

# Memo

**To:** MCWD Operations and Programs Committee  
**From:** Telly Mamayek, MCWD Director of Communications and Education  
**Date:** February 5, 2015  
**Re:** Public Opinion Survey Draft Questionnaire

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A key goal of the District's communications program, as outlined in the Strategic Communications Plan for 2014 and 2015, is increasing awareness of MCWD, its mission and its programs. To assess the effectiveness of the District's effort to reach that goal, the plan includes a random-sample survey of District residents. The MCWD last conducted a District-wide public opinion survey in 2003.

An integral component in the process of developing the District's next 10-year comprehensive water resources management plan is outreach to individuals and organizations that have a vested interest in community and water resource planning and management. As those outreach efforts get underway with the kickoff meetings on February 18, 2015, the public opinion survey will assess residents' attitudes, perception and awareness of water quality issues, the MCWD and its projects and programs.

The survey, authorized by MCWD Board of Managers on February 27, 2014, is being developed by Himle Rapp which worked with staff to create the enclosed draft questionnaire.

Once finalized, the questionnaire will be used in a phone survey of a random sample of 600 residents across the District by The Morris Leatherman Company, formerly known as Decision Resources. The survey will identify current attitudes relating to protecting water and water quality issues, test attitudes, perceptions and awareness of MCWD and its projects, and help shape the strategy and overall positioning for the District's next 10-year plan.

It is important to note that quantitative survey research is able to test concepts, not detailed or technical specifics. An effective survey will discover directional insights into critical questions, strategy and positioning and should be considered one of many data points in an organization's decision making process.

The process of implementing the survey, analyzing the data and developing a report on the findings will take approximately two months, with a report expected in the spring of 2015.

## MCWD 2015 DISTRICT-WIDE PUBLIC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Himle Rapp Draft 2 – 1/29/15

Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_ of the Morris Leatherman Company, a national survey research firm located in Minneapolis. We are conducting a survey of residents in your area and would like to ask you a few questions about several issues facing your community. Before we begin, I want to assure you all of your responses will be held strictly confidential; only summaries of the entire sample will be reported. Finally, no-one will be using anything in this survey for marketing or commercial purposes or to sell you anything.

May I speak with the adult in the household over the age of 18 whose birthday is closest to today's date?

1. In your opinion, do you think Minnesota is heading in the right direction or off on the wrong track?
2. Regarding your household, would you say your household is better off financially compared to one year ago, worse off, or about the same compared to one year ago?
3. I'm going to read a list of issues facing the state of Minnesota. Please tell me which one is the most important issue currently facing the state? [ROTATE/READ LIST]
4. And, which issue would you rate as the second most important?
  - Having access to affordable health care
  - Improving education
  - Controlling taxes and spending
  - Protecting our environment
  - Upgrading our transportation system
  - Protecting the safety of the public
  - Improving the economy and creating jobs
  - Other
  - DK/R

Let's talk about some environmental issues.

5. What do you think is the most important environmental issue that needs to be addressed in the Twin Cities metro area? [ROTATE/READ LIST]
6. And, what is the second most important environmental issue that needs to be addressed in the Twin Cities metro area?
  - Reducing air pollution
  - Addressing climate change

- Improving water quality
- Promoting more energy conservation
- Reducing the run-off of chemicals from lawns and farms
- Encouraging the development of more renewable energy, such as wind and solar
- Depletion of groundwater and aquifers
- Reducing the amount of garbage going into the waste stream
- Other
- DK/R

7. How would you rate the water quality of lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands in Minnesota, would you say the water quality is:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair, or,
- Poor
- DK/R

8. As you think about lakes, rivers, streams or wetlands that are located near where you live, would you say the water quality is:

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair, or,
- Poor
- DK/R

9. Over the last five to ten years, would you say the water quality of lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands near where you live has become:

- Better
- Worse, or,
- Stayed about the same?

[WAIT FOR RESPONSE] Do you feel strongly that way?

10. As you think about lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands near where you live, how important is it to protect the quality of water in your area?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not too important
- Not at all important
- DK/R

11. When someone mentions the word – “water quality” – what does that mean to you?  
[OPEN END]

12. Based on what you know or might assume, what is the biggest threat to water quality in lakes and streams that are located near where you live? [ROTATE]

13. And what is the second biggest threat to water quality in lakes and streams that are located near where you live? [ROTATE]

- Too much development pressure
- Run-off of lawn chemicals into streams and lakes
- Too much recreational use
- Companies and manufacturing plants releasing pollutants into the water
- Spread of aquatic invasive species, such as milfoil and zebra mussels
- Run-off of agricultural chemicals and livestock waste into streams and lakes
- 
- Other
- DK/R

14. How aware are you of a local governmental organization known as the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District?

