



Title: Update on Stakeholder Engagement Process for the Land & Water Partnership Initiative

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Purpose:

To provide an update on progress and proposed adjustments to the stakeholder engagement process authorized by the Board in December 2021.

Background:

At the [December 16, 2021 Board Meeting](#), the Board authorized the initiation of a stakeholder engagement process for two program initiatives:

- Land & Water Partnership Program (formerly the Responsive Program): a new program designed to leverage opportunities created through partner-led projects 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

Given their shared purpose of improving integration and collaboration with public and private land use partners, these two initiatives are collectively being referred to as the "MCWD Land & Water Partnership Initiative". The purpose of this 2022 engagement effort is two-fold:

- Ensure the successful rollout of these two program initiatives
- Strengthen relationships and collaboratively define an approach for ongoing coordination with public and private land use partners

Summary:

In preparation for initiating the engagement process, staff has worked with Background Stories to develop the attached kickoff publication, which introduces the two program initiatives and describes how partners can engage in the process. This publication will be distributed to public partners, along with a tailored cover letter, inviting them to participate.

Staff are recommending a shift in approach for initiating this engagement process. The original plan was to begin with calls to key staff contacts and then invite public partner staff and policymakers to a kickoff event before beginning a series of Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings. After further consideration, staff are planning to invest more time in having individual touchpoints (meetings and calls) with each city/public partner, rather than a kickoff event, to provide more meaningful engagement. A larger stakeholder gathering could then be held in fall 2022 to roll out the already vetted programs and preview plans for engagement in 2023 around climate action planning.

This shift in approach is further supported by recent efforts of the Administrator and program manager team to align work plans for the District's various initiatives to ensure that there is clarity on how the initiatives will draw on the different departments and that timelines are realistic given the competing priorities and current staff vacancies. Based

on these discussions, the original timeline for initiating the stakeholder engagement process was adjusted to allow more time for the completion of other initiatives before kicking off this process.

As individual meetings with cities and other public partners are scheduled over the next 2-3 months, staff will request the participation of Board members for any meetings with policymakers. It is anticipated that this will be a fairly limited number of meetings for each Manager, and they will be planned in coordination with the Administrator and Board President.

At the March 26, 2022 Board Meeting, staff will be seeking the Board’s feedback on this shift in approach. Below is an updated summary table outlining the new approach and timeline.

Audience	Local Public Agencies (Cities, Counties, MPRB, TRPD)			Regional/ State Agencies	Private development community	General public	State Legislators
	Primary Staff Contacts	Other Key Staff	Policy Makers				
Level of Participation	Consult or Involve	Consult	Inform or Consult	Consult	Consult	Consult	Inform
Role in Decision Making	Advisor	Reviewer	Observer	Reviewer	Reviewer	Reviewer	Observer
Outreach/Engagement Methods and Schedule							
Kickoff Mailing <i>June 2022</i>	X	X	X	X			X
Individual calls/meetings <i>June-August 2022</i>	X	X	X				
TAC Meetings <i>August-December 2022</i>	X						
Email updates <i>Key milestones throughout</i>	X	X	X	X			
Targeted Input Sessions <i>October-December 2022</i>				X	X		
Stakeholder Gathering <i>November 2022</i>	X	X	X	X			
Formal Comment Period for Rules <i>January-February 2023</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Supporting documents:

Land & Water Partnership Initiative Publication



MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT
LAND AND WATER PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

Inviting you to join us in 2022 to strengthen partnerships
and inspire collaborative projects.



MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT

IN PURSUIT OF A BALANCED URBAN ECOLOGY

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) believes that clean water and a healthy natural environment are essential ingredients in creating vibrant, sustainable communities.

The lakes, streams, and wetlands that make up our landscape create a sense of place that provides a local identity, adds economic value, and increases well-being. These water resources are also impacted by what happens on the land.

That's why, to advance our mission, we collaborate closely with public and private partners, in a **focused, flexible, and responsive** manner, to create win-win opportunities that maximize natural resource benefits and achieve broader community goals.

Integrating water resource management and land use planning allows MCWD and its partners to bring natural systems in balance with the built environment. This approach achieves better results and greater public value than any of us could ever attain by working on our own. We committed to this vision in 2014 by adopting our **Balanced Urban Ecology Policy**.

Many partners helped us develop our 2017 Watershed Management Plan, which offered a 10-year roadmap for advancing collaborative planning throughout our 178 square-mile watershed. Now, in 2022, we're at the halfway point in our plan and we want to bring stakeholders back together to keep land and water partnerships at the core of our work with communities.



INVITATION TO COLLABORATE

As an important public partner of MCWD, we're inviting you to join us in our 2022 Land & Water Partnership Initiative to help shape our new program and policy direction, share stories and priorities from your community, and explore how we can best continue building partnerships and projects of shared benefit in coming years.

We want to leverage the creativity and critical eye of partners like you!

