MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT
QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

Meeting: Operations and Programs Committee
Date: 10/8/2020
Agenda Item #: 5.1
Item type: Update

Title:	Website Content Strategy
Prepared by:	Name: Trevor Born
	Phone: 952-649-2726
	tborn@minnehahacreek.org

Purpose:

To follow up on September's OPC discussion with a more detailed review of the Phase I website content plan.

Staff will walk through the attached content plan produced in partnership with Vendi Creative, and seek the committee's counsel on the following questions:

- Does the detailed content strategy align with the goals and approach for the website discussed last month?

- Are there core content items that are missing or off-base in the plan?

- Are there "wish list" content items the Board would like to flag for future exploration?

- Is the committee comfortable advancing the plan for approval in November?

Background:

The Phase I website content plan defines the site's architecture and the key content items needed to achieve its goals. It lays the foundation for decisions about copywriting, design, and configuration that will be made during the Phase II design and build.

At the September 10 OPC meeting, staff facilitated a discussion with the committee about the key ideas and principles in this Phase I plan, and the extensive input that went into it. These principles included:

Connect people to information they value: MCWD's new strategic outreach direction calls for an increased emphasis on supporting high-impact interpersonal outreach that is tied to key District initiatives. To achieve this shift, the website must play a larger role in meeting the needs of the variety of other "customers" MCWD must serve that are not tied to key initiatives, by connecting them to the information they value in a user-friendly and effective manner.

Weave in MCWD's brand position throughout. While the primary goal of the site is to connect people to the information they want or need, each core section should also promote the value MCWD provides and reflect the District's brand of integrating land and water in pursuit of a balanced urban ecology.

Begin with a judicious focus on the most important content. Website design processes often go wrong when too many ideas are pursued, creating an overloaded website with too much peripheral content to actively maintain. This is a concern with MCWD's current website. Staff aimed to focus on the content that delivers significant value to its users, knowing that there will be opportunities to add functionality in the future.

<u>Leverage high-quality third-party content whenever possible.</u> There are many high-quality existing resources on general topics like best management practices and watershed education. When possible, the site will curate these resources instead of creating new resources from scratch.

September OPC discussion:

In the September 10 discussion, committee members expressed general comfort with the key ideas presented and provided the following feedback:

<u>Leverage Phase I product in choosing Phase II firm:</u> Staff should connect with other organizations that have been through a similar process to learn best practices for a choosing a firm for designing and building, and to benchmark its evaluation of its Phase I vendor, Vendi Creative. As part of evaluating firms, staff should consider providing the Phase I content plan and asking firms to propose creative ideas to build on the content presented.

<u>Consider how to measure the site's success:</u> The primary goal for the website is to effectively connect people to the information they value. Staff should consider what systems can be used to measure how well those common requests for information are being served.

<u>Emphasize visual appeal:</u> Because of the aesthetic nature of MCWD's core work of building high-impact capital projects that are integrated with the surrounding community, the site should emphasize compelling visual imagery as a matter of content strategy.

<u>Spatially display demonstration sites:</u> MCWD's "What Can I Do" section will feature a number of pages on actions people can take to protect clean water. When possible, staff should look for ways to leverage GIS to spatially display examples of these practices, such as green infrastructure.

<u>Connect information about recreation and clean water work:</u> The content plan calls for a Recreation section that highlights recreational opportunities that intersect with water throughout the watershed. An explicit connection should be made between this information and the work MCWD and others do to protect clean water that underpins these recreational options.

The Citizens Advisory Committee also reviewed the plan at its September 2 meeting and offered the following feedback:

1. A "zero based budgeting" approach to content that identifies which items are absolutely necessary could help protect against the website becoming bloated. Content planners should be judicious about what content is added, because each piece of content has long-term overhead for upkeep.

2. It is important to have an effective governance process that holds individual people accountable for keeping content up to date

3. Requests for proposals for Phase II should include "acceptance criteria" that defines when a project should be considered satisfactorily completed

4. The permitting section must communicate that many projects require permits from additional agencies as well.

5. The site should have the option to display an urgent message banner at the top of the home page

About the Phase I plan

The attached plan reflects Vendi's Core Model Process framework. This process identifies the core sections of the site, the key content elements required to achieve the section's purpose. Those core sections are:

Permits: Leveraging the power of the online permitting portal currently in development, the primary goal of this section is to ensure that a user can enter in the specific location and type of project they are considering, and be provided information about the exact steps that will be required to obtain approval. Users will be able to indicate a project location and type on a map and then learn what rules are triggered, what they will need to comply, what steps they must take to obtain approval – and also be able to enter the application process. Secondarily, this section will emphasize the potential for partnering with MCWD to achieve win-win outcomes. It will feature a page with information about partnering with the District, a connection to the responsive model, and case studies on a handful of successful partnerships.

Water Data: Most users are not interested in watershed-wide data in aggregate, but in information about a specific water body that is relevant to them. To meet this need, the centerpiece of the Water Data section will be an interactive map that allows a user to choose the water body that is most relevant to them and view monitoring data, learn about the surrounding subwatershed, and find links to additional partner agency information. Within this section is also a "Water Budget" page that provides real-time water levels fed by the RESNET remote sensor network and information about how MCWD leverages technology and partnership in its operation of Gray's Bay dam.

Recreation: Core to MCWD's brand is the idea that healthy natural systems underpin quality of life in our communities – and recreation is one of the primary ways people interact with water resources within the District. The recreation section will feature a map that highlights select recreational opportunities throughout the watershed that are relevant to the District's mission: Paddling, boat launches, beaches, regional parks, and regional trails. Key District-related recreational opportunities, such as the Minnehaha Creek Greenway or Six Mile Marsh Prairie, will be particularly highlighted. The section will also feature the highly-trafficked resources on paddling Minnehaha Creek and boating Lake Minnetonka.

What You Can Do: This section serves users who are actively interested in taking action to protect clean water. The section is organized according to the five most common categories of request with the question, "I would like to":

- Use best practices on my property – e.g., installing raingardens, low-impact turf care
- Educate myself – e.g., water science basics, water governance
- Educate others – e.g., curricula for teachers, materials for community meetings
- Take action in my community – e.g., joining community groups, adopting a drain
- Support MCWD's work – e.g., statements of support for an MCWD project, joining CAC

Within each category are hubs of information that include curated information, referrals, and funding opportunities.

Projects: Project web pages highlight the impact of MCWD's most important initiatives. The emphasis of these project pages is providing a clear up-front snapshot of the rationale for building the project and its key outcomes, while situating each project within the context of the watershed. Each page will also allow for a variety of community engagement tools that can be selectively displayed based on the needs of the project. This section also includes definitive landing pages for each Focal Geography, highlighting the latest work and the overall value of the focused work.

About Us: The About Us section provides any user a generalized understanding of what MCWD is and does, regardless of their level of prior knowledge. It also provides more sophisticated information about MCWD's Balanced Urban Ecology approach. Finally, it provides key organizational information such as Board and CAC members, financial information, and upcoming meetings.

Note for reading the plan: Note that the diagrams are not meant to represent design. The size of the boxes are not representative of the proportion of the content on the designed page, nor are the colors or fonts indicative of the final design. The "Visual Strategy" page gives recommendations on the overall visual tone of the site.

Next steps:

- November Board of Managers Meeting: Review and approve final draft of Phase I content plan

VENDI

MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

WEBSITE

Site map, flow chart, features and content strategy foundation

OCTOBER 02, 2020
Final report

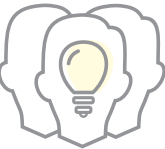# VENDI WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT LIFETRACK

PHASE ONE:
PLANNING

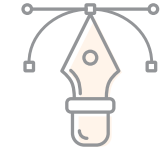**PHASE TWO:**
CREATIVE

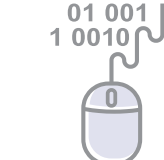**PHASE THREE:**
DEVELOP

PHASE FOUR:
LAUNCH

PROJECT KICKOFF
- Project review
- Timeline
- Roles

DISCOVERY
- Audit
- Research
- Competitive analysis
- Goals
- User personas

CORE MODEL WORKSHOP
- Engagement path
- Content themes
- Priority content
- Features and functions
- Site map

CONTENT STRATEGY
- SEO focus keywords
- Voice
- Data model

CONCEPTS
- Site design
- Component design
- Prototypes
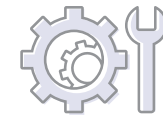
CONTENT DEVELOPMENT
- Copywriting
- Photography
- Video
- SEO meta data

ASSETS
- Testimonials
- Resources
- Maps
- Infographics

CODE
- CMS build out
- Data integration

ACCESSIBILITY
- WCAG
- Testing

CONTENT
- Migration
- Populate

USABILITY
- Testing

TESTING
- Browser
- Device

TRAINING
- Manual
- CMS training

MAINTENANCE
- Security
- SEO optimization
- Development
- Analytics
- User engagement tracking

GOALS AND STRATEGY

Business goals

– Automate common requests for information by effectively connecting people to information they value

– Highlight the value Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) delivers

