Information Item

Committee of the Whole

Meeting Date: April 17, 2024

Topic

2050 Water Policy Plan Update

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.145, Minn. Stat. § 473.157, and Minn. Stat. § 473.1565
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Division/Department:	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 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 also includes planning for regional water supply which is addressed through the Metro Area Water Supply Plan for the metropolitan region.

At the Committee of the Whole meeting on April 17th, staff will present an overview of regional water planning as it relates to the Water Policy Plan, share about our water advisory teams and engagement, and draft plan content developed over the last year. Metropolitan Council Members will be encouraged to share and promote opportunities for public comment on these findings.

2050 Water Policy Plan

The 2050 Water 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 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 Water Advisory Groups

The Water Policy Plan is developed in collaboration with water professionals and resident input from across the metro area. We have four primary advisory groups to assist with policy evaluation and drafting:

1) **Metropolitan Council Environment Committee**

   The Environment Committee addresses issues of sewer policy and planning, environmental reviews, wastewater facilities and treatment, water supply, water resources, nonpoint source

pollution, and federal and state regulations.

2) **Water Advisory Group**
The Water Advisory Group (WAG) is comprised of 21 regional water professionals. Membership is distributed across the metro region, with seven members focused on watershed management, seven focused on water supply, and seven focused on municipal wastewater treatment and conveyance. The intention of this group is to foster cross-sector conversations about regional water issues and guide policy development.

3) **Metro Area Water Supply Advisory Committee**
The Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC) provides advice and assistance to the Council in its water supply planning activities. Created by the Minnesota Legislature, MAWSAC played a lead role in developing the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Plan and continues to guide its implementation. Committee members include local representatives of the 11-county metropolitan area in addition to Minnesota's departments of agriculture, health, natural resources, and pollution control agency.

4) **Water Supply Technical Advisory Committee**
A 15-member Water Supply Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), appointed by MAWSAC, provides scientific and engineering expertise to inform MAWSAC's work.

2050 Stakeholder Engagement
Stakeholder input is vital to the creation of regional water policies. Water planning staff have put in considerable effort to engage the region about water supply issues and needs through our Subregional Engagement. The region was divided into seven subregions that had similar water concerns, geology, and other characteristics to build a shared understanding of current conditions, future success, issues and barriers, and local strategies and actions to address them. Over the course of the seven-month engagement, Met Council staff engaged over 150 people at 23 different events. Attendees included:

- 6 cities and townships represented
- 44 non-community organizations represented
- 14 watershed organizations
- 12 county and county soil water conservation districts
- 5 state agencies
- 5 consulting firms
- 3 private large-volume water users
- 3 nonprofits/advocacy groups
- 1 community advisory group member (Washington County Groundwater Plan)
- 1 tribal nation

The effort identified 300 individual actions that are going to be included in the Water Policy Plan. With stakeholder support, Met Council staff will continue to engage these subregional groups to implement their ideas.

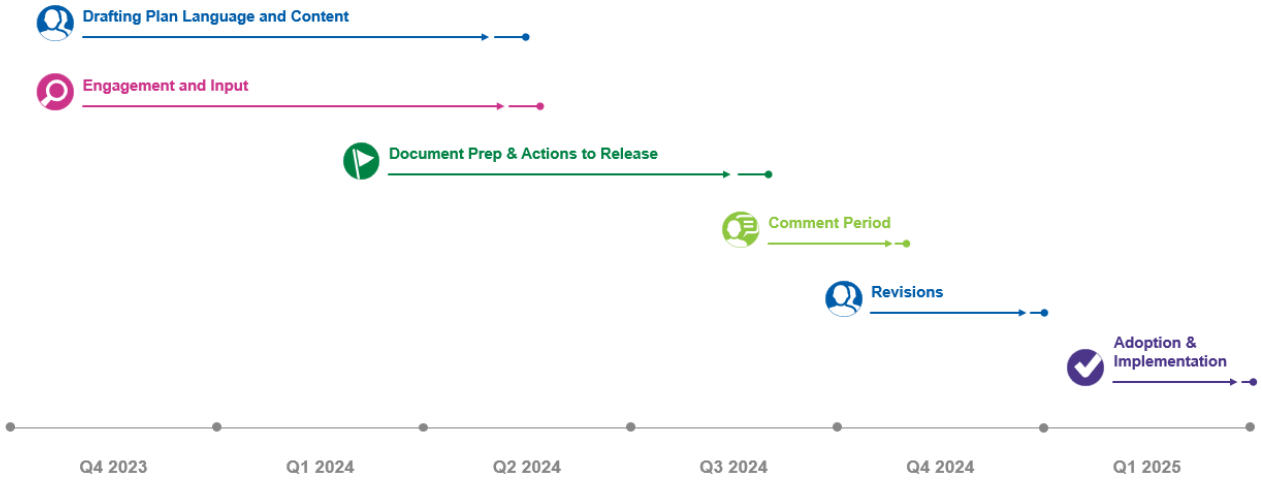
Additionally, Met Council staff have tabled at scientific and water professional conferences, engaged with local public works and water supply staff, have solicited feedback from watershed management and planning staff, and connected with regional water-related non-profits. Our engagement is planned to continue through the spring with events planned at the following locations:

- Tuesday, April 30th from 1-3pm at Cottage Grove City Hall Training Room
- Tuesday, May 7th from 9-11am at Chanhassen Recreation Center
- Thursday, May 16th from 1-3pm at Shoreview Community Center
- Virtual information session – Late May or early June

Met Council staff value these experiences which allow us to hear and incorporate diverse perspectives on regional waters and our policy towards it.

2050 Water Policy Plan Timeline

The Water Policy Plan will be adopted as a part of the Regional Development Guide in early 2025. 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.



Draft Water Policy Plan Content

Proposed Water Objectives

The information below outlines proposed objectives for the 2050 Water Policy Plan. These objectives are vital areas of focus to guide the region towards achieving our ultimate goal of sustainable waters by protecting, restoring, and enhancing regional waters and water services for public and ecosystem health. The connections between the natural water cycle and the built or engineered environment are evident. The physical and chemical relationships between surface and groundwater, stormwater, drinking water sources and supply systems, and wastewater treatment are complex, requiring holistic integrated planning and management approaches. The Met Council strives to integrate regional water planning efforts and operation of the regional wastewater system to help the region have waters that are clean, safe for use, and abundant.

The policies and actions associated with these objectives direct and guide the Met Council and our regional partners to employ approaches that collectively result in sustainable water uses, water and water services that are resilient to risk, and associated benefits of growth and a thriving economy – including convening partners, utilizing new tools and technologies, water conservation and protection efforts, and water planning and technical assistance. The Met Council commits to working with and supporting our regional water partners to meet the needs of current and future generations.

