



Title: Stakeholder Engagement Plan for Permitting Alignment and Responsive Program

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Purpose:

To discuss the stakeholder engagement strategy for the Responsive Program and Permitting Program Alignment and obtain Board feedback. A refined stakeholder engagement plan will be brought forward for Board action in early December with a request for authorization to initiate the engagement process.

Background:

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD or District) is focused on the protection and improvement of natural resources in ways that support thriving communities. Since what happens on the land is the primary driver of ecosystem health, MCWD's Balanced Urban Ecology Policy recognizes that the District can best achieve its mission by working in close partnership with those who change the landscape. By integrating its work into land use change, MCWD not only achieves its environmental goals, but also broader social and economic goals, thereby delivering maximum value to the taxpayer.

From 2015-2017, the District led a robust stakeholder engagement process as part of the development of its 2017 Watershed Management Plan (WMP). A central focus of this engagement effort was to create awareness of the District's new vision and shift the District's brand reputation from that of a regulator to a partner. Since the adoption of the WMP in early 2018, the District has been working to align the organization around its vision of a Balanced Urban Ecology and improve integration between land use and water planning. Two key initiatives the District has undertaken to operationalize this policy commitment are the development of the Responsive Program and the alignment of the Permitting Program:

- **Responsive Program:** development of a new program designed to leverage opportunities created through land-use change by partners and incentivize water resource improvement through financial and technical support
- **Permitting Program Alignment:** streamlining the District's regulatory process and rules to improve customer experience, reduce duplication of efforts with cities, and promote early coordination and collaboration

Over the past few months, staff have reviewed and refined the policy recommendations for both of these initiatives with the Board and Citizens Advisory Committee and are now ready to engage the District's land use partners to vet and build support for these initiatives.

Staff also plan to use this engagement effort as an opportunity to collaboratively define an approach for ongoing engagement with these key audiences. For example, it is anticipated that there would be mutual benefit in maintaining a standing Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and transitioning into other topics such as climate action planning. Staff intends to seek partner input on the most effective approaches for ongoing coordination and engagement.

Summary:

At the October 21, 2021 Board Meeting, staff will outline the preliminary stakeholder engagement plan for these two initiatives, including the engagement goals, target audiences, outreach/engagement methods, and anticipated schedule. Below is a summary of engagement goals, both for the short-term execution of the two policy initiatives and for ongoing engagement of these key audiences.

- **Ensure successful rollout of initiatives (short-term)**
 - Build understanding for proposed program/rule changes through clear and easily understood communications
 - Refine proposed program/rule changes with input to ensure they meet partner needs
 - Build explicit, enthusiastic support for proposed program/rule changes through meaningful and targeted engagement opportunities

- **Strengthen relationships and improve integration of land use and water planning (long-term/ongoing)**
 - Broaden awareness of MCWD's strategy to partner with the land use community and appreciation of the value MCWD adds to collaborative projects
 - Build and strengthen relationships with land use community
 - Co-develop approach for ongoing coordination and engagement
 - Maintain situational awareness and identify blind spots ahead of 2027 WMP
 - Document our champions (quotes in writing we can re-use)
 - Increase early coordination and collaboration of public and private partners with the District
 - Understand barriers to early coordination/collaboration and co-develop solutions
 - Obtain guidance on how to improve the pipeline of quality projects
 - Identify reciprocal actions our land use partners will take
 - Generate projects that measurably improve water resources

The table on the following page summarizes the key external audiences, proposed outreach and engagement methods for each, and anticipated schedule. The table also includes the [level of participation](#) and role in decision making for each audience, as defined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), which staff are testing as a framework for the District's engagement programming.

Staff anticipates Board involvement in the TAC kickoff, one-on-one policy maker meetings (when requested), and verbal/written updates in Board meetings throughout the TAC process. Formal adoption of the Responsive Program and revised rules is anticipated in July-August 2022.

Staff will use any Board input from the October 21 discussion to further refine the proposed engagement plan and then turn to development of key messages and supporting outreach materials (e.g. publications, fact sheets). Staff will bring back a refined stakeholder engagement plan in early December with a request for Board authorization to initiate the engagement process.

Stakeholder Engagement Plan Summary:

Audience	Local Public Agencies (Cities, Counties, Park Districts/Boards)			Regional/ State Agencies	Private development community	General public
	Primary Staff Contacts	Other Key Staff	Policy Makers			
Level of Participation	Consult or Involve	Consult	Inform or Consult	Consult	Consult	Consult
Role in Decision Making	Advisor	Reviewer	Observer	Reviewer	Reviewer	Reviewer
Outreach/Engagement Methods and Schedule						
Soft Rollout (individual calls) <i>Nov-Dec 2021</i>	X					
TAC Kickoff <i>Feb 2022</i>	X	X	X			
TAC Meetings <i>March-July 2022</i>	X					
Written Communications (publications, email updates) <i>Key milestones throughout</i>	X	X	X	X		
1:1 Meetings <i>As needed/requested</i>	X		X			
Targeted Input Sessions <i>May-June 2022</i>					X	
Notice/Formal Comment for Rules <i>June-July 2022</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X