– Provide transparency and organizational information

– Uncover opportunities for strategic partnerships

User goals

– Get a permit

– Recreate in the watershed

– Take action to protect clean water

– Learn about a water body that is relevant to them

– Access organizational information about MCWD

– Learn about a project that is relevant to them

Site map | flow chart | feature recommendations

| News | Events | Search | Login |

Home

| Permits | Water data | Recreation | What you can do | Projects | About us | Contact us |

Permits
- Apply for a permit
- Partnership benefits
- Why regulations and permits
- Resources

Water data
- Water budget
  - Dam management plan

Recreation
- Paddle Minnehaha Creek

What you can do
- Best practices
  - Best practices detail pages
  - Best practice detail pages
- Educate myself
  - Water issues
- Educate others
- Take action
  - Join the CAC
  - Adopt my storm drain
  - Lake associations
  - Educate my community

Projects
- Comprehensive plan
  - Focal geography detail pages
  - Project detail pages

About us
- Balanced Urban Ecological Approach
- Upcoming meetings
- Board of managers
  - Meeting pages
- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
  - Meeting pages
- Our team
  - Work for MCWD
  - Team bio pages

Permits
— Projects

Water data
— Water body map

Water budget
— Real-time water levels

Recreation
— Opportunities map
— Projects

Paddle Minnehaha
— Creek map
— Current water flow

What you can do

Projects/Focal geographies

Comments — Modal

Project
— Project map
— Survey
— Community engagement comments map
— Project resources
— Project news
— Staff contacts
— Photo gallery
— Related projects

About us
— What our watershed covers map

Our team

Team member bio
— Projects involved in

Contact
— Modal

Allow users to drop a pin on a map (geographically reference their question), attach a photo, and include an option for categorizing the request (e.g., Report an obstruction, question on permit, sharing a nice photo)

Thanks!

Legend
- Main parent pages
- Child pages (not to be included in nav)
- External link

FOOTER
Newsletter sign up
Facebook
Twitter
Linkedin
Privacy policy
Accessibility

PERMITS SECTION

Core model workshop results - content priorities

– Decision tree — Am I in the watershed? Which city? What kind of project? Which benefits of partnering apply? Leading to action steps segmented by type of project (SFH, commercial, dock, shoreline)

  – Do I need a permit based on my circumstances/project details? If so, which one? What are the associated costs, processes, requirements?

– Permit processes and timelines

– Education — why a permit is necessary, why we regulate, what we regulate compared to other organizations

– Partnering with MCWD — case studies/success stories of early coordination with MCWD

Outside influencers

– In-person meetings

– Interpersonal communications

– Referrals — citizen groups, other related organizations, city websites

– MCWD communications — newsletters, postcards, social, digital ads

– Organic search

Ideas to explore

– Partner program

– Partner pledge (community members, developers) - support badge or signage that can be applied for

– Permits map

– Project packet — packet creation wizard to determine document needs for project, download project packet/checklist

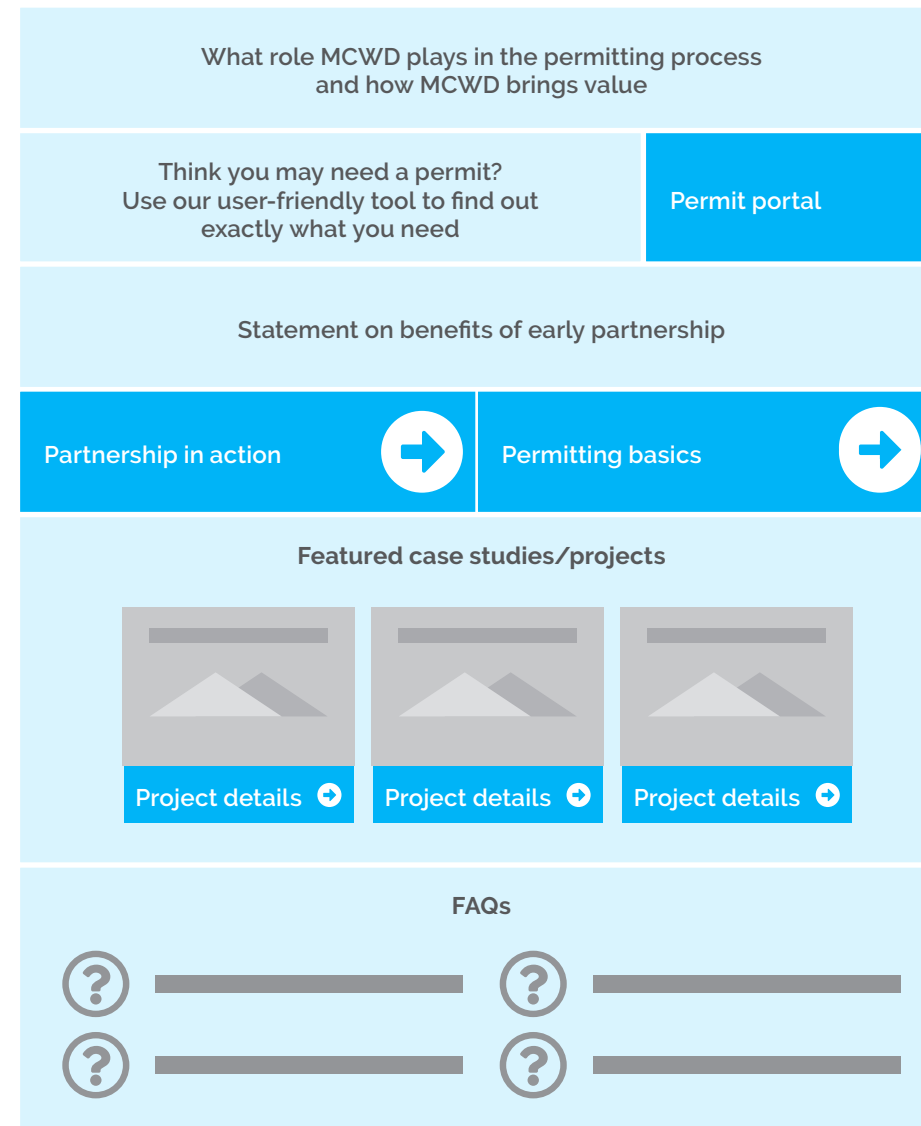## Content strategy foundation
Permits main page

Business goals

– Help users easily learn about and apply for permits

– Minimize opportunities for conflict in the permitting process

– Make process more streamlined/friendlier overall

– Promote early coordination with district and communicate value to applicant

– Clearly communicate permitting process

– Direct non-MCWD partners and permit seekers to appropriate agency

– Minimize "hand holding"

User goals

– Apply for permit

– Learn when and why a permit is needed

– Learn about permit rules and fees

– Understand status of permit/permitting process, access customized information about "my permit"

– Learn about or comment on another permit (significant or controversial projects)

– Submit inquiries and comments/complaints about: existing permits or projects, perceived needs and/or perceived violations from others in the District

– Partner with MCWD

Permits navigation

Permits

Apply for a permit
Partnership benefits
Why regulations and permits
Resources

What role MCWD plays in the permitting process and how MCWD brings value

Think you may need a permit?
Use our user-friendly tool to find out exactly what you need

Permit portal

Statement on benefits of early partnership

Partnership in action

Permitting basics

Featured case studies/projects

Project details
Project details
Project details

FAQs

Content strategy foundation
Partnership benefits page

Permits navigation

Permits

- Apply for a permit
- Partnership benefits
- Why regulations and permits
- Resources

MCWD's approach to responsive partnership

Partnership benefits

Partnership success stories

Schedule partnership consultation

Balanced Urban Ecology approach

Featured case studies

Developer partnership

Municipal partnership

Landowner partnership

Content strategy foundation
Why a permit page

Permits navigation

Permits

Apply for a permit
Partnership benefits
Why regulations
and permits
Resources

Why a permit is necessary

Think you may need a permit?
Use our user-friendly tool to find out
exactly what you need

Permit portal →

Why we regulate permits

What are the costs and requirements

Pre-application meeting request →

Featured case studies/projects

Project details → Project details → Project details →

WATER DATA AND RECREATION SECTIONS

Core model workshop results - content priorities

– Report real-time conditions on the creek and other water bodies

– Real-time water levels and flow

– Information on the health/characteristics of the water body of interest to the user

– Flooding outlook (when applicable)

– Information about Gray's Bay Dam

– Education

   – Understand goals, issues, priorities for each water body/subwatershed and how they all work together