The presence of icons indicates the need for diverse actions that connect the many water planning and management sectors of the region.

CLIMATE: The region's water, ecosystems, water services, and infrastructure are resilient to current and future climate challenges.

The region's waters, water infrastructure, and utilities are experiencing the impacts of climate change. Observations show that the frequency and intensity of storm events has shifted, winters are warming, growing seasons are extending, and more extreme heat and drought events are projected to occur over the coming years and decades. These and other changes create risks to public and ecosystem health, while magnifying long-lived water and water service challenges. In partnership with the State of Minnesota, local communities, and our regional water planning and management partners, the Council supports work that helps the region to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, limit risks and adapt to climate change impacts, and be resilient when new and evolving challenges threaten water and water services and a high quality of life in the region.

INVESTMENTS: Regional water protection, planning, management, and infrastructure investments are optimized.

Water professionals provide critical operations and planning services and put significant investment into water infrastructure for stormwater, wastewater, and assistance for local water supply across the region. We work to optimize the existing investments and thoughtfully and responsibly plan future infrastructure to sustain and serve our growing region. The funding for this work and water planning must be supported now and into the future. We will continue to work to secure funds and grants for our efforts as well as to support local communities in those pursuits. We have a responsibility to the region to protect our region's waters with community input to identify needed expansions or additional service needs.

HEALTH: Regional waters, water services, and infrastructure are maintained, restored, and enhanced to protect public and ecosystem health and a high quality of life in the region.

Through our breadth of services, we will continue to protect public and ecosystem health for the region and those downstream. The protection of these critical resources will allow our region to be successful, support growth, and improve the health and well-being of our residents. Examples of how we work to protect public and ecosystem health include wastewater treatment, water quality monitoring, source water protection, and technical assistance.

EQUITY: The benefits of water and water services are contextualized for local needs and shared by all residents and communities.

The Met Council and our partners work across the region to provide access to safe and affordable water for drinking, recreation, cultural, commercial, and other social uses. Not all communities have the same water needs, environmental conditions, or cultural connection with water. The Met Council will be inclusive of community perspectives in our efforts to identify water service and benefit gaps, co-create solutions, and provide resources for the work necessary for an equitable water future.

Proposed Water Policies

1. *Integrated Water Planning*

The Twin Cities metro region is shaped by the water that moves through it. The 2050 Water Policy Plan, like the 2040 plan before it, is an integrated plan that supports our core mission to operate and manage the regional wastewater system, provide water supply planning, and provide surface water planning and management throughout the region. There is a finite supply of water in the metro region, and it is a shared responsibility for all regional water professionals to take care of the resource for future prosperity.

Integrated Water Policy:

Water planning, management, and operation approaches are cooperative and span the natural and built water cycle.

Desired Outcomes:

- Federal, tribal, state, regional, and local water plans and policies align to support sustainable and equitable water outcomes.
- Water planning and management decisions consider risks and impacts across the entire water sector.
- All water organizations work collectively across geographical, political, social, and cultural boundaries to achieve water sustainability in the region.
- The Council conducts long-range planning using a holistic (integrated system) approach that considers the water needs, challenges, and risks for both natural surface and groundwaters, as well as water moving through the built environment (stormwater, water supply, and wastewater).
- Water planning and management roles and responsibilities within the region are clarified and any identified gaps collaboratively addressed.
- The Metropolitan Council will strive to maximize the benefits of clean and plentiful water from regional investments, through coordination among its divisions and across the integrated water cycle.
- Economic prosperity including affordable and sufficient water to meet the needs of residents, institutions, businesses, industries, and agricultural producers

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- Work within the metro region to address issues that transcend water organization boundaries to prepare water management plans that promote the enhancement and restoration of local and regional waters (lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater).
- Engage, consult, and collaborate with state agencies, tribal governments, watershed organizations, and community water utility providers to amend and update the Council's Water Policy Plan.
- Collaborate with federal, tribal, state, and local partners to perform studies that develop information and approaches that enhance the sustainability of water services of the Council and local providers.
- Support outreach and educational opportunities with organizations that further integrated water planning and management.

- The Met Council will partner with the state to help rural communities collaborate around emergency planning and service reliability by identifying community needs and potential service or funding gaps.
- The Council will partner with communities, water agencies, technical experts and residents to identify risks, associated vulnerabilities, and develop solutions for our regional water concerns.

PLAN

- Support local plan development and regional policy alignment through informed water planning, management, and development decisions.
- Identify and assess current groundwater and surface water conditions, uses and use behaviors, community needs, historical trends, drivers (influencers) of change, risks and system limitations, and estimated future conditions.
- Develop plan requirements that reflect and support addressing local and regional water planning and management challenges.
- Met Council staff will adopt an adaptive management approach ("plan-do-study-check") to ensure our water policies are prioritized, targeted, measurable, and effective at improving the region's water quality and quantity.

PROVIDE

- Convene and facilitate discussions that support sustainable waters and delve into regional water issues that transcend community or watershed organization boundaries.
- Provide technical information to watershed organizations, city planners, and local water providers on practices to use and incorporate into their operations or planning efforts that protect water quality and quantity.
- Advocate for financial assistance to local governments, water suppliers, and other partners on water issues and water management activities.

2. Water Equity

All people should have access to clean and safe water and affordable water and wastewater services. All water and wastewater systems should have sufficient funding to provide affordable services. All communities should share in the economic, social, and environmental benefits of investment in water systems.

Environmental justice and equity concerns in our region regarding water include, but are not limited to, access and impairment of waters for fishing and recreation, access and affordability of clean drinking water, affordability of wastewater treatment, treatment abilities and technologies for contamination in private drinking water wells compared to public drinking water sources, and the impacts to a neighborhood that contains or is near water infrastructure.

The Met Council is committed to addressing water equity issues within our organization and support our partners in the region to do the same. Conversations with marginalized communities and reparative relationship efforts need to be had to better understand where they are occurring, what existing policies may still be exacerbating them, and how to best to remedy the injustice. All Minnesotans have the basic human right to access clean water.

Equitable Water Outcomes Policy:

Regional water benefits and water services are accessible and shared among all residents and communities.