JOIN US TO SHARE YOUR INPUT ON THREE EXCITING TOPICS:



Launching Our New Land and Water Partnership Program | *Learn more on page 5*

We want to create partnerships where we understand your local priorities and we work together to create projects that advance mutual interests and produce broader community benefit. Help us review the framework for a new program that will provide technical and financial resources to support the development of impactful capital projects. We want to know how we can implement this program to support your goals — and start talking about your project ideas, too!



Optimizing the MCWD Permitting Experience | *Learn more on page 7*

We recognize that permitting is a key way that we interact with land use partners every day. We're rethinking our permitting experience to improve customer service, streamline the process, and promote early engagement in search of mutually beneficial partnerships that extend beyond our regulatory role.



Building Sustainable Connections for On-Going Collaboration

How can we best sustain on-going, proactive connections between land use and water management? What are the major initiatives and issues shaping your community? Together we'll brainstorm new bridges we can build to create continued synergy between land and water.



CREATING SHARED BENEFITS

We've learned that we can best achieve our mission of protecting natural resources when we add value to our partners' activities, whether it's a private development, park improvement, or municipal infrastructure project.

As a regional agency, we're ready to enhance our partners' projects by applying our expertise in concept design, planning, permitting, and project management. When we work together to integrate land use and water planning, we can add value in a variety of ways:

- ➔ **Identify and develop project partnership opportunities** for greater economic, community, and natural resource benefits
- ➔ **Provide technical and funding assistance** to support project development and implementation
- ➔ **Anticipate regulatory needs upfront** and help partners navigate the process to find creative solutions
- ➔ **Save partners time and money** by streamlining the permitting process



ESTABLISHING A CLEAR PATHWAY FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

We're pleased to introduce MCWD's new Land and Water Partnership (LWP) program. We're designing this program to bring value to partners by supporting projects that advance your goals and enhance the watershed.

The LWP program will create opportunities for you to connect with us early in planning and budgeting processes. We're ready to work creatively with you to provide financial and technical support on projects, including integrating qualifying projects into our Capital Improvement Plan.

What kinds of projects will the LWP program support?

- Capital projects that provide regional water resource benefits

Who will be eligible?

- Public and private partners who have the capacity to implement

What types of support will be available?

- Technical and financial support for project development and implementation

What do I need to do?

- When you begin envisioning a new project in our watershed, reach out to talk with us about your idea so we can begin identifying partnership opportunities together



STARTING EARLY TOGETHER PAYS OFF

Time and again, MCWD has seen how integrated planning saves time and money — and generates better outcomes. From experience, we know that the largest return on investment is realized in the earliest stages of a project, when ideas are still malleable and there is time and space to build meaningful collaboration. That's why we want to find ways to proactively engage as a creative partner that adds value at the concept level, rather than stepping into finalized projects solely as a regulatory authority.

See what this early approach looks like in action by turning the page!



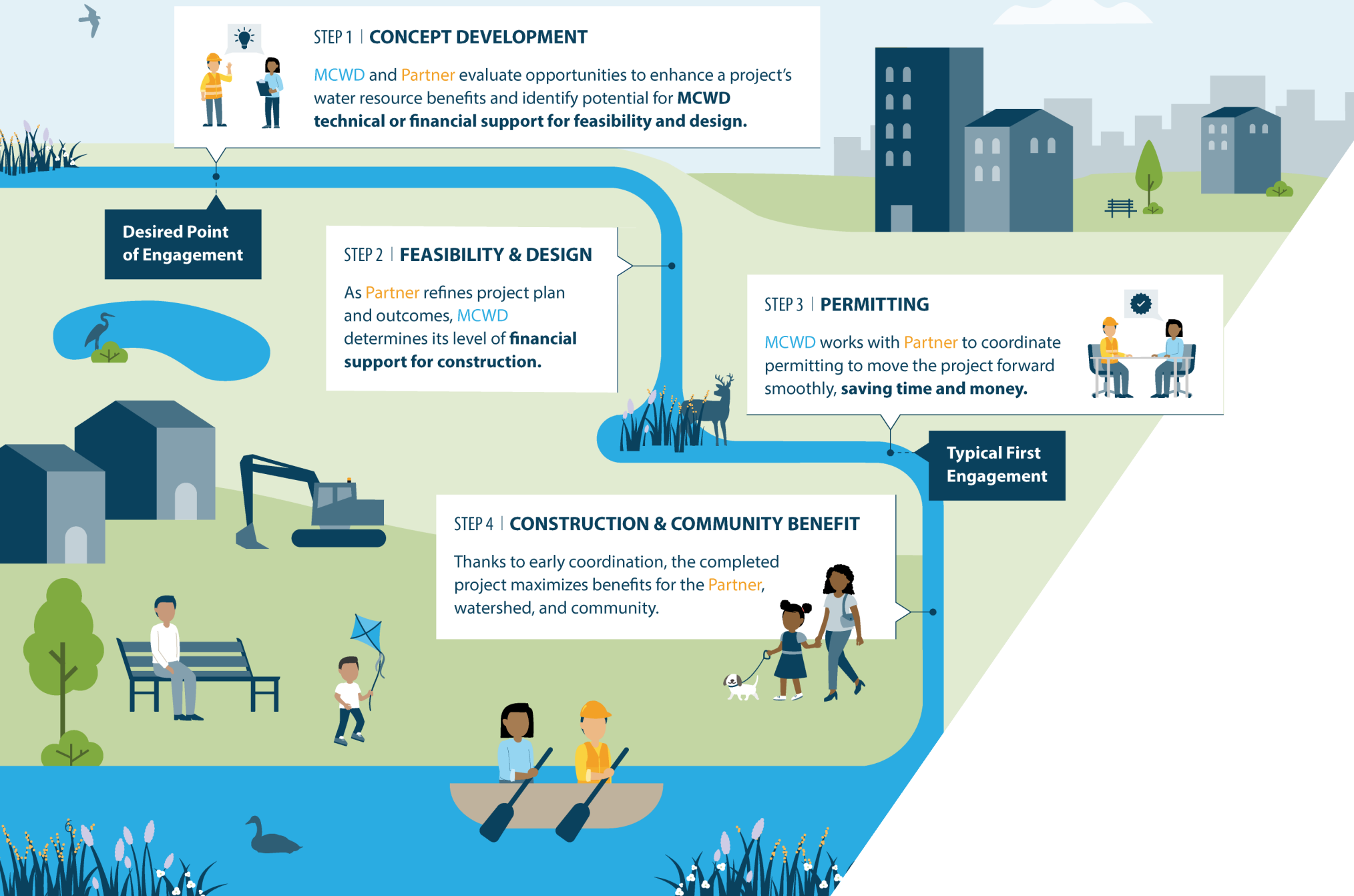
HELP SHAPE THE LAND AND WATER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM!