– Information on paddling Minnehaha Creek

– Conditions of recreational assets

Outside influencers

– External resources

   – Funding for AIS management

   – LMCD water restrictions for recreation

– What you can do section

– Project portfolio section

Ideas to explore

– Leverage infographics or video animation for education

   – How Gray's Bay Dam works

   – Where water goes when it hits your roof or driveway

– Create water condition alerts sign up

Content strategy foundation
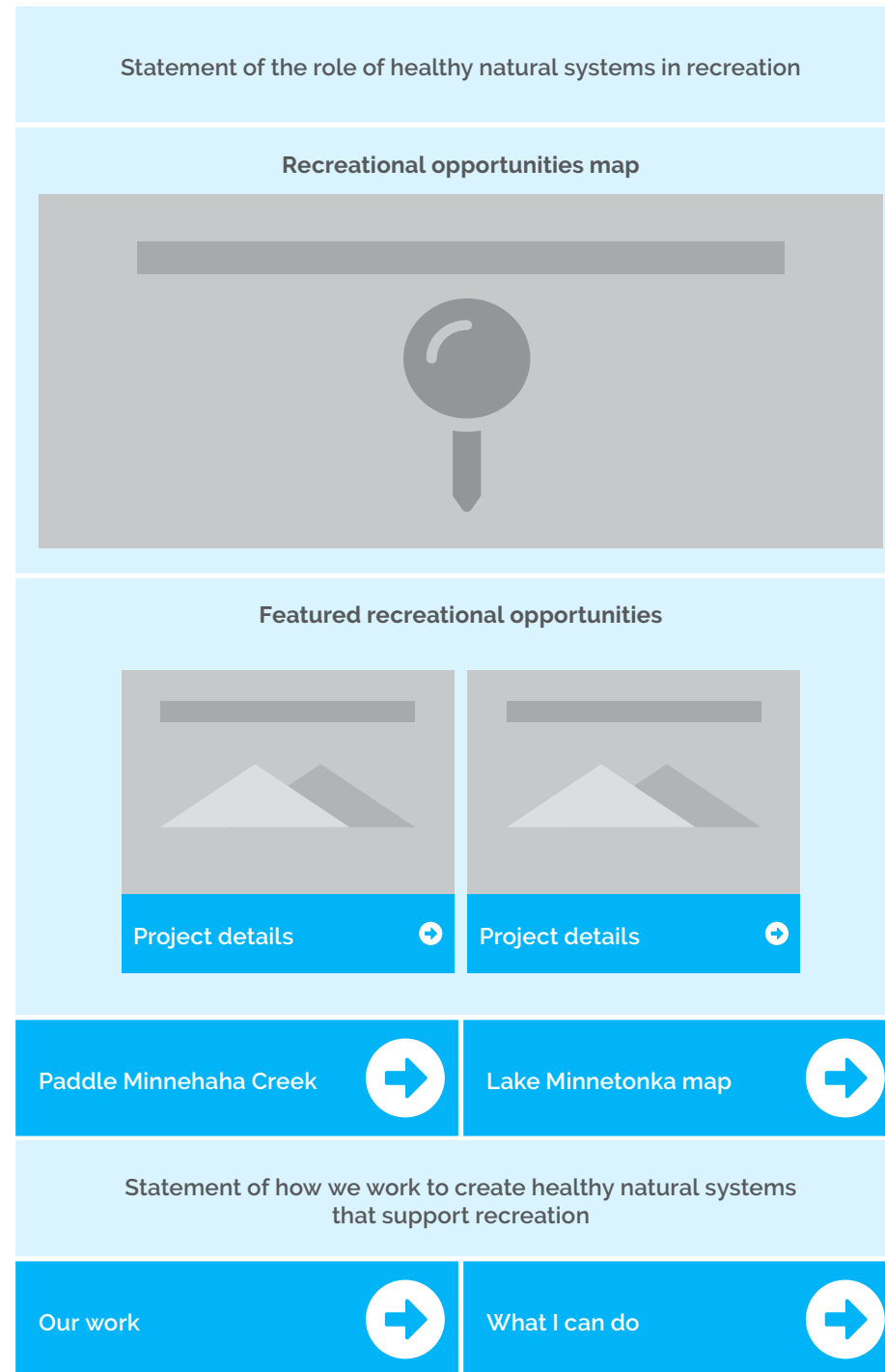Recreation main page

Business goals

– Answer common requests for water data (to help reduce the number of calls to MCWD)
– Enhance water planning initiatives
– Support outreach initiatives
– Provide and clarify information we regularly collect
– Promote best practices
– Provide education/manage expectations

User goals

– Learn about the water body I care about
– Understand flooding risk
– Plan recreation around water conditions
– Provide business professionals with data specific to their project

Recreation navigation

Recreation

Paddle
Minnehaha Creek

Statement of the role of healthy natural systems in recreation

Recreational opportunities map

Recreation highlights include:
· Trails
· Paddling
· Regional parks
· Beaches
· Boat launches
Each item includes forward path to:
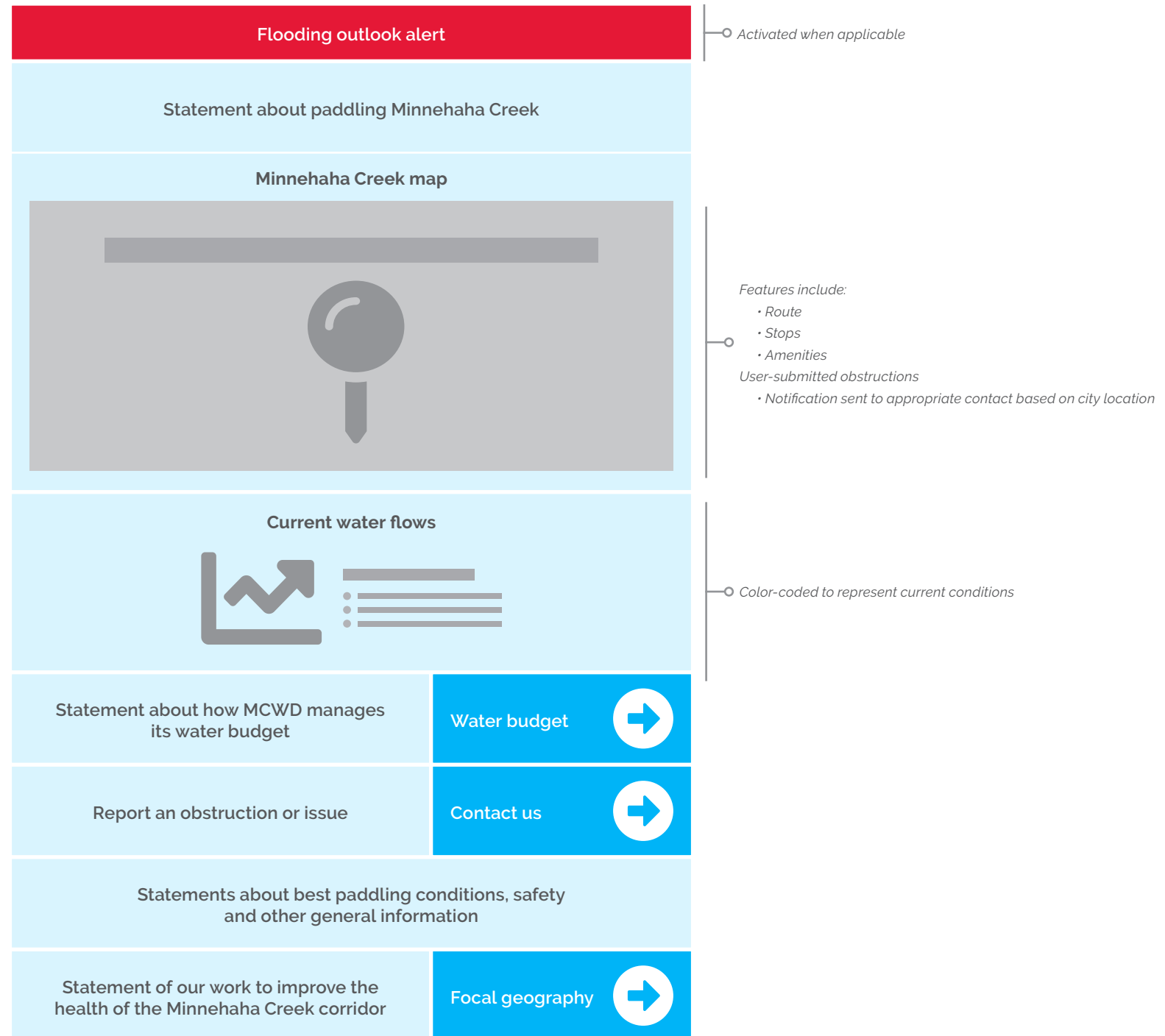*· Information page hosted by the appropriate agency*
· Water data listing for nearby water body

Featured recreational opportunities

Project details

Project details

Highlight 2 projects with strong recreational aspects

Paddle Minnehaha Creek

Lake Minnetonka map

Statement of how we work to create healthy natural systems that support recreation

Our work

What I can do

Content strategy foundation
Paddle Minnehaha Creek page

Recreation navigation

Recreation

Paddle
Minnehaha Creek

Flooding outlook alert

Activated when applicable

Statement about paddling Minnehaha Creek

Minnehaha Creek map

Features include:
· Route
· Stops
· Amenities
User-submitted obstructions
· Notification sent to appropriate contact based on city location

Current water flows

Color-coded to represent current conditions

Statement about how MCWD manages
its water budget

Water budget

Report an obstruction or issue

Contact us

Statements about best paddling conditions, safety
and other general information

Statement of our work to improve the
health of the Minnehaha Creek corridor

Focal geography

Content strategy foundation
Water data main page

Water data navigation

Water data

Water budget

Dam management plan

Statement on how MCWD protects, preserves and manages the watershed

Learn about your water body map

Statement of how we leverage technology to manage the water budget of the watershed