Desired Outcomes:

- All residents have access to safe and affordable water for drinking, recreation, cultural, and other social or commercial uses.
- The public and ecosystem health benefits of abundant and clean natural waters and water service providers are fully realized in all communities in the region.
- Water service and benefit gaps are prioritized and addressed in vulnerable populations and communities.
- Historically underrepresented and overburdened populations are involved in water planning conversations and decisions.
- Improvements to the regional wastewater conveyance and treatment systems enhance the aesthetics and amenities in the region.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- Engage with residents and other local and regional partners to understand local perspectives and regional water values and identify services and benefit gaps.
- Partner with groups and organizations who promote water equity and connect residents with water services and benefits.
- Partner with tribal nations and communities to build trust through shared knowledge and experiences, collaborate on solutions, and work together to bring indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences forward, to ensure the sustainable and equitable water outcomes for the region.
- Work with Council Members to promote and support environmental justice in the region.
- Environmental Services will partner with other Met Council divisions on equity efforts that overlap regional systems. Potential projects to explore:
    - Regional Parks: Pilot projects involving monitoring in waters in certain parks/ Create signage about blue green algae/ Information about safe swimming.
    - Transit: Pilot projects that increase access to Regional Priority Waters, create signage about waters
    - Community Development & Housing: Pilot projects that promote low flow fixtures and green infrastructure in disadvantaged communities without causing housing affordability concerns and environmental gentrification.

PLAN

- Wastewater infrastructure investments are planned for by prioritizing environmental justice approaches that promote equitable public and ecosystem health outcomes and undo past harms.

PROVIDE

- Met Council staff will convene and listen to community members who have water equity and environmental justice concerns or experiences. We will work together to try to alleviate imbalances that cause injustices and strengthen our relationship and build trust in our organization and the water services we and our partner organizations provide.
- Provide resources that inform and support equitable water outcomes.
- Met Council will engage residents to plan and deliver regional wastewater related improvements with community informed design.

3. Water Monitoring, Data, and Assessment

Data is critical to make informed decisions. Among other reasons, data helps us understand surface water and groundwater conditions, see trends and patterns in water quality, and support water supply partners in providing water for their population. Many organizations in the region have a role in collecting and understanding this information from the federal and tribal levels to local government. Coordination of this work is vital to ensure we do not duplicate efforts and maximize our collective effort to gain information about our waters.

Through efforts of monitoring the water quality of the region's lakes, rivers and streams, monitoring wastewater effluent, the Met Council's Priority Water List, and other efforts, we value the impact data can have on improving water to support human and environmental health and will continue to provide and understand the data to help the region meet its water quality, sustainability, and human health and aquatic life goals.

Environmental Services proudly served the region through the COVID-19 pandemic by tracking the concentration of viral material in the wastewater at the Metro Plant. This partnership gave scientists and public health officials another resource to guide public health decisions and was informative to the region. If the need arises, we are committed to offering our technical expertise and services to other public entities.

Water Monitoring, Data, and Assessment Policy:

Natural waters and engineered water systems (stormwater, water treatment and distribution systems, reuse systems) in the region are proactively monitored, high quality data is collected and shared, and conditions (past, present, and future) are collaboratively assessed to support regional water objectives.

Desired Outcomes:

- The region is a steward of water, understanding the current status of its waters, whether its quantity or quality, to be prepared for the future.
- The Council and regional partner organizations will coordinate efforts to monitor the region's surface water, groundwater, and wastewater to assess current conditions, trends, and assure regulatory compliance.
- The Council conducts studies and supports efforts to measure progress towards achieving sustainable and equitable water goals.
- The Council, in partnership with other organizations, uses its resources to support efforts to provide public health insights, as the need arises.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- The Metropolitan Council will partner, assist, and support collaborators with the monitoring and assessment of regional priority waters and groundwaters.
- The Metropolitan Council will collaboratively research and gather data and information on the quality, quantity, flow, and connections between the regions surface and groundwaters.

- In partnership with other water professionals, Council staff will complete technical studies to understand regional and sub-regional long-term water supply availability and demand.
- The Met Council will partner with public health agencies to remain aware of when Environmental Services can assist in wastewater monitoring and data collection in the interest of public health insights, when the need arises, and funding is available.

PLAN

- Explore and identify data sources to support the understanding of water value and use, especially to increase the effectiveness of the Priority Waters List.
- Support community efforts to identify and evaluate the economic and technical feasibility of water supply approaches and best practices that increase water conservation, enhance groundwater recharge, and make the best use of groundwater, surface water, reclaimed wastewater, and stormwater.

PROVIDE

- The Met Council will continue to provide monitoring data to our partners through our regional database that contains easily accessible water quality, quantity, and other water-related information collected as a part of the Council's monitoring programs.
- The Metropolitan Council will create a data products, visualizations, and databases of narratives and water values regarding regional waters to understand how different people relate to water and are impacted by policy and planning of city and township, watershed, and regional planners and water utility providers.
- Council staff will provide long-term assessments of the quality and quantity of our regional waters

4. Climate Adaptation and Mitigation

Acute and chronic changes to weather patterns pose significant risks to the water the region relies on for public and ecosystem health, and economic productivity. These changes also impact the ability of our wastewater utility and local water suppliers to provide essential services to the region. Climate impacts can threaten the reliability of water infrastructure and service delivery, and the predictability of the regulatory environment, resulting in increased costs for service providers and those they serve. Other public water service providers, businesses and industries with water appropriation permits, and individuals with private water supplies and wastewater treatment infrastructure may also be impacted.

To ensure the abundance and quality of the region's waters, as well as the robustness of water services and service providers, the region must proactively address the current risks and impacts of climate change and plan for known and unknown impacts in the future. This means that the factors that drive climate change like greenhouse gas emissions are mitigated, and that the region can adapt to new and evolving conditions. Doing so helps to limit negative outcomes and increases the resiliency of communities and the water and water services we all rely on.

The Metropolitan Council produced the Climate Action Work Plan to address areas where the Council can act and reduce climate change impacts within the organization. The Climate Action Work Plan's vision is "*to reduce our contributions to greenhouse gas emissions in the region and make our services and facilities resilient to the impacts of climate change."* The Water Policy Plan supports the actions and goals of the Climate Action Work Plan.

We are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing service resiliency in our wastewater operations and support services. Likewise, through our long-term planning responsibilities, our wastewater and water resource planning sections can help the region adapt by providing technical support for communities to prepare, build resiliency, and grow sustainably.

Climate Resilient Water Policy:

The impacts of climate change on water and water services are proactively addressed to minimize the risks of negative public and ecosystem health outcomes so that current and future residents enjoy long term benefits of clean and abundant waters.

Desired Outcomes:

- Council and local actions mirror and are in alignment with the Minnesota Climate Action Framework.
- The region is prepared for impacts and associated risks due to climate change and has the tools and resources to adapt and thrive.
- Negative climate impacts on water sources and water infrastructure are reduced and limited, while positive climate impacts are enhanced and promoted.
- Water utilities reduce and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions produced in the collection and treatment of water supply and treatment through energy efficiency improvements.
- Water and services can adapt to evolving climate risks and continue to support and protect public and ecosystem health.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- The Metropolitan Council will prioritize inter-agency collaboration to understand the effectiveness of water reuse and infiltration as a stormwater management practice, particularly under a range of potential climate futures.
- The Metropolitan Council will connect, partner, and learn from other water utilities and planning organizations as we take on water and climate challenges.
- The Metropolitan Council will partner with and support academic institutions and other organizations to conduct research to generate metro area-specific climate change information, identify potential risks and benefits, and best understand future climate scenarios based on current science and models.

