

Business Item

Environment Committee



Committee Meeting Date: June 28, 2022

For the Metropolitan Council: July 13, 2022

Business Item: 2022-182

Priority Waters List Approval

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. §473.157
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Emily Resseger, Environmental Analyst, 651-602-1033 Judy Sventek, Manager, Water Resources, 651-602-1156
Division/Department:	Environmental Services/Water Resources Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve the Priority Waters List for resource decision use by Council staff.

The list is included as an attachment.

Background

The Twin Cities seven-county metro area has more than 950 lakes and hundreds of miles of rivers and streams. The Met Council has had a version of a Priority Waters List to help focus limited resources on sustainably managing the region's waters since 1982. This new list builds on the success of the Met Council's Priority Lakes List, last updated in 2015, by adding rivers and streams and considering a wider group of benefits provided by waterbodies.

Rationale

The Priority Waters list is being developed to anticipate future needs: It will be a tool to help Met Council leaders and water resources staff effectively distribute resources and make decisions. This list is designed to be a useful tool for a variety of future projects. Some of the first uses of the list will be to:

- Guide how the Met Council allocates resources to monitor, assess, plan for, and improve the region's waterbodies.
- Provide a key lens for developing policies and activities to include in the 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan. It will inform how the Met Council can align with the priorities of local, regional, and state partners, and provide value for those partners.
- Offer insights to other organizations as they prioritize projects and spend their valued resources.

The Priority Lakes List was historically included within the Water Resources Policy Plan and not approved separately. Staff are seeking separate approval for the Priority Waters List so that they can begin using the list to evaluate the Council's monitoring and assessment work ahead of implementation of the Water Resources Policy Plan.

Thrive Lens Analysis

This action advances all five Thrive Outcomes:

- **Stewardship:** The Priority Waters List will be used to ensure the Council is responsible and strategically investing in the region's most significant water resources.
- **Prosperity:** The Priority Waters List will allow the Council to invest staff and financial resources in those water resources that will most greatly contribute to the success of our region through economic benefits such as tourism and transportation.
- **Equity:** The Priority Waters List approach specifically looked at equity. Waters received points if they are accessible to communities that may generally have more limited access to benefits waterbodies can provide.
- **Livability:** The Priority Waters List will help the Council focus its resources on those waters that most directly impact the residents of this region by supplying drinking water and providing recreation.
- **Sustainability:** The Priority Waters List will assist the Council in targeting the most regionally significant waters to protect and improve them for future generations.

Funding

This approval does not require additional funding.

Small Business Inclusion

Not applicable for this business item.