Water budget

FAQs

? —————— ? ——————

? —————— ? ——————
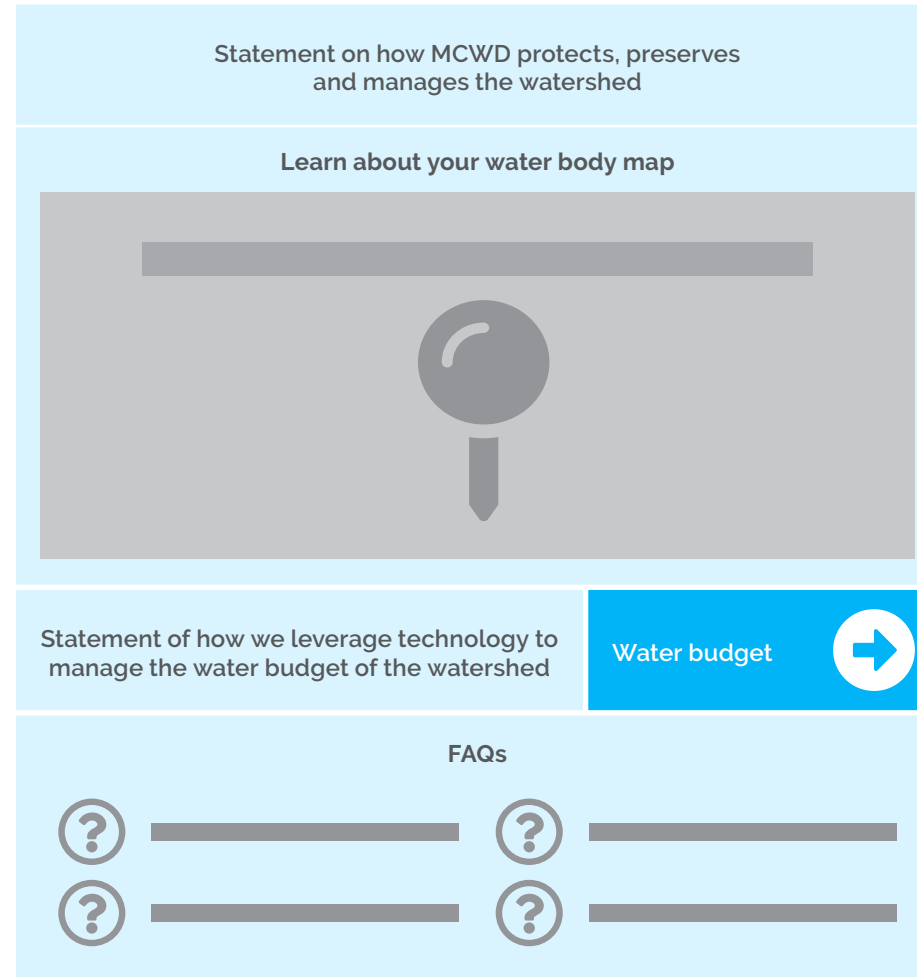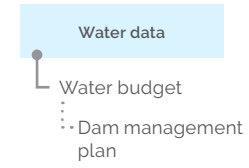
Clickable water bodies
Details include:
 • Water quality facts
 • Subwatershed - forward path to comp plan
 • Lake association (when applicable)
 • Link to DNR LakeFinder
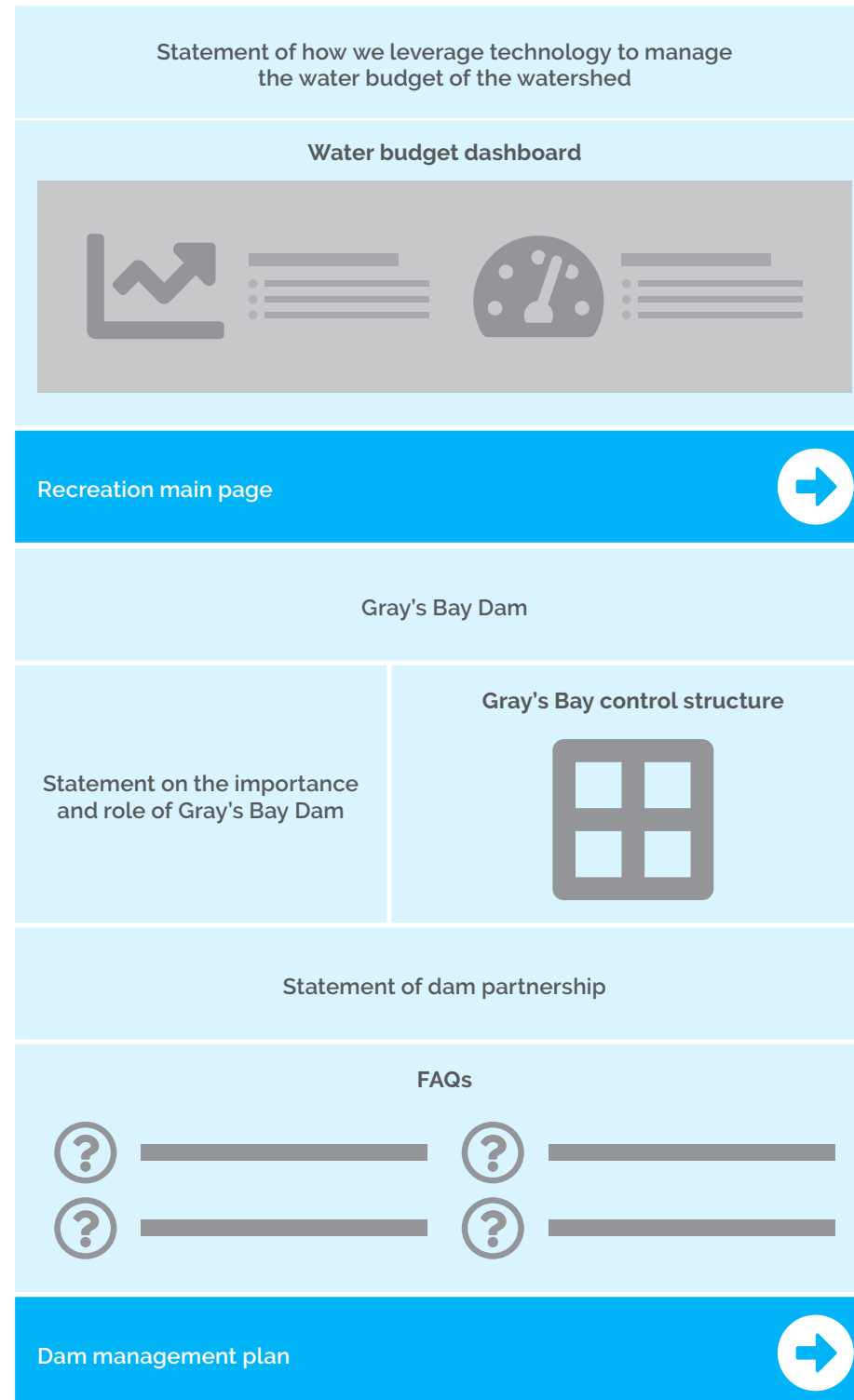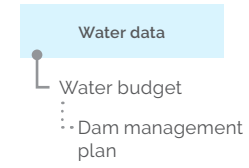 *• Link to MPCA water quality database listing*

Topics covered could include:
 • Water quality
 • Water conditions

Content strategy foundation
Water budget page

Water data navigation

Water data

└ Water budget
　　┊ Dam management
　　　 plan

Statement of how we leverage technology to manage the water budget of the watershed

Water budget dashboard

Real-time water levels fed by RESNET sensor network

Recreation main page

Gray's Bay Dam

Gray's Bay control structure

Statement on the importance and role of Gray's Bay Dam

Current dam discharge, displayed overlaid on the "operating zones" graphic

Statement of dam partnership

FAQs

? _____　　? _____
? _____　　? _____

Dam management plan

WHAT YOU CAN DO SECTION

Core model workshop results - content priorities

– Resource hub/library

    – Information about implementing best practices

    – Resources for grants from partners

    – Information about joining citizen groups

    – Toolkits

    – Collaboration with other watershed organizations (if/when applicable)

– Automate display reservation process

Outside influencers

– Implement a best practice

– Join a resident group

– Apply for a grant

– Explore third-party resources/external organizations for opportunities to volunteer, get involved