PLAN

- The Metropolitan Council will integrate and center state and regional climate objectives into our wastewater operations and water planning within the region.
- The Metropolitan Council will consider the climate vulnerabilities and risks within our facilities and operations and reduce the impact of climate on water resources, land management, water planning, and regional wastewater services now and in the future.
- Met Council staff will develop internal infrastructure design and placement guidelines based on the latest scientific and engineering knowledge to reduce their climate-risk on longevity.
- The Metropolitan Council will support low impact design and the integration of nature-based solutions into regional development to adapt to projected climate impacts on our land and waters.

PROVIDE

- The Metropolitan Council will manage our facilities and land holdings to reduce impervious surfaces, integrate green infrastructure and nature-based solutions within our stormwater management systems, install native plantings where possible, and be a regional leader in climate-focused land management.

5. Growth, Development, and Land Use Considerations

Water issues throughout our region are varied, complex, and connected. As the region grows, so does the need for water and water services providers. Also, as the region grows, development and redevelopment change how land is being used influencing both the need for, use of, and risks to water and water services.

How water is used and the potential risks to the quality and quantity of water sources and services are connected to how we use our metro area landscapes. For instance, much of the commercial and industrial use of water is concentrated in more urban areas, while agricultural uses are concentrated in the rural parts of the metro. Similarly, highly developed areas tend to have smaller and less natural areas than less developed landscapes. The potential for and types of water pollution also vary across urban and rural landscapes.

For growth in the region to be sustainable, the use of and risks to water and water utility services must be considered when planning for and making decisions about how the region grows, develops, and redevelops. This requires the region to identify and understand current water and utility system limitations, project needs and drivers of future change, and pursue opportunities to protect, restore, and enhance water and water services.

The connectedness of the region's water and water systems also means that actions taken in one part of the metro can have lasting impacts in others. Changes in our lands affect our waters. As we develop and install impervious surfaces (buildings, sidewalks, parking lots, etc.), this affects the way that water once moved through the area. It cannot infiltrate into the ground and recharge our groundwater in the region. Instead, it runs off, carries pollution, and discharges into the nearest body of water through stormwater conveyances. Constructing and installing best management practices and stormwater management technologies can help to direct water flows to mimic natural pathways. For example, water recharge may be promoted through engineered systems that collect precipitation or treated stormwater or wastewater effluent in basins that promote infiltration.

As water and water service needs vary across metro area landscapes, so do local and regional actions. The diversity of land uses, the complexity of water systems, and water flow through the region means that one size fits all solutions are rarely effective. By accounting for and incorporating water and water service needs into growth, development, and redevelopment planning, the Council and its partners can identify holistic solutions that allow the region to ensure the water needs of current and future generations are met.

Our region needs high-quality, affordable, and sustainable wastewater collection and treatment services to prosper and grow. The Metropolitan Council collects and treats wastewater for nearly three million people in the region, as well as for institutions, businesses, and industries. Our nine treatment plants continue to achieve near perfect compliance with federal and state water discharge standards while keeping rates competitive. These treatment plants and the Metropolitan Disposal System serve those in the urban center. The rural areas have different service needs. But The Council is responsible for providing direction on the planning for and management of our resources.

The planning function takes into consideration the varied and unique interactions between land use and water quality, growth patterns and industry, and the long-term efforts to maintain a clean, healthy water supply now and for the future. The Council planning services and wastewater treatment services vary across the region to meet the unique needs of our residents.

Water-focused, Land Protection, and Development Policy:

As the region grows, the effects of development, redevelopment, and land use changes on water, and water services are planned for and inform water management approaches and strategies.

Desired Outcomes:

- The quality and quantity of source and recreational waters is protected and restored.
- Recharge areas are protected and enhanced.
- Engineered systems and new technologies are implemented to enhance the rate of groundwater replenishment where feasible.
- Natural system, water treatment, and distribution risks and limitations are accounted for and addressed in development and redevelopment planning.
- Current land uses and future changes mitigate negative water outcomes and enhance the benefits of clean and abundant water in all communities.
- Integrated water management, including sustainable water approaches, are made critical parts of land use decisions, planning protocols, and procedures through comprehensive water planning.
- Development and re-development plans consider natural waters and water system sustainability, including potential impacts to public and ecosystem health, as critical parts of land use decisions, planning protocols and procedures to ensure state and regional goals for protection and restoration of regional waters are enhanced.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- Partner with state, tribal, local, and watershed planners and water utility staff to build a shared understanding and identify strategies that address risks to public and ecosystem health.
- Promote preservation of regionally significant ecologic areas as rural areas develop through engaging stakeholders, technical assistance, outreach to local governments, and plan review.
- Encourage participation in the agriculture certification program and soil health/regenerative agriculture in rural areas through the Council-monitored Agricultural Preserves Program and partnerships with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, metro soil and water conservation districts.
- Work with communities, watersheds, agricultural landowners and business, and agency partners to identify, promote, and assess best management practices including nature-based stormwater management such as vegetated buffers to provide vegetated land areas between pollutant sources and surface water bodies and protect groundwater.
- The Met Council will partner with local and regional experts to identify needs and develop tools that help to improve public understanding around contamination, well testing and maintenance, source water protection, and publicly available resources.
- Assist communities and watersheds in their application of regional treatment of stormwater to reduce design and maintenance costs while increasing the utilization of developable land.

- Encourage local efforts that result in restored social and cultural connections through human-water interaction.

PLAN

- Ensure, the protection and restoration of natural, source, and recreational waters, as well as the sustainability of water utility systems, is prioritized in the development and review of comprehensive, local water (surface, supply, and sewer), source water / wellhead protection, and county groundwater, and environmental impact plans.
- Identify and use the latest research to improve and update stormwater infiltration requirements and recommendations around practices, particularly in vulnerable drinking water supply management areas.
- Evaluate how growth and development, urban and rural land uses, and overall land use change impact and influence water supplies and local water needs.

PROVIDE

- Implement and promote the use of nature-based, green infrastructure solutions on Met Council properties.
- The Metropolitan Council will analyze the impact of land practices on water quality and quantity, including the vulnerability of source water areas and water supplies.
- Provide resources and tools to promote land use practices and development decisions that enhance water quality and quantity for communities and watersheds across the region.
- Identify and develop tools and resources to better understand pressures on and interconnection of the region's rivers, lakes, streams, and aquifers to help regional, local, and watershed planners and water utility staff make informed water management decisions.
- Offer grants or other funding opportunities that protect and enhance water quality, quantity, or other water benefits throughout the region.

