



Title: Turbid-Lundsten Corridor Planning

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Purpose:

At the December 17, 2020 Planning and Policy Committee (PPC) Meeting, staff will provide an update on the next phase of focused project planning work in the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay (SMCHB) Subwatershed, the development of an area plan for the Turbid-Lundsten Corridor.

Background:

In 2014, building on the successful focused implementation model piloted in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, the MCWD Board of Managers selected the SMCHB Subwatershed as a priority geography for capital project implementation. In 2017, through the Watershed Management Plan, the MCWD Board of Managers adopted the SMCHB subwatershed implementation plan, which integrates identified water resources issues and natural resource opportunities with local land use and planning context. Due to the geographic scale and varied political landscapes across the subwatershed, SMCHB was subdivided into four management units, each with unique issues, drivers, and strategies, and distinct partnership approaches. Through this process, the Pierson-Marsh-Wassermann management unit broadly, and specifically the restoration of Wassermann Lake, was identified as a short term implementation opportunity.

From 2017 through today, MCWD has focused capital project implementation on Wassermann Lake and its drainage area, while remaining responsive to other opportunities that have emerged across the subwatershed. Through this focused capital project work, we have accomplished the following:

- Addressed all identified watershed sources of phosphorus to Wassermann Lake
- Reduced common carp below the target density of 50 kg/ha through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council Habitat Restoration Program
- Created the City's first nature-based park that restores habitat, protects and improves Wassermann Lake, and leverages unique interpretation to raise public awareness of the watershed
- Secured funding to address internal loading through alum treatment planned for 2021, a project which is predicted to result in Wassermann Lake meeting state water quality standards
- Leveraged 1.06 million dollars of outside investment into the City through the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, the Board of Water and Soil Resources Clean Water Fund, and partnership with Lennar, a private developer

In addition to the focused project implementation work completed in partnership with the City of Victoria, in 2018 MCWD participated in Victoria's Comprehensive Plan development process. This cooperative planning effort integrated investments in Wassermann Lake into a broader greenway vision as the City grows west into the 27-acre future annexation area called the western growth area. MCWD and the City jointly developed a vision and recommendations for an interconnected greenbelt system in the City of Victoria that "build[s] off of the City's existing park and trail system, incorporating new public nodes on each lake, connect[s] to passive and active recreational areas, and enhance[s] the public experience of natural systems". The Greenway Corridor Policy provides an innovative framework for integrating future capital project investment into local growth planning, leveraging each agency's unique strengths and authorities. This vision document sets the stage for the next phase of project implementation in partnership with the City of Victoria.

At the August 27, 2020 PPC meeting, staff introduced the next phase of focused capital project planning and implementation work. While the Greenway Corridor Policy will guide a focus within the western growth area, MCWD staff are limited in their ability to drive the broader vision forward while the City focuses its short term growth and development planning in their southern growth area, which is outside of MCWD's jurisdiction. As such, staff made the recommendation to decouple natural resource goals from greenway planning, allowing MCWD to advance capital project interest in the short term, while seeking to align those projects with any future planning for the broader greenway. Staff have recommended a two-fold strategy to implement capital projects within the broader greenway context:

- Focus in the short term on the area of highest natural resource need and capital project opportunity, the Turbid Lundsten corridor.
- While the development of that corridor plan is underway, continue to improve coordination with the City to work towards a more robust framework for implementation of the greenway vision.

As such, at the August 27 meeting, staff made a recommendation to pursue the development of an area plan for the Turbid Lundsten corridor to guide future capital project investment in that corridor.

Summary:

At the December 17, 2020 PPC meeting, staff will provide an update on the process and timeline for the development of a Turbid Lundsten Corridor Plan, and contextualize the process within SMCHB project and planning priorities more broadly. The presentation and discussion will include the following elements:

- A briefing on short-term capital project priorities outside of the Turbid Lundsten corridor, the completion of which will position staff to focus on future phase initiatives such as corridor planning.
- An overview of the cross-departmental approach to corridor plan development, which reflects MCWDs strategic shift towards aligning programs around high impact capital projects.
- The strategy and timeline for corridor plan development, which will include technical feasibility, landowner outreach, reengagement of the SMCHB subwatershed coalition, and development of a guiding vision document for the corridor.

While scoping and background work is already underway in the development of this corridor plan, the process is expected to begin in earnest in May 2021. This timeline will be detailed at the December 17 meeting.

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