Ideas to explore

– Best practices video series

    – Managing storm water

    – How to build a rain garden

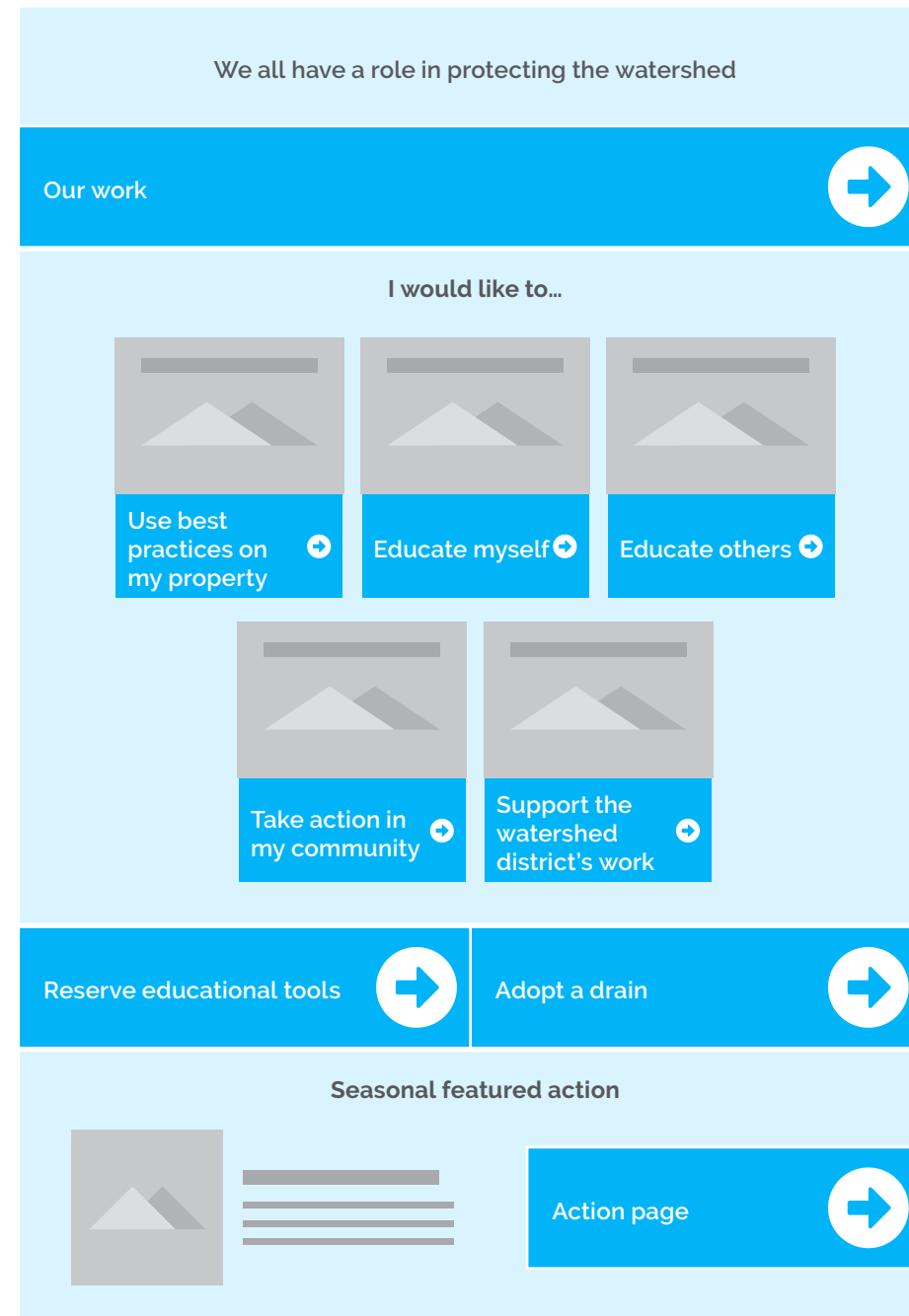# Content strategy foundation
What you can do main page

Business goals

– Guide residential best practices

– Provide info on how to get involved

– Provide resource and referrals

– Promote partnership across agencies/developers/residents (connect to useful third-party resources)

User goals

– What actions can I take?

– How can I get involved?

– What additional resources can I explore?

What you can do navigation

What you can do

Best practices
- Best practices detail pages
- Best practice detail pages

Educate myself
- Water issues

Educate others

Take action
- Join the CAC
- Adopt my storm drain
- Lake associations
- Educate my community

We all have a role in protecting the watershed

Describing how the role of the public complements the role of the District

Our work

I would like to…

Use best practices on my property

Educate myself

Educate others

Take action in my community

Support the watershed district's work

Reserve educational tools
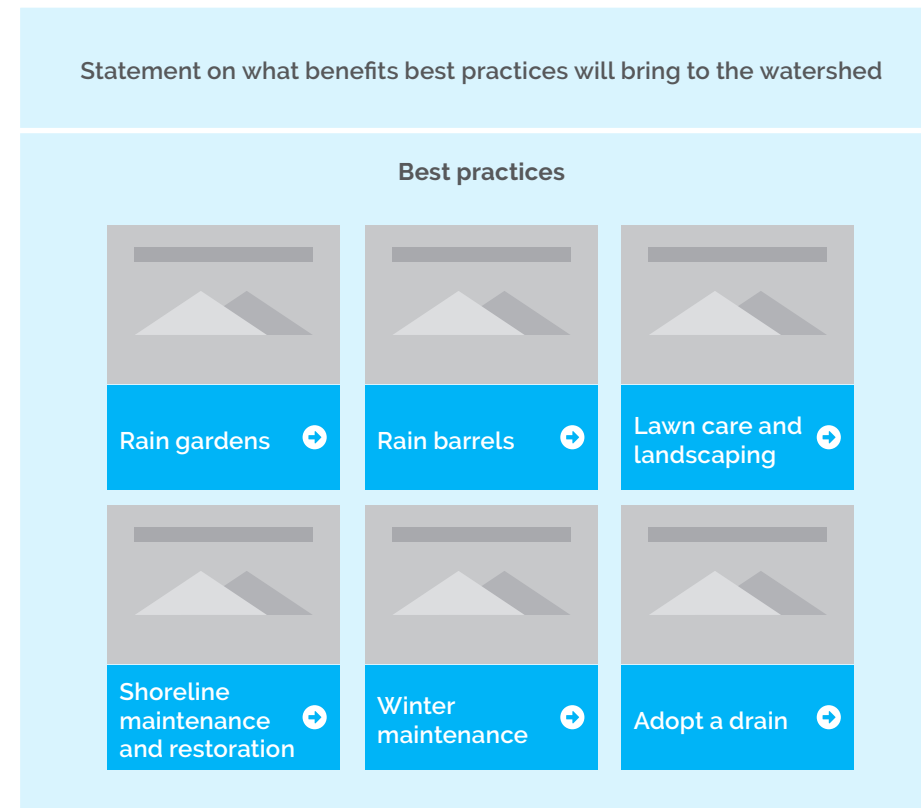
Adopt a drain

Seasonal featured action

Action page

Seasonal action will rotate based on current month

Content strategy foundation
Best practices detail page

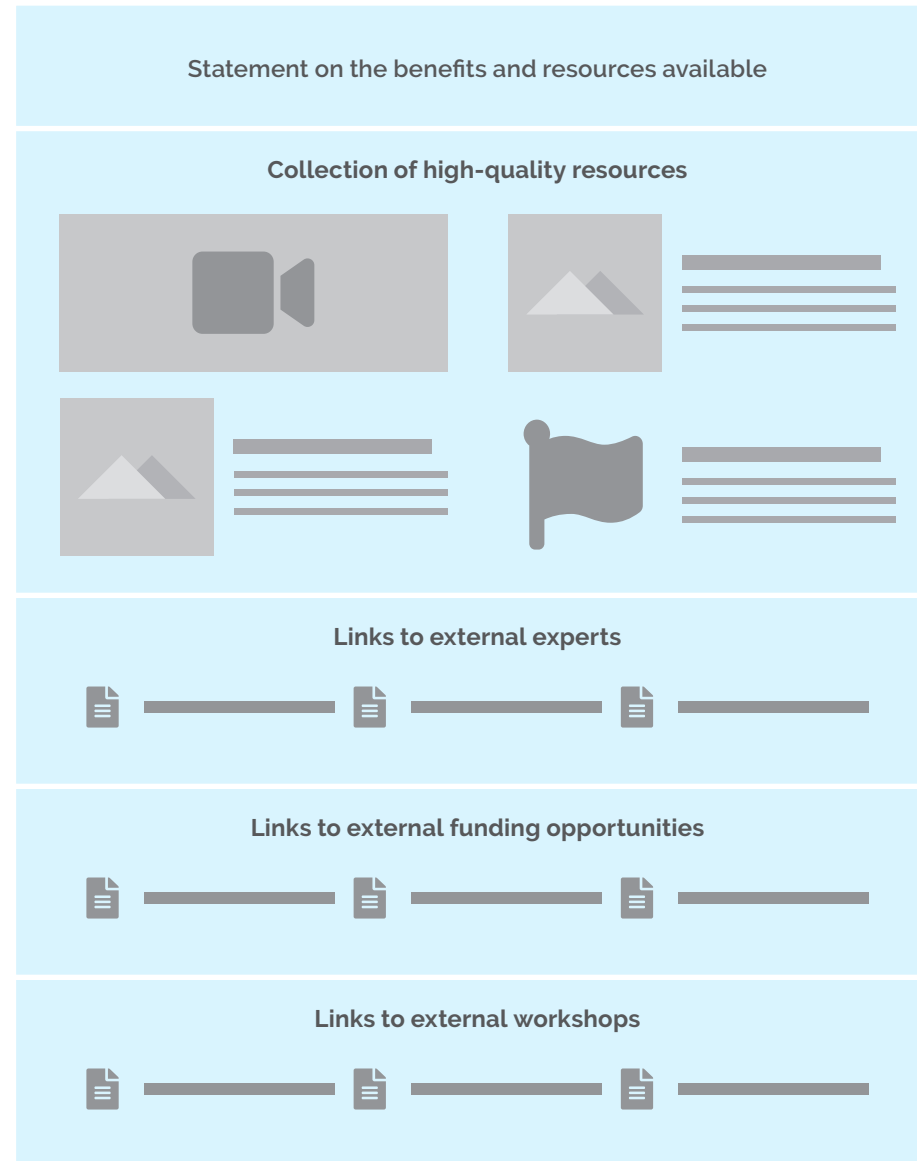**e.g. Use best practices on my property**