Regional Wastewater Service Area Policy:

The Council will plan for sustainable water resources by providing wastewater service commensurate to designated land use to protect waters for public health, recreation, habitat, and environmental health.

Desired Outcomes:

- Wastewater services are provided to support orderly and economical development and redevelopment of the metro area
- Communities requesting additional wastewater service or rural wastewater treatment plant acquisition submit requests through the comprehensive plan and comprehensive sewer plan process
- Long range planning supports source water protection in both urban and rural areas

Connected Objectives:

Urban Service Area

A community's comprehensive plan is expected to accommodate the forecasts and to meet the densities specified in the Council's Imagine 2050 plan.

A community's comprehensive plan must include:

- A water supply plan that is informed by the Twin Cities metro area Water Supply Plan and meets the Department of Natural Resources plan requirements.
- A local surface water management plan that is consistent with Minnesota Rules Chapter 8410 and Council policy and does not adversely impact the regional wastewater system.
- A comprehensive sewer plan that is consistent with the regional wastewater system plan.

Inconsistencies between the local plans and the Council's plans may result in the Council's finding that the community's plan is more likely than not to have a substantial impact on, or contain a substantial departure from, the metropolitan system plan, thus requiring modifications to the local comprehensive plan.

- Provide a level of wastewater service commensurate with the needs of the growing metro area, and in an environmentally sound manner.
- Provide sufficient capacity in the wastewater system to meet the growth projections and long-term service area needs identified in approved local comprehensive sewer plans.
- Any connection of parcels with Individual Sewage Treatment Systems or communal wastewater systems to the Metropolitan Disposal System must be included in the community's overall minimum residential density requirements.
- Stage wastewater system improvements, when feasible, to reduce the financial risks associated with inherent uncertainty in growth forecasts.
- Potentially implement early land acquisition and work closely with communities to preserve utility corridors when it is necessary to expand its facilities or locate new facilities needed to implement the wastewater system plan.
- Efficiently use existing sewer investments in developing and redeveloping areas.
- Preserve unsewered areas inside the Long-Term Wastewater Service Area for future development that can be sewered economically.
- Extend wastewater service to suburban communities if the service area contains at least 1,000 developable acres.
- Require that all communities currently served by the regional wastewater system remain in the system.
- Acquire wastewater treatment plants from suburban communities outside the current service area, based upon their request through the comprehensive plan and comprehensive sewer plan process, after soliciting customer input and conducting a public hearing on the request.

Rural Service Area

The Met Council will acquire wastewater treatment plants owned by Rural Centers, based upon their request through the comprehensive plan and comprehensive sewer plan processes, if the requested acquisition:

- Provides cost-effective service
- Accommodates assigned growth
- Protects public health and well-being
- Currently meets or, with improvements can meet, environmental and regulatory requirements.

In addition, customer input must be solicited and a public hearing on the request must be conducted.

- A Rural Service Area's wastewater service request will be accepted only when the following criteria are met:

    - The community accepts the Council's growth forecasts, as well as preserves at least 1,000 developed or developable acres for growth through the land use planning authority of the county or adjacent township(s) or through an orderly annexation agreement or similar mechanism to provide for staged, orderly growth in the surrounding area.
    - The community has a DNR-approved water supply plan.
    - The community has a watershed approved local surface water plan.
    - The community has adequate transportation access.
    - The community lies within the Long-Term Wastewater Service Area or other regional benefits would result, such as economic development unique to the rural area or preservation of high-value water resources.
    - There are feasible and economical options for siting and permitting an expanded wastewater treatment plant or for extending interceptor service.
    - The Council has sought customer input, has conducted appropriate financial analysis, and has conducted a public hearing on the community's wastewater service request.
- Convene a work group of urban customer representatives to advise the Council regarding growth forecast uncertainty, transportation to support the growth forecast, and the identifiable regional benefits.
- Require that, if the most economical and beneficial wastewater service option is to construct a regional interceptor to serve the community, the Council will not acquire the community's wastewater treatment plant, and the community will be responsible for decommissioning its treatment plant.
- Not allow connections to the regional wastewater system outside the sewered rural community. The Council may construct capacity to serve the long-term needs of the rural and agricultural planning areas, but will not provide service until the Council, in consultation with the appropriate community, designates the area as a developing community and the community amends its comprehensive plan accordingly.
- Preserve areas outside the Long-Term Wastewater Service Area for agricultural and rural uses, while protecting significant natural resources, supporting groundwater recharge, protecting source water quality, and allowing limited unsewered development.

6. Water Stewardship and Sustainability

Stewardship of the region's water and water services ensures and enhances the region's livability and ability to thrive. Being stewards of water means we employ a number of best management practices and behaviors to protect, restore, and enhance natural waters, water supplies, water utility systems and infrastructure. It also means that waters are sustained so that the clean and abundant water is available to meet the public and ecosystem health needs of current and future generations.

The Minnesota Legislature has defined water sustainability in water use terms: "Water is sustainable when the use does not harm ecosystems, degrade water quality or compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." However, many factors, along with use practices and behaviors, influence the viability of water to meet the needs of the environment and the economic, social, and cultural needs of society including:

- Development and redevelopment practices
- Gaps in emergency preparedness
- Ever-increasing demands for drinking, industrial, and irrigation water
- Evolving regulatory limits on use and treatment standards
- Climate change
- Historical patterns of inequitable water outcomes

State, regional, and local policies as well as individual approaches to water use have observed and measurable effects on the quality, quantity, and availability of water and water services. Our current choices have a lasting influence on the long-term viability of the region's water sources and ecosystems in all communities. When sound stewardship decisions are made those benefits are felt in the present and the future. Likewise, when benefits are made exclusive or burdens are not addressed or pushed to certain areas or future generations, negative outcomes are perpetuated.

Being stewards of water, water utilities, and water infrastructure starts with sustainable practices that conserve sources, infrastructure and use water efficiently. When we use water efficiently, we are using only what is needed, limiting the need for additional water infrastructure, treatment, and associated energy use and costs. We are also optimizing and, in some cases, extending the life of current investments in water services and infrastructure, helping to ensure that the water and water systems we rely on are available to meet needs in the future.

The Met Council works to understand and address water conservation and efficiency practices through research, assessment of Council, regulatory agency, and partner data, tool development, exploring new technologies, and grant programs that support local investments and behavior change. The Met Council also makes internal investments to use water efficiently and regeneratively at Council owned properties and facilities. The Council aims to be a regional leader and support the efforts of partners to steward of the region's waters and investments in infrastructure and water services.

