



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** MCWD Board of Managers  
**From:** Telly Mamayek  
**Date:** January 18, 2019  
**Re:** 2020 Strategic Communications Plan

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### **Purpose:**

To review and receive Managers' feedback on draft goals and the process for creating an organizational strategic communications plan for the MCWD for implementation in 2020.

### **Background:**

The MCWD's 2017 Watershed Management Plan identifies the strategic priorities of building high-impact capital projects and integrating land use and water planning while also remaining responsive to needs and opportunities across the watershed district. While the Plan was adopted with the support of its communities, the MCWD needs the ongoing support of its key stakeholders to ensure the Plan's long-term success.

The 2020 Strategic Communications Plan will be an organizational blueprint that ensures the MCWD's outreach activities for all of its projects and initiatives align with its mission, vision, goals and meets the objectives outlined in the Watershed Management Plan.

To assist in the development of the 2020 Strategic Communications Plan, staff is proposing issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to hire a public relations consultant with experience in public affairs work. The MCWD's 2019 budget includes \$50,000 for strategic communications planning.

Staff began preparing for this project in 2018 by creating a draft list of goals for the 2020 Strategic Communications Plan. Agreement on the goals at this stage will provide clarity for the RFP and provide a solid foundation for the plan's development. To provide context for those goals, staff also categorized key stakeholders and drafted some example objectives and strategies. This exercise provides a comprehensive look at how the District's projects and initiatives fit into the plan. The 2020 Strategic Communications Plan Goals document (attached) was reviewed by the District's leadership team on November 26, 2018 and December 20, 2018 and by the Program Managers on January 16, 2019.

Staff also has been getting input from public relations agencies that specialize in public affairs work. These include John Himle, who has a long history of advising the MCWD through his affiliation with

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Himle-Horner and Himle-Rapp and who now is affiliated with Padilla. Other firms that have been consulted so far are Tunheim and Weber-Shandwick. Meetings with additional firms are planned. All of the firms who have been contacted have expressed interest in responding to the RFP.

## **Summary:**

### Goals:

The general purpose of the 2020 Strategic Communications Plan is to ensure the effective delivery of key messages to stakeholders to achieve the following goals, which align with the strategic priorities outlined in MCWD's 2017 Watershed Management Plan.

1. The MCWD has the support and assistance of local and state officials for its major capital project initiatives
2. The MCWD has the support of local government officials and developers for early coordination on land use change
3. The MCWD receives more funding and leverages more partnership contributions for its capital projects, operations and programs
4. The MCWD's responsive program has the support of its key stakeholders across the District, especially those in non-focal geographies
5. The MCWD is perceived by its key stakeholders and the general public as a credible, transparent and responsive agency that adds value in its communities.

It is anticipated that these draft goals will be refined during the strategic communications planning process.

### Scope:

The development of the 2020 Strategic Communications Plan will be a two-part process that will involve the consultant working closely with the MCWD to inform and create the plan.

- A. Discovery
  1. Review of the MCWD's guiding documents
  2. Review of past audits of MCWD stakeholders
  3. Evaluation of internal and external stakeholders' current perceptions and needs
- B. Build the plan
  1. Refine goals and audiences
  2. Identify and prioritize objectives, strategies and tactics

The process of how to work with the consultant, including identifying members of the team that will be involved and the desired level of Board involvement, is still to be determined.

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Process and timeline:

Staff proposes the following process for selecting the consultant and drafting the 2020 Strategic Communications Plan:

February - March: CAC and Board review; issue RFP

April – May: Interview applicants and select consultant

June - July: Discovery

August - October: Build the plan

November - December: Review, refine and adopt plan

January 2020: Implement plan

**Next Steps:**

Pending Board input, staff is planning to provide an update to the CAC in February and bring the RFP to the Board for approval in February or March.

If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact: Telly Mamayek at (952) 641-4508 or [tmamayek@minnehahacreek.org](mailto:tmamayek@minnehahacreek.org).

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## **2020 Strategic Communications Plan Goals**

**1/18/19 Draft**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) is a special-purpose unit of local government that works in partnership to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations. Located in a 178-square mile area in the western Twin Cities metro, the MCWD consists of 129 lakes, eight major creeks and thousands of wetlands across 29 communities in Hennepin and Carver Counties. The MCWD includes such iconic water bodies as Lake Minnetonka, the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes and Minnehaha Falls.