What you can do navigation

What you can do

Best practices
— Best practices detail pages
— Best practice detail pages

Educate myself
— Water issues

Educate others

Take action
— Join the CAC
— Adopt my storm drain
— Lake associations
— Educate my community

Statement on what benefits best practices will bring to the watershed

Best practices

Rain gardens ➡

Rain barrels ➡

Lawn care and landscaping ➡

Shoreline maintenance and restoration ➡

Winter maintenance ➡

Adopt a drain ➡

Forward paths to key practices

Content strategy foundation
Best practice detail page

e.g. Rain gardens

What you can do navigation

- What you can do
  - Best practices
    - Best practices detail pages
    - Best practice detail pages
  - Educate myself
    - Water issues
  - Educate others
  - Take action
    - Join the CAC
    - Adopt my storm drain
    - Lake associations
    - Educate my community

Statement on the benefits and resources available

Collection of high-quality resources

Links to external experts

Examples:
- *Certified rain garden installers*
- *Winter maintenance professionals*

Links to external funding opportunities

Links to external workshops

When applicable

Content strategy foundation
Educate myself page

What you can do navigation

- What you can do
  - Best practices
    - Best practices detail pages
    - Best practice detail pages
  - Educate myself
    - Water issues
  - Educate others
  - Take action
    - Join the CAC
    - Adopt my storm drain
    - Lake associations
    - Educate my community

Statement on learning about the watershed and issues it faces

Water issues

What is a watershed?	Water governance	Stormwater pollutants
Climate change and water	Learn about a specific water body	

Forward paths to key water issues

Learn about taking action on your property

Attend a workshop or event

Only displayed when active upcoming events are posted

Balanced Urban Ecology

Content strategy foundation
Educate others page

What you can do navigation

What you can do
- Best practices
  - Best practices detail pages
  - Best practice detail pages
- Educate myself
  - Water issues
- Educate others
- Take action
  - Join the CAC
  - Adopt my storm drain
  - Lake associations
  - Educate my community

Statement on how you can educate others to help MCWD protect the watershed

Resources for educators
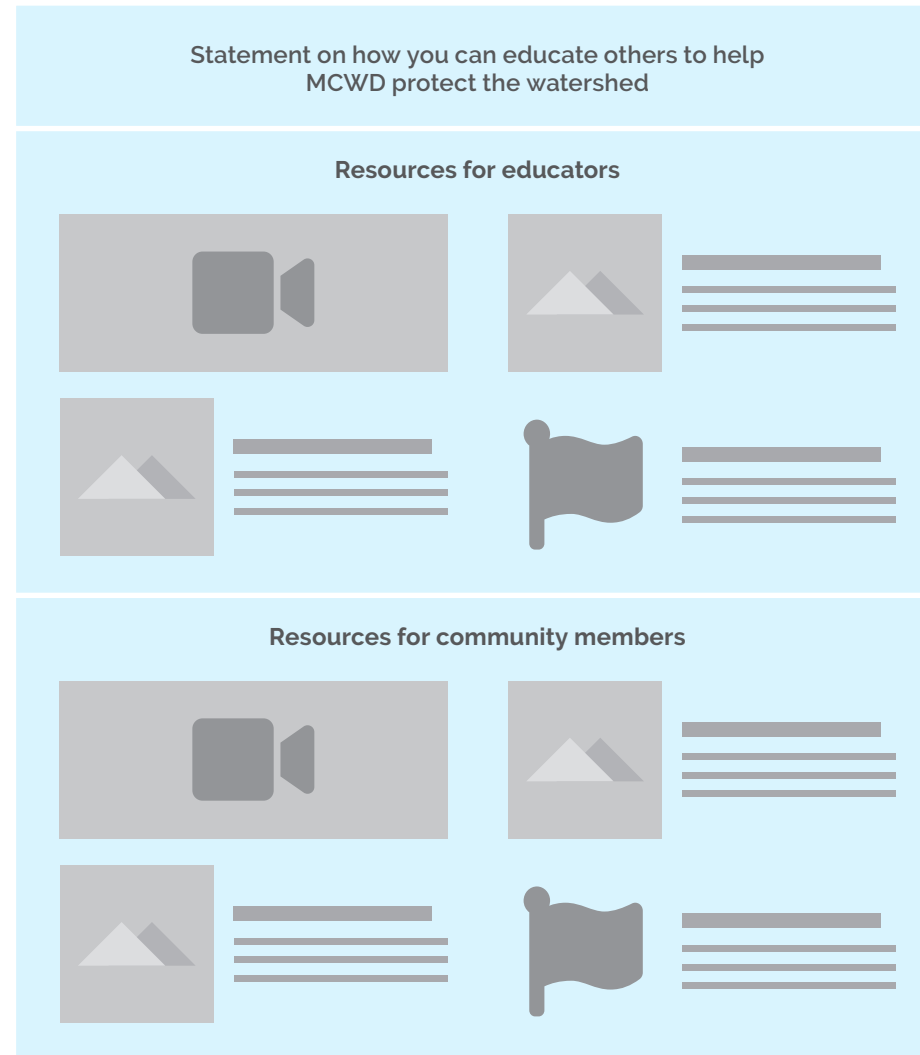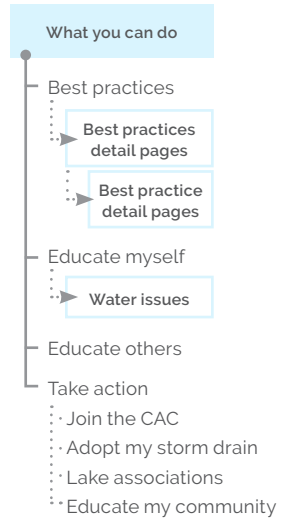
Mix of resources
- *Sample curriculum*
- *External links to classroom speakers*
- *Other external resources*
- *Forward path to display/activity/resource check out*

Resources for community members

Mix of resources
- *Fact sheets on water issues and what you can do*
- *Videos*
- *etc.*

Content strategy foundation
Take action in my community page

What you can do navigation

What you can do

Best practices
- Best practices detail pages
- Best practice detail pages

Educate myself
- Water issues

Educate others

Take action
- Join the CAC
- Adopt my storm drain
- Lake associations
- Educate my community
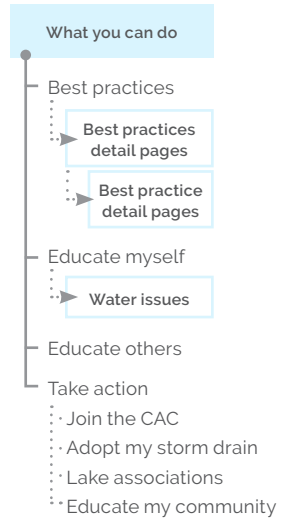
Statement on supporting the watershed through various outlets like programs, committees and volunteering

Take action in my community

Join the CAC ➡

Adopt my storm drain ➡

Join or form a lake association ➡

Educate my community at an event ➡

Support the watershed's work ➡

Attend a local event ➡

ABOUT MCWD SECTION

Content priorities

– Mission, district goals

– Authority/why they exist

– How MCWD is different from other agencies (DNR, city, county)

– Ongoing public outreach strategy

– Highlight key case studies/projects

– History (brief)

– Budget/levy

– Agendas/minutes

– "Am I in the watershed?" search functionality

– Comp plan

– Requests for applications and proposals

– Job postings

– Board of Managers

– MCWD staff

– Committees, task forces and commissions

– Publications/annual report/strategic plans

Outside influencers

– Community outreach

– Concerned citizens

– Media coverage

– Social

Ideas to explore

– Elevate key staff members, include more information about what they do

– Video - overview of MCWD

Content strategy foundation
About us main page

Business goals
– Inform public and private sectors of ongoing missions and goals
– Provide public transparency

User goals
– Learn about MCWD

About us navigation

About us

Balanced Urban Ecological Approach

Upcoming meetings

Board of managers

Meeting pages

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

Meeting pages

Our team

Work for MCWD

Team bio pages

What is a watershed district statement

"What our watershed covers" map

Our work

Display communities
Search by address and/or city

Watershed key stats

No. of lakes
No. of streams
No. of communities
No. of wetlands
Populations
Highlight popular lakes

