

# Information Item

Committee of the Whole



Meeting Date: June 21, 2023

## Topic

Water Resources Policy Plan: Overview and Water Policy Research Project

<b>District(s), Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Policy/Legal Reference:</b>	Minn. Stat. § 473.145, Minn. Stat. § 473.157, and Minn. Stat. § 473.1565
<b>Staff Prepared/Presented:</b>	Jennifer Kostrzewski, Water Resources Environmental Analyst, Planning Judy Sventek, Water Resources Manager, Planning
<b>Division/Department:</b>	Environmental Services

## Background

The Metropolitan Council is charged in statute with preparing a comprehensive development guide that includes a plan for the region's wastewater collection and treatment system, along with supporting policies, goals, standards and maps. The Water Resources Policy Plan is also prepared in response to federal requirements and state statute for a regional management plan to address pollution from point sources (such as treatment plant discharges) and nonpoint sources (such as stormwater runoff). Water resources planning includes planning for regional water supply which is addressed through the Metro Area Water Supply Plan the metropolitan region.

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup>, staff will present an overview of regional water planning as it relates to the Water Resources Policy Plan and share crucial concerns and key messages developed in a year-long Water Policy Research Project. Metropolitan Council Members will be encouraged to share and promote opportunities for public comment on these findings.

## 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan

The 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan will build off of the regional vision and values described in the Regional Development Guide and focuses on ensuring sustainable water resources in the metro region. It also provides the foundation of integrative water planning, which considers planning for water across wastewater, water supply, and watershed management sectors. This cycle, the Water Resources Policy Plan will contain Metropolitan Council's water policies, local water planning requirements, the Metro Area Water Supply Plan, and the regional wastewater system plan.

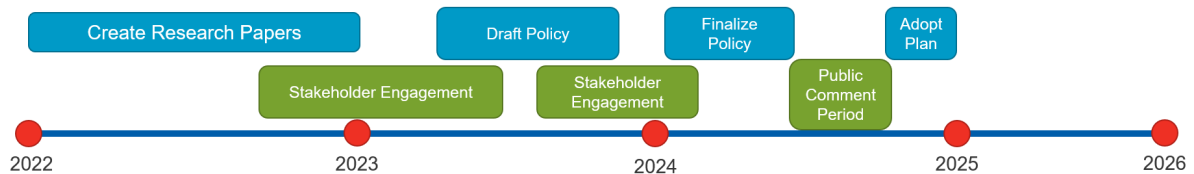
## 2050 Stakeholder Engagement

There are many stakeholders to provide invaluable input to the 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan. In the early stages, Metropolitan Council staff have relied on the input and guidance of the Environment Committee and our external advisory committees – the Water Advisory Group and the Metro Area Water Supply Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committees. Additionally, Metropolitan Council staff have tabled at scientific and water professional conferences, engaged with local public works and water supply staff, have solicited feedback from watershed management and planning staff, and connected with regional water-related non-profits. Our engagement is planned to expand to more

stakeholders as the process continues, so that Metropolitan Council staff can hear and incorporate diverse perspectives on regional waters and our policy towards it.

### 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan Timeline

The Water Resources Policy Plan will be adopted as a part of the Regional Development Guide at the end of 2024. Metropolitan Council staff will continue to engage with stakeholders and work with the Metropolitan Council Members on the Environment Committee to develop and hone water policies that reflect the region's needs and water values.



### Water Policy Research Project

At the start of the 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan, Environmental Services staff proposed and created seven topical research papers discussing current and future critical water concern areas. The paper topics are:

1. Protecting Source Water Areas
2. Rural Water Concerns
3. Wastewater Concerns
4. Water and Climate
5. Water Availability, Access, and Use
6. Water Quality
7. Water Reuse

The authoring teams sought initial feedback from members of the Water Advisory Group to confirm these areas of concern resonated with local perspectives. Upon agreement, the teams developed content that outlined the background information, identified primary drivers that influence the issues, focused on crucial concerns specific to our region, and recommended strategies and actions that could address our concerns and should be considered in the 2050 water policy.

The series of papers are intended to spark dialogues with our stakeholder groups. Discussion points have focused on if the papers fully describe or over emphasize the crucial concerns; if the recommendation scope is appropriate for regional and local needs; or if the papers failed to discuss other important information. Council staff have recorded input and will use it to inform our policies and direction in the 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan.

### Provide feedback

The research papers are on the Metropolitan Council's website (<https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Planning/2050-Water-Resources-Policy-Plan.aspx>) with the intention to share the research broadly with the region. They are summarized in an approachable structure and language that allows the reader to opt in for more information. The website also has feedback surveys that allow readers to provide their thoughts on the research. Metropolitan Council staff widely encourage the sharing of this website to gather regional water-related feedback. The more perspectives that are included early in the process allows us to draft better, more inclusive water policy.