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not too aware
- Not at all aware
- DK/R

15. Based on what you know or have heard, what do you think is the primary function of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District? [OPEN END]

16. Again, based on what you know or might assume, how effective is the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District in protecting water quality in the watershed?

- Very effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not too effective
- Not at all effective
- DK/R

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is one of the largest urban watersheds in the country. It stretches from Lake Minnetonka and nearby lakes, through portions of Minnetonka, Hopkins, St. Louis Park, Edina and south Minneapolis, including Minnehaha Falls, where it then empties into the Mississippi River. The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District works with cities, developers, residents and others to implement programs and best practices to both protect and restore the water quality throughout the watershed. The work of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is supported with a small levy on property located in the district and its primary function is the protection and restoration of water quality within the watershed.

17. Based on this information, does the idea of having a single-purpose agency to protect water quality in these communities seem like a good idea or a bad idea?

[WAIT FOR RESPONSE] Do you feel strongly that way?

18. Based on what you know or might assume, which government agency do you think does the best job of protecting the water quality of lakes, rivers streams and wetlands in your area?

19. Which agency do you think does the second best job of protecting water quality in your area?

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Your local city government
- Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- The county
- The federal government
- Other
- DK/R

20. The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is beginning the process to update its Comprehensive Plan; the Plan will guide the work and priorities of the Watershed District over the next several years. Among the following three goals, which one do you think should be the highest priority for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District in future years?

- Goal 1/Prevention -- protect the waters in the District from future run-off, pollution and degradation
- Goal 2/Restoration – improve degraded areas and water quality in those places that have already incurred the worst damage
- Goal 3/Aquatic Invasive Species – protect waters from getting infested with aquatic invasive species and work to manage invasive species if they enter a water body.
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A possible approach for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is to implement a “two-track” strategy for its Comprehensive Plan. Under this approach, the District would continue to be responsive to needs and opportunities District-wide through projects, permitting and education , but also implement a second track that would concentrate District staff and resources into “high needs” areas in order to make significant, lasting improvements to the most sensitive water challenges in the watershed .

21. In general, does this two-track strategy sound like a good way to prioritize resources for the District or not? [WAIT FOR RESPONSE] Do you feel strongly that way?

22. How aware are you that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District develops and enforces water regulations such as requiring buffer zones for houses and buildings to

protect wetlands and lakes, permitting, and other regulations to reduce erosion and run-off of chemicals into water?

- Very aware
- Somewhat aware
- Not too aware
- Not at all aware

23. As you think about the most effective way to protect and manage water quality in this area, do you think it is more effective to take a regulatory approach that enforces water regulations, or do you think it is more effective to pursue a partnership approach of providing incentives to protect water quality?

[WAIT FOR RESPONSE] Do you feel strongly that way?

In recent years, there have been several reports about the spread of aquatic invasive species, such as milfoil, zebra mussels and Asian carp in metro lakes and rivers and throughout the state.

24. In your opinion, how important is it to prevent the spread of invasive species and ultimately find a solution to get rid of invasive species from Minnesota lakes and rivers?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not too important
- Not at all important
- DK/R

25. Should the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District make it a high priority, a medium priority or a low priority to prevent the spread of invasive species in Minnehaha Creek, Lake Minnetonka, the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes and other water bodies in the District?

- High priority
- Medium priority
- Low priority

Water quality experts have found that creating water retention ponds, sediment buffer zones and other measures to prevent run-off of chemicals and various pollutants into lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands are some of the most effective means of protecting and improving water quality. The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District has worked in partnership with cities and businesses to help design and finance water retention ponds and buffer zones in higher priority areas in the Watershed District.

26. Would you rate these programs a high priority for the District, a medium priority or a low priority?

27. How important is it for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District to provide periodic measurements or report cards to the public on the progress and effectiveness of its programs and projects?

- It's very important to me
- Somewhat important to me
- Not at all important to me
- Not important to me, but I'm glad that others will monitor the District's work and hold them accountable
- DK/R

The services and programs provided by the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District are funded by a small levy on property located within the District. As an example, the owner of \$300,000 home pays about \$50 per year to finance the Watershed District services and programs while the owner of a \$200,000 home pays about \$33 per year.

