



Title: Minnehaha Creek Watershed District – Year Ahead 2023

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Purpose:

This memo serves to frame the planned Year Ahead 2023 presentation to the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), scheduled for January 18, 2023.

Introduction:

MCWD is at an exciting juncture, and 2023 represents a year of possibility, promise, and potential for the organization!

2023 sees MCWD sitting at the midpoint in the major ten-year watershed planning cycle, and five years in on efforts to strategically align the organization. At this junction point, as we prepare to look out at what lies ahead in the next strategic window, it is important that we look back at where we came from and where we are today as an organization and team. This provides foundational context for 2023 and everything we hope to accomplish in the years to come.

Where We Have Been:

The last six years have been transformative for MCWD. In 2017, the District adopted a new ten-year [watershed management plan](#). In many ways, this plan represented MCWD's reintroduction to its member communities and partner organizations, and established MCWD's philosophy for the decade. Carrying forward the vision policy established in 2014 ([In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology](#)), the plan cemented that MCWD's approach to water planning recognizes the environmental, social, and economic value created when built and natural systems work in harmony.

Beginning in 2018, MCWD pursued, in earnest, efforts to realign programs and people to live into its Balanced Urban Ecology philosophy, and drive new levels of organizational excellence – defined in a [2017 Alignment Report](#). Since 2018, every program, including the CAC, has undergone a shift in structure and focus. In the last two years, despite contractions in staffing and disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organization has shifted from direction setting and realigning to implementing these new programmatic directives in ways that are driving MCWD into the future.

Given all our recent history has taught us, there is also much to be learned from the 50 plus years of organizational history. That is why, in 2021, the Board began a strategic analysis of its history, to understand where MCWD has been over its 50-plus years of watershed management, and derive insights and lessons that can be memorialized, institutionalized, and carried forward to drive future success. The capstone of this work, [Historical Insights and Principles of Success](#) was accepted by the Board on January 12, 2023 and memorialized key events and learnings from MCWD's history that will serve the District in its continued growth over the next four years and beyond.

Where We Stand Today:

2022 was a year of execution of work in MCWD's pipeline, in preparation for the next phase of strategic initiatives. Concluding the year, and energetically opening the door into 2023, MCWD received acknowledgement from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as Watershed of the Year, an Ambassador of Excellence award from the National Weather Service, and an Engineering Excellence award from the American Council of Engineering Companies for the restoration of Arden Park in Edina. All of which recognize MCWD's work to build climate resilience.

This recognition from our partners of MCWD’s work on climate action and building resilience, summarized in a [news release](#) on MCWD’s website, also marks the launch of MCWD’s [Climate Action Framework](#) (CAF).

What Lies Ahead in 2023:

This all serves as backdrop for the District’s plans to drive policy planning forward towards the development of the 2027 watershed management plan, and deliver high-impact capital projects over the next five years that build community and watershed resilience

In the coming year of 2023, important work will be carried forward in the following areas:

- Project Planning:
 - 325 Blake Road stormwater management improvements and transit oriented development
 - Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay’s Auburn wetland restoration, and Turbid-Lundsten corridor plan
 - The Long Lake Creek Roadmap, including two regional stormwater management projects
 - Development of the Clean Water Partnership 2.0 in Minneapolis

- Policy Planning:
 - The advancement of a 2D watershed wide model to map vulnerabilities to climate change
 - The [Land and Water Partnership](#), a partnership onramp into MCWD’s capital improvement plan
 - Finalizing changes to MCWD’s regulations to streamline and encourage partnership
 - Climate Action planning with MCWD’s partners
 - Planning for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)

Across MCWD’s portfolio of work, there will be key points of engagement within regularly scheduled meetings, as well as information flowing between them, to continue to engage the Citizen Advisory Committee in ways that meaningfully advance the District’s mission. A preliminary meeting calendar is offered below and will be summarized during our January meeting together:

• January 18, 2023	Look Ahead	Board Liaison: Manager Miller
• March 15, 2023	Land & Water Partnership Initiative	Board Liaison: Manager Olson
• April TBD	Field Trip: On-boarding Capstone	
• May 17, 2023	Capital Improvement Plan	Board Liaison: Manager Maxwell
• July 19, 2023	2024 Budget	Board Liaison: Manager Loftus
• September 20, 2023	DEI; Permitting Alignment	Board Liaison: Manager Sando
• November 15, 2023	Climate Planning Process	Board Liaison: Manager Hejmadi

January 18, 2023 CAC Meeting:

During the upcoming meeting, staff will provide an overview of where MCWD currently sits in its strategic trajectory and what lies ahead in 2023 and beyond.

Questions in advance of the meeting can be directed to James Wisker at Jwisker@minnehahacreek.org or 952.641.4509.