Your participation in our 2022 engagement activities (see back cover) will help design our new program to meet your needs. **You can help us:**

- ➔ **Align the program schedule** with your Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and budget processes
- ➔ **Refine the project evaluation process** to support a transparent decision-making process
- ➔ **Identify early opportunities** for successful Land and Water Partnership projects

THE BENEFITS OF EARLY COORDINATION

For public agencies and private developers alike, engaging MCWD as a partner early in the planning process allows for us to add value to projects in a variety of ways.



REIMAGINING THE PERMITTING PROCESS

AN OPPORTUNITY ON-RAMP

MCWD's permit review is key to ensuring natural resources continue to be sources of value for communities. In seeking to engage early and collaboratively, MCWD believes that the review process is an opportunity to provide service, grow relationships, and find mutual value in partnership.

We're **improving our permitting process** to be simpler, more streamlined, better integrated with other agencies, and able to catalyze partnership opportunities. **We intend to:**

- ➔ **Streamline and simplify requirements** to create a more efficient and transparent process for partners that ensures our natural resources are protected
- ➔ **Design processes to promote early coordination** and identify opportunities for technical and financial support to enhance project outcomes
- ➔ **Align our standards** with the state's MS4 requirements to improve consistency of regulatory requirements between the watershed and cities
- ➔ **Form partnerships** with cities to reduce redundancy and leverage each other's capabilities
- ➔ **Communicate clearly** about rules and procedures in plain language
- ➔ **Improve our internal systems** to be faster and more efficient

BENEFITS FROM AN IMPROVED PERMITTING PROCESS

- **Better outcomes** for the project, community, and water resources
- **Easier to navigate** requirements and process
- **Reduced burden** on cities to independently meet state standards
- **Less time, money, and surprises** for applicants
- **Opportunity to collaboratively explore creative project alternatives**



REACH OUT FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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HOW WE CAN COLLABORATE IN 2022

We're excited to bring together city, county, and parks agency staff and policymakers across the watershed in 2022 for our Land & Water Partnership Initiative. We're looking for interested stakeholders like you to provide important input to shape MCWD's new Land and Water Partnership program, review permitting improvements, and explore ideas for on-going engagement.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTNER PARTICIPATION

- ➔ **Individual Meetings:** We're available to meet individually to hear your ideas and discuss partnership opportunities.
- ➔ **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC):** This group of public agency staff, to be formally appointed by the MCWD Board of Managers, will meet over several months to advise MCWD on the program and policy efforts described within this publication.
- ➔ **Fall Stakeholder Gathering:** This event will provide an overview of the MCWD program and policy developments and plans for ongoing engagement.
- ➔ **Early Pilot Project Engagement:** If you have a capital project idea, reach out to us to see if it could be a good candidate for technical or financial support through our pilot Land & Water Partnership program, currently underway.

INTERESTED? SIGN UP AND STAY INFORMED!

📄 Complete our Interest Form!

Let us know how you'd like to participate in the Land & Water Partnership Initiative, including:

- Attend the Fall Stakeholder Gathering
- Request an Individual Meeting
- Serve on the TAC
- Discuss a Project in Concept Development
- Receive Initiative Update Emails

🌐 Visit our Land & Water Partnership Initiative web page

Find the latest Initiative information as available, including dates of TAC meetings, the Stakeholder Gathering, and future engagement and input opportunities for private partners and the general public.

minnehahacreek.org/partnership