### **PURPOSE STATEMENT:**

The MCWD's 2017 Watershed Management Plan represents a significant shift in direction from previous plans. It identifies the strategic priorities of building high-impact capital projects and integrating land use and water planning while also remaining responsive to needs and opportunities across the watershed district. While the Plan was adopted with the support of its communities, the MCWD needs the ongoing support of its key stakeholders to ensure the Plan's long-term success.

MCWD's Strategic Communications Plan is an organizational plan that relies on the participation of all District staff in the distribution of key messages to stakeholders to achieve the goals of the plan.

### **GOALS:**

1. The MCWD has the support and assistance of local and state officials for its major capital project initiatives
2. The MCWD has the support of local government officials and developers for early coordination on land use change
3. The MCWD receives more funding and leverages more partnership contributions for its capital projects, operations and programs
4. The MCWD's responsive program has the support of its key stakeholders across the District, especially those in non-focal geographies
5. The MCWD is perceived by its key stakeholders and the general public as a credible, transparent and responsive agency that adds value in its communities

## **KEY STAKEHOLDERS:**

While the primary target audiences of this communications plan are elected officials and developers, other key stakeholders listed here are integral to the accomplishment of some of the plan's goals.

### **Actively Engage**

#### Internal

- Staff
- Board of Managers

#### External

- Government
  - Policymakers
  - Staff
- Developers
- Property owners in focal geographies
  - Homeowners
  - Business owners
  - Community Institutions (hospitals, faith groups, etc.)

### **Actively Inform**

#### Internal

- CAC

#### External

- Partner organizations
- Interested Public
  - Lake associations
  - Neighborhood leaders
  - Residents living near projects
  - Trained volunteers
- Media

### **Passively Inform**

- Property owners outside focal geographies
  - Homeowners (seeking BMP info, permits, etc.)
  - Business owners
  - Community Institutions (hospitals, faith groups, etc.)
- Water-based recreation enthusiasts (seeking water level info)
- General public

**Goal #1: The MCWD has the support and assistance of local and state officials for its major capital project initiatives**

Focus area: Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed

Potential Objectives and Strategies:

1. By 2022, 80% of the government agencies in the Western Growth Area express their support for the SMCHB Subwatershed Plan in resolutions, policies and funding for the next ten years.
  - a. Strategy: Pursue City of Victoria's adoption of the Western Growth Area in its comp plan
2. 80% of the Planning Commissions, City Councils, and County Commissioners in the SMCHB Subwatershed adopt and begin promoting the region's brand identity within one year of the brand's launch.
  - a. Strategy: Pursue resolutions from cities and counties in the SMCHB to adopt the brand
  - b. Strategy: Work with cities and counties to incorporate the brand in their communications
3. The 2020 Minnesota Legislature approves a bonding request for the Halsted Bay alum dosing facility.
  - a. Strategy: Persuade the Minnetrista City Council, Hennepin County Board and other key publics to express support for the project.
4. There is a 50% increase in key stakeholders' understanding of the science of restoring ecological health and how a healthy environment benefits communities by 2022, as measured by a survey.
5. Key stakeholders participate in and collaborate on programming in the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed by 2022.
  - a. Strategy: Develop pilot programming in the SMCHB
6. There is a 50% increase in the number of interested publics who understand the value of protecting and restoring SMCHB's water resources and advocate in support of MCWD's projects by 2022, as measured by a survey
  - a. Strategy: Provide presentations to community groups
  - b. Strategy: Increase the number of Master Water Stewards in the SMCHB
  - c. Strategy: Connect Master Water Stewards to lake associations in the SMCHB
  - d. Strategy: Engage CAC as advocates for the MCWD in its communities

Focus area: Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed

Potential Objectives and Strategies:

1. All of the Planning Commissions, City Councils, and the County Board in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway adopt the Greenway's brand identity by 2021.
  - a. Strategy: Pursue resolutions from cities in the Greenway and the county to adopt the brand