28. Would you be willing to pay an additional \$20 per year per household to support water quality services and programs provided by the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District? [WAIT FOR RESPONSE] Do you feel strongly that way?
29. How about paying an additional \$10 more per year per household to support water quality programs for your area?? [WAIT FOR RESPONSE] Do you feel strongly that way?
30. Are you more likely to support paying for water quality programs and projects if the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District can provide a way for the public to measure how well the program or project is performing?
31. If the Minnehaha Creek watershed District were to offer a water protection and improvement program that your city, a local neighborhood group or individual residents could implement at local block or household level, is this something that would be of interest to you? [WAIT FOR RESPONSE] Do you feel strongly that way?

Please tell me if you or your household has taken any of the following measures to conserve water or protect water quality:

32. Reduce or eliminate the use of fertilizer and chemicals on your yard
33. Install permeable driveway pavers instead of concrete or asphalt to reduce water run-off
34. Prevent leaves, grass clippings, oil or chemicals from going into storm-water drains
35. Reduce or eliminate water used for lawn irrigation
36. Install low-flush toilets, shower heads or other measures to reduce home water usage
37. Install shoreline protection with native plants or rain gardens to filter sediment from seeping into water
38. Do you feel you would like more information about measures and best practices that residents can use to protect water quality, or do you feel you have enough information, or is this just not a topic that is of interest to you?
  - More information
  - Have enough information
  - Not of interest

39. What is the most effective way for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District to provide useful information about water quality best practices and other news involving the work of the District?

- Website information and on-line updates
- Social media
- Printed newsletters mailed to your home
- Work with local media to generate news stories on water quality
- Sponsor advertising with information and tips on protecting water
- Presentations to community and neighborhood groups
- Provide materials to local cities and other public agencies

40. The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District is now video recording its Board meetings which are available for viewing on-line. How often do you think you might want to view a board meeting of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Board meeting? [READ LIST]

- Almost every meeting
- A few times a year
- Once a year
- Only when the Board is discussing an issue important to me
- Never
- DK/R

Next, I'm going to read to you a short list of people or organizations that sometimes speak about water issues and protecting water quality. For each one, please tell me if you feel they are very credible, somewhat credible, not too credible or not at all credible when discussing water quality issues. [ROTATE]

41. Local officials from your city
42. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
43. Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
44. Citizens or neighborhood groups
45. Federal environmental agencies
46. Environmental organizations
47. State legislators
48. County officials
49. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
50. Area businesses

I would like to read a short list of activities. For each one, please tell me whether that activity applies to you:

51. Read a newspaper at least four to five times a week
52. Watch television news most evenings
53. Volunteer time or contribute money to a community or charitable organization



54. Check the Internet for news and information several times a week
55. Have contacted an elected official about an issue
56. Contributed money or volunteered time to a political campaign or advocacy organization
57. Have written a letter to the editor or posted comments to websites or blogs

Finally, I want to ask you a few questions for demographic purposes .....

58. Do you own or rent your current residence?
59. In terms of your current residence, how close do you live to a river, creek, wetland or lake?
  - My residence is immediately adjacent to a river, creek, wetland or lake
  - My residence is within two blocks of a river, creek, wetland or lake,
  - My residence is within a mile of a river, creek, wetland or lake
  - My residence is more than a mile from a river, creek, wetland or lake
60. Do you or your family own a lake cabin in Minnesota, Wisconsin or another state?

From the following list of activities, tell me if you participate frequently, occasionally, or not at all.

61. Fishing
62. Motor-boating
63. Sailing, canoeing or kayaking
64. walking or biking
65. Are you a member of, or have contributed money to, a conservation organization, lake property owners association or environmental group?
66. Which of the following categories contains your age?
  - 18-34
  - 35-49
  - 50-65
  - 65 and over
  - Refused
67. Do you have pre-school or school-aged children living with you at home?
68. In politics, do you consider yourself to be [ROTATE] a conservative, a liberal, or a moderate? [If conservative or liberal, ASK: Do you think of yourself as very (conservative/liberal)?] [If moderate, ASK: Do you lean closer to conservative or liberal?]

69. Are you employed by – a government agency or political subdivision, such as the state or local government or school district; a business or corporation; self-employed; student; currently not working, or retired? [If currently not working ASK: Are you looking for a job?]

70. What is the last grade of formal education you completed?

- High school graduate or less
- Vo-tech/technical college
- Some college
- College graduate
- Post-graduate
- Refused

71. Which of the following categories contains your total household income for the year?

- Less than \$35,000
- \$35,000 to \$75,000
- Over \$75,000
- DK/R

72. Gender [By Observation]

73. Location