting.

On behalf of the MCWD Board of Managers, I would like to once again thank the council for its engagement and input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sherry White". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Sherry White
President, Board of Managers
Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

CC: Lake Minnetonka Conservation District
Lake Minnetonka Association

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

From: tfletcher@aexcom.com
To: [James Wisker](#)
Cc: ["Rob Roy"](#)
Subject: Follow up to our conversation
Date: Friday, October 16, 2020 1:28:35 PM

James:

As a follow up to the call with yourself, Sherry White, Jessica Loftus, Rob Roy, and myself in which Jessica asked about more specific suggestions / amounts for MCWD involvement in the AIS arena, we have prepared the following options for the watershed district to consider as part of its budget / program process. Please let me know if you have any questions and I would appreciate your providing this information to your Board of Managers.

Support applied research by Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center for work relevant to Lake Minnetonka such as use of natural carp pathogens, E-DNA monitoring, zebras mussel control. \$50,000

Support U of M St Anthony Falls Laboratory Boat Wake Impact on lakes research \$30,000

Support the creation of a comprehensive lake management plan that sets out measurable goals for use, shoreland development, AIS, vegetation management, fisheries, etc. based on Lake Minnetonka's physiological setting, water chemistry, biological systems, and community values. \$60,000

Support Boat Surveillance and Inspection Program at public boat launches including camera installation in 2021. \$100,000

Support consistent monitoring of higher risk areas for AIS introduction to Lake Minnetonka such as public and other launch sites and have backup funding for early response with primary emphasis on starry stonewort. \$10,000

Select a common contractor and financially support bay plant surveys such as those conducted by Lake Improvement Districts with the intent that the surveys can provide a lake area database for to assist with vegetation management decision making, native plants restoration, and an early warning system for AIS introductions to the Lake. \$75,000

Support efforts for "rapid response" to eradicate / control flowering rush and any other AIS when it appears likely that the targeted intervention will likely have long term positive results to either remove or substantially reducing the occurrence of the targeted AIS in the watershed. \$20,000

It is understood that none of the above expenditures provide guaranteed assurance of success in stopping AIS. They could however save hundreds of thousands of dollars if new AIS are controlled before they get a foothold in Lake Minnetonka. If these efforts are carried out in a meaningful way they will reduce the chance of new AIS introduction to the lake. For example, starry stonewort is currently the greatest AIS threat to the Lake Minnetonka ecosystem. Increased and more visible inspections would reduce the likelihood of starry stonewort's introduction to the Lake. If starry

stonewort is introduced despite these efforts, PLM Lake Management has been successful with minimizing its spread in other lakes where it had been quickly detected through the proposed monitoring and treated in a targeted manner with a consistent ongoing program.

The MCWD's expressed attitude during our call was that its Board wants to focus only on projects with 100% guaranteed results. As a practical matter, our sense is when dealing with natural systems 100% success is never guaranteed. The MCWD needs to recognize with respect to AIS that it is the prime government entity on the environmental protection front lines for the lake and that its acknowledged lack of support and oversight has resulted in at best a haphazard approach to AIS prevention in the watershed. Just as a City cannot disband its police and fire departments because they cannot prevent every crime and fire, the MCWD should not turn its back on AIS and continue to leave a large gap in the Lake's defenses because 100% success is not guaranteed. The City of Greenwood noted these concerns early enough in the MCWD 2021 budget process cycle to allow the MCWD to consider these concerns as part of that process

Thank you,

Tom Fletcher & Rob Roy
City of Greenwood Council Members

From: [James Wisker](#)
To: ["tfletcher@aexcom.com"](mailto:tfletcher@aexcom.com)
Cc: ["Rob Roy"](#)
Subject: RE: Follow up to our conversation
Date: Friday, October 23, 2020 5:08:00 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Councilmember Fletcher,

I am writing to confirm receipt of your e-mail requesting \$345,000 for seven proposed activities to be included in the 2021 MCWD budget. I have shared it with our Board of Managers.

Our budgeting process for 2021 is completed. As required by law, MCWD's Board of Managers held a public hearing and certified the budget and levy with Hennepin and Carver counties in advance of September 15. Moreover, there is not nearly enough time ahead of 2021 to evaluate the benefits or significant feasibility considerations of these seven individual requests.

That said, in 2021 we can take the time to thoughtfully evaluate the suite of activities you've proposed. For the reasons outlined in our previous communications, it is likely that much of the proposal will fall outside MCWD's strategic focus on building high-impact capital projects that measurably improve water quality and manage high water. As we have noted, the District's Capital Improvement Plan focuses a majority of its spending on improving the three most polluted tributaries into Lake Minnetonka, in order to address the lake's most degraded bays and promote ecological integrity by providing healthy in-lake conditions that allow native species to thrive. This is something MCWD is uniquely positioned to address.

As we evaluate the initiatives you have proposed, we may require more detail than is provided in your e-mail and will reach out as needed for additional information.

Thank you again for your continued engagement. Like you, we are committed to protecting and improving the health of Lake Minnetonka, one of the state's marquee water resources.

Sincerely,

James Wisker
District Administrator

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
15320 Minnetonka Blvd.
Minnetonka, MN 55345

Office: 952-641-4509
Fax: 952-471-0682
www.minnehahacreek.org



November 6, 2020

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
Attn: James Wisker, District Administrator
15320 Minnetonka Blvd
Minnetonka, MN 55345

SENT VIA EMAIL
jwisker@minnehahacreek.org

Re: Comments Regarding MCWD 2021 Budget

District Administrator Wisker:

This letter is in response to your 10.23.20 email response to Greenwood Councilmembers Fletcher and Roy's 10.16.20 email that included their recommendations for MCWD support of Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention efforts. Your email stated that the MCWD's "budgeting process for 2021 is complete" and implies that Fletcher and Roy's 10.16.20 email was too late – even though it was in response to Board Managers Sherry White and Jessica Loftus' request for Fletcher and Roy to provide specific suggestions / amounts for MCWD involvement in AIS. Your email further states that while the MCWD can take time in 2021 to evaluate "the suite of proposed activities you've proposed," it is likely that they fall outside of the MCWD's "strategic focus."

Regarding your comment that the MCWD "budgeting process for 2021 is complete"... The city of Greenwood first contacted the MCWD on 07.10.20 regarding MCWD support for AIS prevention initiatives in the 2021 budget. More importantly, at the 09.10.20 MCWD Board of Managers meeting, the Board approved the MCWD's 2021 preliminary budget and announced that a public meeting for further comment on the 2021 budget would be scheduled for 11.19.20. Therefore, we certainly expect the MCWD Board is open to making revisions to the 2021 budget, and we respectfully request that the MCWD staff and Board give thoughtful analysis and consideration to including some or all of the AIS prevention ideas that Fletcher and Roy recommended in the MCWD's 2021 budget.

Regarding your comment about the lack of fit with the MCWD's "strategic focus"... We respectfully request that the MCWD adjust its strategic focus dynamically in response to the issues that it is confronted with and public input. As stated in our 08.05.20 letter, the MCWD is the only party that is in a financial position to support an aggressive AIS prevention and remediation program. Your action is needed now.

We also request that you distribute this letter to the MCWD Board of Managers for their awareness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Debra J. Kind". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debra J. Kind
Mayor, City of Greenwood
on behalf of the Greenwood City Council

CC: LMCD Board, LMA Board