- b. Strategy: Work with cities and the county to incorporate the brand in their communications and to promote the Greenway as a regional attraction
- 2. There is a 50% increase in the number of key stakeholders who view the MCWD as a value-added partner in the master planning process for improvements along Minnehaha Creek in Minneapolis by 2022, as measured by a survey.
- 3. There is a 50% increase in the number of key stakeholders who understand the science of stormwater management by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: Increase outreach about Gray's Bay Dam operations
  - b. Strategy: Increase outreach on the complexity of the groundwater/surface water issues in the Nokomis/Hiawatha area and the multijurisdictional approach to address the problems
- 4. There is a 50% increase in the number of elected officials who include MCWD's projects in their communities' climate resiliency plans by 2022.
- 5. Key stakeholders participate in and collaborate on programming in the Minnehaha Creek Subwatershed by 2022.
  - a. Strategy: Develop a programming plan for the Minnehaha Creek Greenway
- 6. There is a 50% increase in the number of interested public members who understand the value of protecting and restoring the greenway's water resources and advocate in support of MCWD's projects by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: Provide presentations to community groups
  - b. Strategy: Increase Master Water Stewards in the Greenway
  - c. Strategy: Connect Master Water Stewards to neighborhood associations in the Greenway

**Goal #2: The MCWD has the support of local government officials and developers for early coordination on land use change**

Focus area: The Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed (as a pilot)

Potential Objectives and Strategies:

- 1. By 2022, 80% of elected officials and developers in the SMCHB subwatershed support early coordination with the MCWD on project design through resolution, policy and practice.
  - a. Strategy: Provide presentations to city councils, planning commissions and developer groups
- 2. By 2022, 80% of development in the Western Growth Area is predicated on early coordination with the MCWD.
  - a. Strategy: Persuade the city of Victoria to change its land use policy to require all land use change to be coordinated with the MCWD at the sketch plan phase

3. There is a 50% increase in the number of key stakeholders in the SMCHB who see the MCWD in a positive light – as a value-added asset, and as a partner in creating successful cities and promoting responsible and sustainable development, as measured by a survey.

**Goal #3: The MCWD receives more funding and leverages more partnership contributions for its capital projects, operations and programs**

Focus area: Focal geographies

Potential Objectives and Strategies:

1. There is a 50% increase in grant funders' and partners' understanding of the benefits of working with MCWD and support of future projects by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: Secure additional grant funding from the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for the MCWD's work in the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed
  - b. Strategy: Secure grant funding for the Arden Park restoration, offsetting expenses incurred by the MCWD and the City of Edina
2. There is a 50% increase in partners' support for the MCWD's pilot programming and capital projects by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: Develop new partnerships and test new programming for potential replication

**Goal #4: The MCWD's responsive program has the support of its key stakeholders across the District, especially those in non-focal geographies**

Focus area: Districtwide

Potential Objectives and Strategies:

1. There is a 50% increase in the number of government agencies (elected officials and staff) and property owners (developers, homeowners and businesses) who view the MCWD as a partner in their projects, rather than as a regulator, by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: MCWD updates its permitting program to be more user friendly and customer-focused
  - b. Strategy: MCWD offers financial assistance to government agencies and property owners for projects that accomplish mutual goals.
  - c. Strategy: MCWD does presentations to city councils, planning commissions, development groups on its responsive program
2. There is a 50% decrease in the number of complaints from elected officials, homeowners and businesses about the MCWD's focused and responsive approach by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: MCWD offers financial assistance to property owners for projects that meet their goals
  - b. Strategy: MCWD provides clear information about the grant funding process and the criteria used for distributing funds



- c. Strategy: MCWD does presentations to city councils, planning commissions, civic groups and lake/neighborhood associations about its responsive program
3. There is a 50% increase in key stakeholders' access to educational information and programming that increases their understanding of water quality issues and how they can help by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: Partner on existing programming in non-focal geographies
  - b. Strategy: Increase Master Water Stewards' capacity to do outreach in non-focal geographies

**Goal #5: The MCWD is perceived by its key stakeholders and the general public as a credible, transparent and responsive agency that adds value in its communities**

Focus area: Districtwide

Potential Objectives and Strategies:

1. There is a 50% increase in the number of elected officials and developers who view the MCWD as an innovative, value-added partner that solves problems on a regional scale and contributes to sustainable communities by 2022, as measured by a survey.
2. There is a 50% increase in the number of key stakeholders who view the MCWD as a regional resource for natural resource science by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: Make the MCWD's data easily accessible and understandable
3. There is a 50% increase in the number of organizations that consider MCWD's Balanced Urban Ecology Approach a model for others to follow by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: Promote benefits of the approach to target audiences
  - b. Strategy: Pursue recognition of the approach
4. There is a 50% increase in key stakeholders' access to educational information and programming that increases their understanding of water quality issues and how they can help by 2022, as measured by a survey.
  - a. Strategy: Partner on existing programming in non-focal geographies
  - b. Strategy: Increase Master Water Stewards' capacity to do outreach in non-focal geographies