Statement of our approach of integrating land and water

Balanced Urban Ecology

Statement about our governance setup and commitment to good government

Upcoming meetings

Board of managers

Citizen Advisory Committee

Our team

Content strategy foundation
Balanced Urban Ecology Approach page

About us navigation
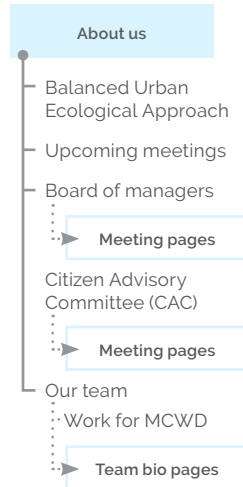
About us

- Balanced Urban Ecological Approach
- Upcoming meetings
- Board of managers
  - Meeting pages
- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
  - Meeting pages
- Our team
  - Work for MCWD
    - Team bio pages

Statement on managing the watershed's resources within a broader ecological context

Detailed description of BUE

BUE policy statement →

Focal geographies
Statement about our focal geography approach

Focal geography #1 →

Focal geography #2 →

Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan →

Content strategy foundation
Board of managers page

About us navigation
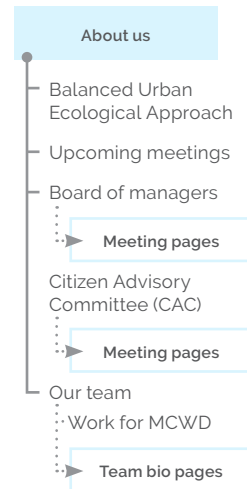
About us

- Balanced Urban Ecological Approach
- Upcoming meetings
- Board of managers
  - ► Meeting pages
- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
  - ► Meeting pages
- Our team
  - Work for MCWD
    - ► Team bio pages

Statement on managers overseeing district activities and protecting water quality and preventing flooding

Board members

Meeting information

Links to meeting pages
Filter by:
- *Year*
- *Meeting type*

Content strategy foundation
Citizen Advisory Committee page

About us navigation

- About us
- Balanced Urban Ecological Approach
- Upcoming meetings
- Board of managers
  - Meeting pages
- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
  - Meeting pages
- Our team
  - Work for MCWD
    - Team bio pages
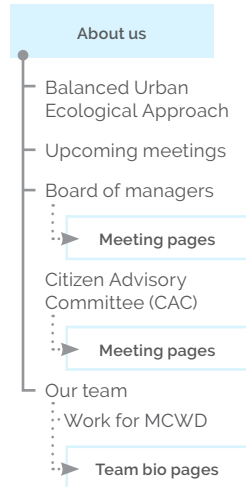
Statement on CAC's role in the district

CAC members

Meeting information

Links to meeting pages
Filter by:
  • Year

Join the Citizen Advisory Committee

More ways to get involved

Take Action in my Community

Content strategy foundation
Our team page

About us navigation

About us
- Balanced Urban Ecological Approach
- Upcoming meetings
- Board of managers
  - Meeting pages
- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)
  - Meeting pages
- Our team
  - Work for MCWD
    - Team bio pages

Statement on team's role and influence on the district

Our team

Statement on general inquiries | Contact us →

Work for MCWD →
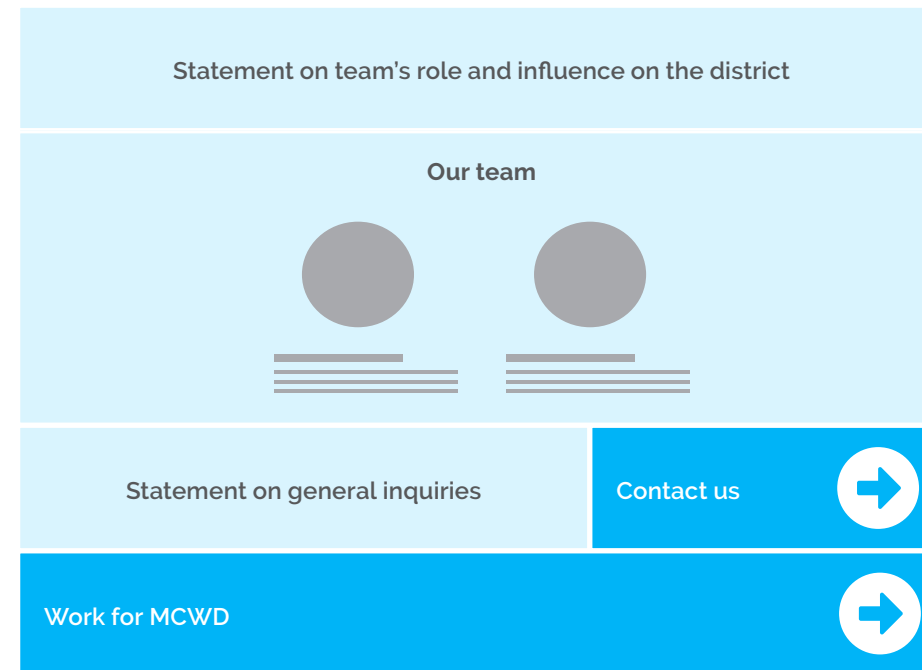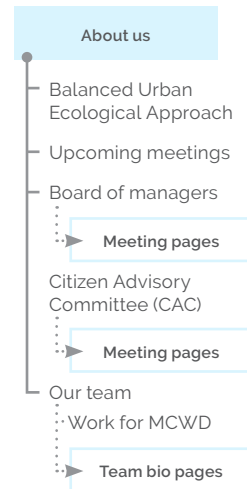
Organized by program
  · Program sections to include a brief description
Link to team bio page

PROJECTS SECTION

Content priorities

- Ability to filter project list/presentation by:
  - Project type
  - Residential/commercial (user type)
  - Subwatershed
  - Status
  - City
- Intro section
  - Short explanation of how & why MCWD is involved with projects —"feel-good" content
  - Key (or highlighted) projects, recently completed
- Project map
- Outreach
  - Informational materials
  - News and press releases
  - Project update emails/communications
  - Information for people who live nearby and may have also received a postcard
  - What to expect as a business or resident near a planned or in-progress project
  - Sign up for alerts/updates on this project
- Location search — see nearby projects
- Project status
  - Completed projects
  - Projects in progress
- Permits issued
- Project overview
  - Project timeline
  - Goal of the project
  - Followup, results
    - Ex. Increased property value/aesthetics, reduced AIS (would want filtered by user type to show relevant outcomes)
  - How this project benefits the watershed and the public
  - MCWD staff contacts for project
  - Associated/related projects

- Success stories highlighted
- Partners and contractors
- Related water body
- Reports/related documents
- Studies, etc.
- Ability to feature significant projects

Outside influencers

- Community outreach
- Public forum
- Concerned citizens
- Partner with us section of the website
- News articles

Ideas to explore

- Icon system
- Robust search and filter functionality
  - Leverage categories/topics/tags
- Project highlights/summary — elevate key project details for an "at a glance" view
- Case study approach to content

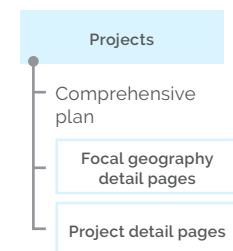# Content strategy foundation
Projects main page

Business goals

– Keep users up to date and educated on current and past projects

– Gain stakeholder & public support

– Promote partnership opportunities by showing relevant success stories and positioning MCWD as the area's expert in water management

User goals

– Updates

– Impacts

– Benefits

Projects navigation

Projects

Comprehensive plan

Focal geography detail pages

Project detail pages

Statement of how projects benefit the public and the entire watershed

Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan →

Our approach to capital projects

Balanced Urban Ecology →

Highlighted projects

Project details →

Project details →

Focal geographies
Statement about our focal geography approach

Focal geography #1 →

Focal geography #2 →

A landing page for each of the 1-3 active focal geographies in MCWD

All projects map

Filter projects by:
- *Status*
  - *Planned*
  - *In progress*
  - *Completed*
- *Partnership type*
  - *Government*
  - *Developer*
  - *Business*
  - *Private landowner*
View projects by map or tile view

Content strategy foundation
Project detail page

Projects navigation

- Projects
  - Comprehensive plan
    - Focal geography detail pages
    - Project detail pages

Hero banner

Project-at-a-glance summary

Highlights can include:
- *City*
- *Subwatershed*
- *Completion date*
- *Current status*
- *Cost*
- *Funding sources*
- *Partners*

Leverage icon system

Statement of why this project is happening

Project by the numbers

Key metric icons
- *No. jobs created*
- *Lbs. carp removed*
- *Lbs. algae prevented*

Project background narrative

Statement of subwatershed context | **More about this subwatershed** →

Brief description of how the project is part of a larger effort to improve a particular subwatershed or water body

Directs users to the corresponding section of the Comprehensive Plan

The focal geography (if applicable) →

Project map

GIS map outlining project boundaries
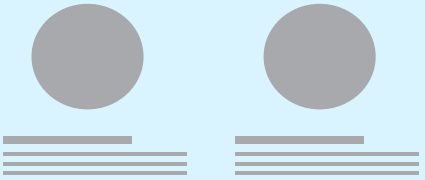
Project survey | **Community engagement map**

Blocks would be turned on and off at various points of a project's life cycle

Community engagement includes:
- *Real-time comments on project portion*
- *Link to public engagement session(s)*

