



# Natural Resources Policy: Proposed Policy Direction

For confirmation June 26, 2013

## Preservation of natural resources

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The Metropolitan Council supports the preservation of the region's natural resources for future generations. The region is home to an abundance of natural resources including three major rivers, over 900 lakes, extensive wetlands, native prairie and woodland habitats, and aggregate resources. The Metropolitan Council directs new development in already-urbanized areas to reduce development pressures that endanger natural resources. Specific strategies, with responsibility shared between the Council and local jurisdictions, are to:

- Prioritize the protection of natural resources by planning to accommodate growth elsewhere.
- Locate and design development in a way that preserves and benefits from the natural environment.
- Integrate natural resource conservation and restoration strategies into local land use planning decisions and regional system plans for infrastructure investment.
- Partner to conserve, maintain, and restore natural resources identified in natural resource inventories.
- Provide technical assistance to communities to promote expanded natural resources protection in planning decisions and through the adoption and enforcement of environmental preservation and conservation techniques and ordinances.

## Regional and local inventories of natural resources

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To inform local comprehensive planning processes, the Council intends to partner with the Department of Natural Resources to update the existing regional natural resources inventory and assessment. Local comprehensive plans are expected to include:

- Local natural resources inventories that build upon the regional natural resources inventory.
- The tension points identified by local governments between the protection of the natural resources identified in the inventory and development pressures and strategies for prioritizing protection and minimizing those impacts.
- Land uses and planning strategies that incorporate the protection of, and minimize impacts to, natural resources as prioritized in the community.

Note that the Council's definition of net residential density excludes arterial road rights-of-way, publicly-owned parks and open spaces, wetlands identified in the National Wetlands Inventory, public waters, slopes steeper than 18 percent grade, and land that is protected or deemed "undevelopable" in local ordinances.

## Aggregate policy

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State law (Minn. Stat. 473.859) requires local comprehensive plans to include the local government's goals, intentions, and priorities concerning aggregate when such resources are present in a community.

***Additional detail about natural resources policy will be discussed with future conversations about water supply and regional parks as well as in the Regional Parks Policy Plan, the Transportation Policy Plan and the Water Resources Policy Plan.***