Water Stewardship and Sustainability Policy:

The region is a steward of the current and long-term viability of the region's waters and water infrastructure investments. By maximizing the benefits of clean and ample water through water conservation and efficient use practices for all current and future communities, residents, ecosystems, and economies.

Desired Outcomes:

- Efficient use and water conservation practices are prioritized and invested in at the local and regional level to help optimize infrastructure investments.
- The water needs of all cities, townships, residents, and ecosystems across the metro are met now and for future generations.
- The Council explores and supports community efforts to adopt technologies that increase the efficient use of water and reduce energy consumption.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- The Met Council will work with partners to support efforts that encourage residents, businesses, and water utilities to incorporate new technology and behaviors, where feasible, as a means of achieving water sustainability and energy efficiency in the region.
- Promote customer engagement efforts to increase water conservation to extend the life expectancies for critical water infrastructure components.
- Work with water supply service providers and agency partners to identify significant water users that could be targeted for water quantity reductions, conservation, and reuse where applicable.

PLAN

- Co-create and develop funding requests for water infrastructure projects and feasibility studies that benefit multiple communities.

PROVIDE

- The Met Council will implement water conservation and efficiencies in the operation of the regional wastewater collection and treatment system.
- Where feasible, the Met Council will install drought-resilient, native landscaping on our properties to reduce the need for irrigation and turfgrass management.
- Continue to support programs targeting water and energy conservation practices and implementation of efficient water and energy use like the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) to assist local businesses, residents, and communities.
- Support ongoing research to direct residents and developers to identify alternatives to using drinking water supplies for lawn watering, install low maintenance turf or now mow and native landscapes that reduce outdoor water use, lessen water demands, and promote climate resiliency.

7. Water Reuse

Recent events and changes in climate and continued growth have increased demands on and added stress to water supply systems, ecosystems, and valued water resources. The region has begun to explore and implement ways to lessen its reliance on overburdened resources by reusing treated stormwater and wastewater for non-potable purposes. The state and other partners in the region have also explored engineered systems to replenish and sustain water sources. However, techniques like advanced aquifer recharge face many technical, economic, and regulatory challenges that have so far made their implementation a significant challenge. Still, continuing to explore and evaluate these techniques is valuable, as there is great potential to reduce burdens on water sources, ecosystems, and water utilities, while addressing fundamental water sustainability issues in the region.

Water reuse can offset the demands being placed on surface waters and groundwater. The metro region may not have an immediate need to look to reuse for drinking water sources as in the arid southwest, but we are seeing clear impacts on our surface water and groundwater levels and associated ecosystem impacts. These impacts may continue or become more advanced in the future as populations grow and climate change impacts become more severe. Therefore, the reuse of water for potable purposes needs to be proactively considered in the region to be prepared for future scenarios where those investments are needed.

The two primary forms of reuse currently implemented in the state are stormwater and wastewater reuse. Stormwater reuse is the practice of harvesting stormwater runoff to meet non-potable water demands (e.g. irrigation, toilet flushing, etc.). Wastewater reuse is the practice of highly treating and reusing wastewater treatment plant effluent for beneficial use before releasing it back into the water cycle. This highly treated wastewater, called reclaimed water, must meet water quality guidelines established by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) before it can be used. Reuse can be a cost-effective solution for industrial or growing areas, or when there may be barriers to accessing groundwater for nonpotable uses.

Water Reuse Policy:

The Council will work with our partners to reduce barriers, pursue opportunities, and support community efforts to reuse water for potable and non-potable purposes, while balancing public and ecosystem health and financial concerns.

Desired Outcomes:

- Stormwater reuse guidelines for the state and region that balance the needs of implementors, state agencies, public health, and financial cost, while furthering sustainable waters.
- Wastewater reuse is implemented where it is economically feasible and appropriate.
- Met Council pursues water reuse projects within its own operations and supports our partners in their wastewater reuse efforts through financial and technical support.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- Metropolitan Council staff, in collaboration with partners, will determine direction on whether further guidance and/or regulation is needed for the various stormwater reuse practices being installed in the metro region. This action will include collaborating with partners and agencies to better understand the risks associated with all types of reuse before decisions are made about guidance or regulation.
- Metropolitan Council staff will work with agency partners to better define agency roles and responsibilities for reuse in Minnesota.
- The Metropolitan Council will promote and invest in stormwater and wastewater reuse, both internally and regionally, as viable alternatives to augment non-potable water uses to support regional growth when feasible.

PLAN

- Identify and evaluate the economic and technical feasibility of best practices that enhance groundwater recharge and make the best use of reclaimed wastewater and stormwater while protecting source water quality.
- The Metropolitan Council will identify and plan for long-range regional investments in wastewater and stormwater reuse that protect source water quality and quantity.
- The Metropolitan Council will identify criteria for viable wastewater reuse projects including, but not limited to, reducing effluent contaminant concentrations to match the water quality need associated with the intended reuse.
- Reuse treated wastewater to meet nonpotable water needs within Council wastewater treatment facilities where economically feasible.
- Council shall pursue sources of non-Council funding to complement Council funding of wastewater reuse projects, including Clean Water Legacy Funds, state bond funds, and reuse grants.

PROVIDE

- The Council will explore and implement the reuse of wastewater and stormwater within our facilities.
- The Metropolitan Council will continue supporting our partners in their water reuse projects through financial and implementation support.
- Council shall report on all wastewater reuse study and project activities at the Council's annual budget outreach meetings.
- For any wastewater reuse partnerships, the cost share for the Met Council shall follow the recommendations of the 2017 Task Force in Appendix XX.

8. Water Quality, Pollution Prevention, and Contaminant Management

Contaminants in our water impact every part of the use cycle, from quality of water for recreations, drinking water, wastewater treatment requirements, and aquatic health. The Met Council is committed to partnering with regional water professionals to further our efforts and actions to address contamination and work to improve water quality. Today we are working to address environmental pollution due to nitrogen, phosphorus, chlorides, PFAS/PFOAS, sulfates, and manganese, selenium, and arsenic. Tomorrow may bring something new, either another contaminant of concern or new or changed regulatory limits. We will mitigate these threats to the best of our capability and technological ability.

Our nine wastewater treatment plants repeatedly earn high honors for compliance with their federal clean water discharge permits. A team of operators, chemists, engineers, mechanics, water resources scientists, and others ensure our treatment plants continue to meet the regulatory limits. We address new and modified regulatory limits as they arise. Constant monitoring and communication with other state and federal agencies support us in our goals and the maintenance of record compliance.