Key partners

Partner with MCWD →

Dynamic project timeline

Project start — *Project end*

Custom admin workflow reminders to staff to update content
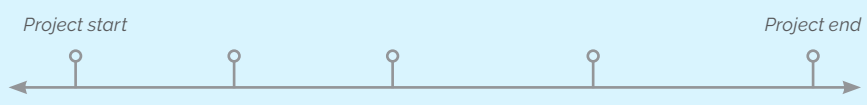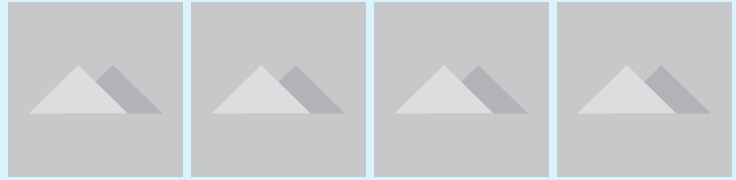
Photo gallery

Project resources

Mix of content
- *Reports*
- *PDF downloads*
- *Videos*

Project news

Mix of internal and external news
- *Construction updates*
- *Community engagement opportunities*
- *Etc.*
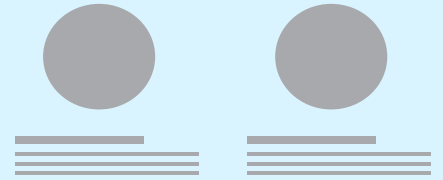
Staff contact(s)

Related projects

Related project #1 → | **Related project #2** →

Content strategy foundation
Focal geography detail page

Projects navigation

Projects

Comprehensive plan

Focal geography detail pages

Project detail pages
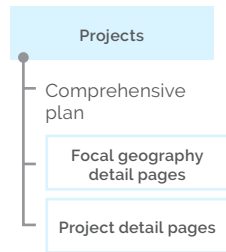
Hero banner

Opportunity statement: Why we are focused on this area

Statement of MCWD's focal geography approach

Focal geography 2 →

Project by the numbers

Sign up for updates on this focal geography →

Map of work within focal geography map

Key partners

Partner with MCWD →

Focal geography resources

Highlights can include:
- *City*
- *Subwatershed*
- *Completion date*
- *Current status*
- *Cost*
- *Funding sources*
- *Partners*

Leverage icon system

Highlights of outcomes

GIS map displaying all the project pages within the subwatershed

Mix of content
- *Reports*
- *PDF downloads*
- *Videos*

Staff contact(s)

CONTENT STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS & GUIDELINES

Overall voice

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) website should speak to visitors in a friendly, understandable way, regardless of subject matter. Much of MCWD's subject matter is highly technical and scientific in nature, but all visitors appreciate direct, easy-to-read/scannable content. A significant number of visitors will possess only limited/basic knowledge of water parameters, watersheds and watershed projects.

Additionally, research shows the average visitor most appreciates content that is delivered at a seventh- to eighth-grade level, so keep content simple and straightforward to reach the most people. We recommend applying the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Readability Test or another readability tool to each page to determine the level of difficulty within your words and sentences. The tool also identifies whether content is written in active voice, which is a desirable quality. If your content registers as difficult to read or in passive voice, you may wish to edit it for better comprehension and retention. Readability tests/tools are often integrated into content management systems and may also be found online.

Overall tone

MCWD has worked to protect and support the health and longevity of the District's water resources since 1967. And with more than 50 years of experience, MCWD has earned a well-deserved reputation as a true authority within the District and overall region.

Content presented within the website must reflect MCWD's authoritative, expert status without confusing or talking down to visitors. Content must also emphasize MCWD's commitment to creating solutions, preventing problems and increasing awareness of both planned and existing water resource solutions/projects.

Copywriting guidelines

Adopt a comprehensive style guide such as the AP Stylebook or Chicago Manual of Style. Then, develop and follow a customized-content style guide that defines District-related common usage or exceptions such as:

– Preferred voice

– Preferred tones

– General guidelines

– Recommended/preferred terms, such as these examples:
  – residents vs. landowners
  – communities vs. cities or towns
  – permit vs. license

– Preferred capitalization for headings, lists, etc.
  – Title Capped
  – Sentence capped

– Common spelling errors to avoid, such as these examples:
  – Grey's Bay vs. Gray's Bay
  – hydrodata vs. hydro data

– Preferred punctuation, such as:
  – No periods at the end of bulleted list entries
  – Use of the serial comma
  – When to use en and em dashes vs. dashes/hyphens

– When to use numerals or words for numbers within content

– Parallel structure within a list (starting all entries in the list with either a verb or a noun, not mixing the two

– Additional matters specific to MCWD

NEVER assume your users/viewers understand "the who, what, when, where, or why" of MCWD.

– Don't demonstrate your advanced knowledge with big words or complex descriptions

– Don't use industry-specific acronyms without first spelling them out/providing their full description (acronyms on secondary references are fine)

– Aim to answer questions—rather than create them—with everything you present within the website

Strive to provide content that anticipates and addresses your users' needs based on the way they are thinking at that point in time.

 Keep copy brief and use short sentences. Write copy that's just long enough to clearly communicate crucial details. Include only the necessary details or risk overwhelming your visitors and losing their interest/attention.

Keep copy factual and direct, but not dry. Visitors want engaging content. Write with enthusiasm and authority.

Copywriting guidelines continued

Make copy reader-friendly ALWAYS. Visitors have neither the time nor the desire to read paragraph after paragraph of narrative copy. Too-long copy overwhelms readers and causes them to lose interest.

– Break copy up into "chunks" with subheads, photos and/or graphic elements like divider lines—think about what you'd want to communicate if visitors read ONLY the subheads and no supporting copy
– Use bulleted lists liberally
  – Especially when describing components, processes or related thoughts
– Use bolded words and phrases where appropriate, but don't overuse them

Write in active voice vs. passive voice to keep copy engaging, easier to understand and generally shorter. Consider these examples:

– Minnehaha Creek Watershed District staff compiled the report. (Active voice)
– The report was compiled by Minnehaha Creek Watershed District staff. (Passive voice)

The first sentence is much friendlier, more direct and understandable.

Write in second-person perspective whenever possible. Readers gravitate more strongly to "you" and "your" statements than "we" and "our." They want to know exactly what your organization can and will do for them. Consider these two sentences about the same subject:

– Six Mile Marsh and Halstead Bay now offer you and your neighbors the beauty and serenity of 16 restored acres of wetland, increased wildlife habitat and new marsh-adjacent open space for outdoor fun.
– We restored land near Six Mile Marsh and Halstead Bay.

The first sentence impacts your audience much more strongly because it speaks directly to each reader and clearly describes how life will improve because of MCWD's efforts. The second sentence simply says that MCWD worked on this project.

Show, don't tell. Whenever possible and appropriate, communicate your ideas with infographics or other graphical elements that communicate complex ideas in a friendly format.

Avoid unnecessary repetition in content.

– Don't simply repeat the point you made in a headline or subhead in its adjacent/supporting description
– If you can link your visitor to an in-depth PDF or other resource, do so without first describing its content in great detail. Feel free to provide the document title or a statement of purpose, but don't post large portions of document content adjacent to its link.

Make calls to action straightforward, visible and accessible. Never make visitors wonder what you want them to do (Learn more, Sign up, Filter map, etc.).

Whenever possible, avoid writing headings, phrases, callouts or sentences IN ALL CAPS. Lengthy all-caps content, regardless of where it's located, is difficult to read.

SEO considerations

Thoughtful Search Engine Optimization (SEO) ensures that MCWD's website ranks highly in search engine results. When a site is optimized for SEO, search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing regard it as more relevant than similar sites and display it higher in the list of search results. Higher ranking increases the likelihood that viewers will see and click through to your website. MCWD should consider SEO an ongoing project, since website optimization will change and grow according to project, focus, current events and/or other factor(s).

Keywords—crucial building blocks of individual page content

– Before writing a page's content, search for and collect major relevant keywords, then plan to incorporate them into your content
– When writing content around your keywords, stay focused on the purpose/description of the page
– Need help determining which keywords are ideal? Use a search tool like Google Ads' Keyword Planner tool or SEMrush's Keyword Magic tool.

Each page within the MCWD website should include search-friendly tagging, including:

– Title tags
– Meta description tag
– Header tags
– Image alt tags
– Links and anchor text tags
– Canonical tags
– Schema tags
– Open graph meta tags

SEO software such as Yoast can help simplify search-friendly tagging.

Visual strategy

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District website is a hub of organized data, resource material, advocacy, answers and action.

The structure, design and content should present widely accessible information, served in bite-sized chunks. The structure, navigation, visual cues and copy should make getting the information—through site search or navigation—simple and quick. The navigation should "suggest" related content of interest to encourage a deeper understanding of the mission of the District.

Imagery

The website should bring to life the District's vision of "a landscape of vibrant communities where the natural and built environments in balance create value and enjoyment." Visuals should tie to the environment at first glance with beautiful photography of the watershed and people enjoying completed projects.

Color

The website should feature a color palette that reflects nature and the Districts' values. All elements should support a realistic, natural and contemporary look and feel.

Show, don't tell

When possible, employ well-designed infographics and simple maps to provide a less text-intense experience.