



MEMORANDUM

To: MCWD Board of Managers

From: Anna Brown

Date: August 20, 2018

Re: Policy and Planning Committee item 4.1 SMCHB Habitat Restoration Project Update

Purpose:

At the August 23, 2018 Policy and Planning Committee Meeting, staff will provide an update on planning and project initiatives in the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed (SMCHB). This memo provides a summary of some of the major project initiatives that will be discussed at this meeting, including Wassermann West Lakefront Park and phase one of the SMCHB Habitat Restoration Project (carp management).

Wassermann West Lakefront Park

Background:

In early 2017, the District and City of Victoria identified an opportunity to collaborate on the joint development of a park and water quality improvement project on a 33.5 acre site on the west shoreline of Lake Wassermann. The site includes a 22 acre wetland with six acres of open marsh, eight acres of upland, 700 feet of stream channel, and an undisturbed wooded ridgeline overlooking the lake. The site is an identified source of phosphorus pollution to Lake Wassermann, which is impaired for excess nutrients. In addition to supporting the District's public interest in protecting and enhancing high value conservation land and improving water quality on priority water bodies, the property is of interest to the City for providing public access and supporting its park, trail, and open space goals. This project has potential to be the first highly visible project in SMCHB, serving as a physical node to engage the public with the otherwise invisible work of lake restoration, and long term will connect into the broader interpretive programming in SMCHB.

In February 2017 the District entered into a purchase agreement for the property. In May 2017 the City and District entered into a cooperative agreement to establish coordinated planning and implementation of park and natural resource improvements on site, as well as establish a collaborative ownership structure. Subsequently, in November 2017 the District and City

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mutually approved a contract for preliminary design for the park and natural resource improvements.

Summary:

Preliminary design is now substantially complete and the City and District have been working to develop a framework and timeline for preparing final design and moving into construction. Staff have led discussions around park programming, specifically how it may serve as an asset in the broader initiative to develop an overarching place-making strategy that highlights the unique natural assets of the subwatershed. Staff have further participated in meetings with the City’s Park and Recreation Committee, Finance Committee, and City Council to develop options for funding and financing the park improvements.

At the August 23, 2018 Planning and Policy Committee meeting, staff will provide a briefing on the status of these discussions with City staff and policy makers. Staff will outline project costs, roles and responsibilities for implementing the park and natural resource improvements, the financing scenarios that have been examined and potential next steps. Staff will further brief the committee on the SMCHB place-making strategy and how this project may serve as a catalyst within that initiative.

SMCHB Habitat Restoration Project: Phase I

Background:

In May 2017 the District submitted an application to Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council for a system-wide carp management and habitat restoration program in SMCHB subwatershed. Through the SMCHB subwatershed plan development process, carp were identified as a primary driver of degrading habitat conditions in the subwatersheds 14 deep and shallow lakes. This comprehensive program would restore 2,488 acres of in-lake habitat by managing carp through:

- Strategic fish barrier installation
- Aeration of reproduction areas to keep predator fish alive
- Adult biomass removal

In May 2018 the MN Legislature approved the Lessard Sams funding bill granting the District \$567,000 in funding for carp management in SMCHB. The grant period formally began on July 1, 2018 and runs through June 20, 2021. The approved work plan for the program prioritizes construction of capital infrastructure – barriers and aeration installation – in 2018/2019. Adult biomass removal will occur throughout the three year grant period.

Summary:

At the August 23, 2018 Policy and Planning Committee Meeting, staff will provide an update on the SMCHB Habitat Restoration Program, including the following items:

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- Fish removal progress and workplan
- Status of securing land rights for aeration and barriers
- Carp barrier design briefing

Next Steps:

Staff anticipates bringing the carp barrier design forward for consideration at the September 13, 2018 Board Meeting.

Other Initiatives:

In addition to these efforts, staff may provide a briefing on other project initiatives underway in SMCHB, including:

- Pierson Lake Headwaters Restoration
- East Auburn Stormwater Enhancement Project
- Western Growth Area Planning

If there are questions in advance of the meeting, please contact: Anna Brown at (952) 641-4522 or abrown@minnehahacreek.org

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