The potential for new contaminants and eventual discharge limits exists. Current and near future challenges include addressing PFAS, phosphorus, chlorides, sulfates, and nitrogen. New and changing limits have the potential to increase operational expenses, require new technology installation, or additional infrastructure for the Met Council. We work hard to cost effectively meet the regulatory standards.

Water Quality Policy:

The Met Council will continue to partner, engage, and provide expertise in the research and regulatory work for contaminants of concern. The Met Council will continue partnering with other public agencies to stay on top of emerging contaminants and any changing regulatory requirements for known and emerging contaminants.

Desired Outcomes:

- Water quality is protected and restored.
- The Council recognizes the physical and chemical connectedness of groundwater, lakes, streams, rivers, stormwater, and wastewater.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- The Met Council will work with stakeholder groups, state agencies, local utility organizations, researchers, and regional water professional partners in the development of potential water quality standards and address current and emerging contaminants.
- The Met Council partners with other state agencies in determination and review of state water plans, permits and regulatory limits through convening assistance and technical support.
- The Met Council will continue to engage with stakeholder groups in the development of the Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy and other state water plans.

- The Met Council will support PFAS research related to wastewater treatment plants both internally and externally.
- Pretreatment group partners and regulates industrial customers to help reduce environmental impacts while encouraging economic development.
- The Met Council will support point source pollutant reductions (chlorides, PFAS, nitrogen, and others) to urban and rural waters, including, as appropriate, through legislative solutions.
- Partner with local public works and city planners to ensure stormwater infrastructure helps to protect and enhance receiving waterbody quality.

PLAN

- The Met Council will consider social, environmental, and economic impacts when planning for and operating under future water quality regulation.
- The Council will engage in pollutant trading or off-set opportunities of pollution when cost-effective and environmentally beneficial.
- The Council will support source reduction efforts to reduce treatment costs

PROVIDE

- The Industrial Waste and Pollution Prevention section (Pretreatment) of the Met Council partners with industry and is authorized to set and review permit limits.
- The Met Council will develop risk-based priorities for accelerated actions for PFAS source reduction, like focused source reduction at wastewater treatment plants with land application programs.
- Strategically invest to prevent and control nonpoint source pollution.
- Investments in our resource recovery facilities to meet regulatory standards are appropriate and cost efficient, utilizing the latest, tested technology.
- Wastewater treatment will address contaminants in accordance with current state and federal guidance.

9. Regional Wastewater Operations and Finance

The Met Council conducts its regional wastewater system operations in a sustainable manner as feasible. Sustainable operations relate not only to water treatment but also to increasing energy efficiency and using renewable energy sources, reducing air pollutant emissions, and reducing, reusing, and recycling solid wastes. Our efforts of harvesting energy from wastewater effluent, use of biosolids as fertilizer, and use of wastewater effluent for secondary uses, show our increasing capacity to recovery resources that provide additional benefits to our operations and region. Therefore, our wastewater treatment plants have been rebranded as resource recovery facilities, to show we do more than only treat wastewater.

The regional wastewater system is composed of over 630 miles of interceptor sewer mains, 229 metering stations, 60 lift stations, and 9 treatment plants. Environmental Service, on average, invests over $100 million per year to maintain, replace, and expand wastewater treatment infrastructure. It is critical to maintain and rehabilitate the system in a timely manner to defer the need for costly repairs or premature expansion.

User fees cover the entire cost of wastewater operations as well as the cost to maintain, replace, and upgrade the physical infrastructure of the system. The Waste Discharge Rules guide our fee collection structure that is based on what it costs to provide service. Those fees support economic development and help us meet our customer level of service. Any changes to fees will be subject to a stakeholder process, a public hearing, and at least three months' notice before implementation. The process may include the establishment of a task force or work group to advise the Met Council, who has final approval for all recommended changes.

Environmental Services continually works to maintain capacity of the collection and treatment system to prevent unnecessary, costly expansions. Efforts to maximize the current capacity and

reduce unnecessary treatment costs include continuing both private and public inflow and infiltration mitigation, regular assessments and maintenance of infrastructure as well as supporting water conservation efforts.

Inflow and infiltration (I/I) is stormwater and groundwater that makes its way into sanitary sewer pipes, mixes with sanitary wastewater, and gets unnecessarily treated at wastewater treatment plants. Inflow is clear water that enters the wastewater system through rain leaders, sump pumps, or foundation drains that are illegally connected to sewer lines. The largest amount of inflow occurs during heavy rainstorms. Infiltration is groundwater that seeps into cracked or broken wastewater pipes.

Unaddressed I/I can result in public and environmental health concerns, mainly through sewage backups resulting from limited system capacity. It can be costly to communities and utility rate payers through both increases in billed volume of water treated at the wastewater treatment plant and additional investments to expand the system to accommodate capacity and it wastes the region's valuable water resource.

Inflow and infiltration from private property has been an under investigated and under supported area of mitigation. Sources of I/I from private property include flow from uncapped sewer cleanouts, improperly connected sump pumps, improperly connected gutters, and cracks in sewer lateral pipes. Local communities in the metro area have estimated that overall, at least half of all I/I comes from private property sources. The gap in mitigation efforts is primarily due to a lack of dedicated and reliable funding sources to incentivize this work. Entry into a private residence or business adds to the legal and political challenges that private property I/I work poses for local communities.

Climate change has the potential to impact these mitigation efforts to keep clear water out of the wastewater conveyance and treatment system. Changing precipitation patterns may stress the regional collection system and could lead to increasing issues with I/I. Rising groundwater levels could inundate pipes that were originally above the groundwater table. With the uncertainty of climate change impacts, it is critical to continue addressing I/I to reclaim capacity in the conveyance and treatment system.

Regional Wastewater Operations and Finance Policy:

The region's investments and operation of resource recovery infrastructure and related assets are built, operated, maintained, and rehabilitated in a sustainable, efficient, and economical way, considering current and future challenges. Service fees and charges to operate the system are based on regional cost of services and rules adopted by the Council.

Desired Outcomes:

- Maintenance and rehabilitation efforts in wastewater infrastructure result in long term use of existing systems, maximizing our investments, and safeguarding sustainable water.
- Private wastewater treatment systems remain up to code, reducing the potential for spills and environmental damage.
- Infrastructure investments are cost-effective and support sustainability.
- Additional capacity will not be provided until it is planned and population growth and water demand require it.
- Fees based on regional cost of services and rules adopted by the Regional Administrator or Council Members are collected from customer communities.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- Communities that permit the construction and operation of subsurface sewage treatment systems and other private wastewater treatment systems within their communities are responsible for ensuring that these systems are installed, maintained, managed, and regulated consistent with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency rules. The Council will provide informational resources but will not financially support communities and private residents if these systems fail.
- Allow communities with failing subsurface sewage treatment system or other private wastewater treatment system to the regional wastewater system at the community's expense if in conformance with the Council's Wastewater System Plan, the community's Comprehensive Sewer Plan, and other Council Policies.
- Cost-sharing between the Council and a local governmental unit may be used when construction of regional wastewater facilities provides additional local benefits for an incremental increase in costs.
- The Council will continue efforts to work to simplify and improve SAC and to communicate to customers.
- Provide industries with incentives to pretreat wastewater to reduce its strength and thus provide the most environmental and economic benefit for the region.

PLAN

- Preserve regional wastewater system assets of the Council through effective operation, maintenance, programmatic assessment of condition and capacity, and capital investment.
- Pursue other renewable energy sources, such as solar power generation, thermal energy recovery, and new technologies as they become proven and economical.
- Advocate on behalf of rural center communities to seek technical and financial assistance to maintain continued local wastewater treatment services.
- Interceptors and related facilities that are no longer needed to serve the regional system will be reconveyed, abandoned, or sold to the appropriate local governmental unit, pursuant to related statutes. The following conditions are recommended for the transfer:
    - An existing interceptor (or segment of it) is no longer necessary to the regional wastewater system when it serves:
        - Primarily as a local trunk sewer; or
        - As a local trunk sewer that ultimately conveys 200,000 gallons per day or less from an upstream community; or
        - A local trunk sewer that conveys only stormwater.
    - Unless,
        - The interceptor has been designed to provide wastewater service to all or substantially all the upstream community; or
        - The flow from the upstream community is greater than 50% of the total forecasted flow at any part within the interceptor.

PROVIDE

- Waste Discharge Rules will be implemented and enforced for the regional wastewater system.
- Evaluate level of service for all customer types to address needed enhancements or availability of wastewater services like liquid and vactor waste disposal sites.
- Septage, biosolids, leachate, and other hauled liquid waste will be accepted at designated sites, provided that the waste can be efficiently and effectively processed and not adversely impact the conveyance and treatment system.

- All fees and charges necessary to equitably construct, operate and maintain the MDS shall be established by the Regional Administrator or Council Members as described in the Waste Discharge Rules.
- The Council will seek customer input prior to and give at least 90-days, notice of, any material changes in the design of charges.
- The Council will stabilize, reduce, and seek opportunities for reuse and energy generation from biosolids processing.

Inflow and Infiltration Policy:

Inflow and infiltration is systematically addressed to reclaim capacity in the conveyance system to improve efficiency and support deferment of capital expenses. Additional capacity will not be provided in the interceptor and wastewater treatment systems to serve excessive inflow and infiltration.

Desired Outcomes:

- Capacity enhancements will not be made to accommodate inflow and infiltration.
- Municipalities are supported in both mitigation efforts on public and private infrastructure.
- Funding is consistent and reliable for inflow and infiltration mitigation efforts.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- Work with the State to make funds available for inflow and infiltration mitigation, and promote statutes, rules, and regulations to encourage I/I mitigation.
- Continue to support, advocate, and coordinate with Metro Cities for state bond funding for municipal public system inflow and infiltration grants.
- Coordinate with lead-removal municipal programs to help residents address water supply and wastewater laterals concurrently, when feasible.

PLAN

- The Met Council will continue developing inflow and infiltration goals for all communities served by the regional wastewater system.
- The Met Council will limit expansion of service within communities where excessive inflow and infiltration jeopardizes the Council's ability to convey wastewater without an overflow or backup occurring or limits the capacity in the system to the point where the Council can no longer provide additional wastewater services. The Met Council will work with those communities on a case-by-case basis, based on the applicable regulatory requirements.

PROVIDE

- Met Council facilities and interceptors will be maintained and rehabilitated to minimize inflow and infiltration.
- The Met Council will institute a wastewater rate demand charge for those communities that have not met their inflow and infiltration goal(s), if the community has not been implementing an effective inflow and infiltration reduction program as determined by the Council, or if regulations and/or regulatory permits require Council action to ensure regulatory compliance.

- The cost of wastewater storage facilities and/or other improvements necessary to avoid overloading Council conveyance and treatment facilities and the appropriate charges for use of capacity beyond the allowable amount of inflow and infiltration will be covered by the wastewater demand charge.
- The Met Council will continue to advocate for and seek funding for communities working to reduce inflow and infiltration from private property sources, which may include partnering with lead service line replacement efforts.

10. Water Sector Workforce Development

Within the water sector, there is a workforce shortage caused by an unprecedented number of retiring employees and declining interest in science and technical students to enter this area of employment. These shifts are causing a labor crisis in water utility operations (including, supporting trade sectors), water planning, and water-focused organizations that safeguard our water and water infrastructure. The Council is not the only organization within the region that is feeling the impact of higher levels of over-time, increasing employee burnout, and concerns that we will not have the staffing necessary to provide water and water services for our region into the future.

However, every crisis has the potential to be an opportunity. By attracting and engaging current and future students in water career pathways, advertising and recruiting in non-traditional workforce communities, and investing to offset the cost burden of pursuing this employment we can proactively and collaboratively alter this trend. Taking these and other steps will result in well-paying opportunities for workers, and a more diverse and skilled workforce ready to take on the challenges of providing and protecting water and water services for future generations.

Water Sector Workforce Development Policy:

Ensure a diverse, stable, and well-equipped water sector workforce to plan and manage water resources and maintain safe, efficient, and reliable water treatment operations through addressing challenges in recruiting, training, and retaining employees.

Desired Outcomes:

- The water sector workforce reflects the racial and gender identity diversity of the communities served.
- A regional pipeline of qualified water sector workforce talent.
- A resilient and technologically competent water sector workforce.
- A regional portfolio of talent development opportunities and experiences that support knowledge development and performance excellence.

Connected Objectives:

Example Actions:

PARTNER

- Collaborate with K-12 educational providers to develop curriculum and support interest and skills needed for water sector careers.
- Develop recruiting partnerships to increase visibility of water sector careers for historically marginalized communities.
- Partner with trades and workforce development organizations to create water sector career skill development opportunities and strengthen the water sector workforce talent pipeline.

PLAN

- Recognize the needs of the changing workforce and make the necessary adjustments and accommodations to the workplace.
- Create water sector career skill development opportunities to support and encourage “in-sector” retention and mobility.
- Map existing workforce skills, identify gaps, and develop strategies to fill gaps.

PROVIDE

- Host a paid internship program in which students can apply their existing knowledge and skills while building new ones in the water sector.
- Host Registered Apprenticeship programs to alleviate barriers of entry to water sector careers.
- Expand on-the-job training and professional development opportunities to up-skill existing water sector workforce to meet changing demands and utilize emerging technologies.