

**DATE:** May 31, 2024  
**TO:** Environment Committee  
**FROM:** Jen Kostrzewski, Assistant Manager Water Resources  
**SUBJECT:** 2050 Water Policy Plan Comments

## Background

Since January 2024, Water Resources Planning staff have been receiving feedback on drafts of the 2050 Water Policy Plan (Plan). Staff have utilized multiple advisory committees for input on the draft objectives and policies. The Metro Area Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC), Metro Area Water Supply Advisory-Technical Advisory Committee (MAWSAC TAC), and the Water Advisory Group (WAG) have met multiple times in the past six months to review the draft Plan, discuss the content, suggest changes, and submit comments. Additionally, staff have held engagement meetings like the subregional engagement focused on water supply planning and Water Policy Plan focused workshops. Staff also provided an opportunity for other Environmental Services (ES) staff to review the draft content to ensure their work was reflected in the document and to help identify areas that the division will be pursuing over the next five to ten years.

## Summary of Comments

There is general support from all advisory groups on the direction that the Water Policy Plan is headed. There were recurring comments about the need for definitions, specifically around the use of the term sustainability. Additional areas of concern that have been raised include further delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the Met Council and its partners.

A strong desire for tracking the Met Council and the metro region’s progress through quantifiable measures has been communicated across each of the advisory committees.

Staff have received more than 350 written comments on the Plan to date, most of which have been addressed in the draft that was included in the Environment Committee packet. Below is a chart that shows the breakdown of comment sources.

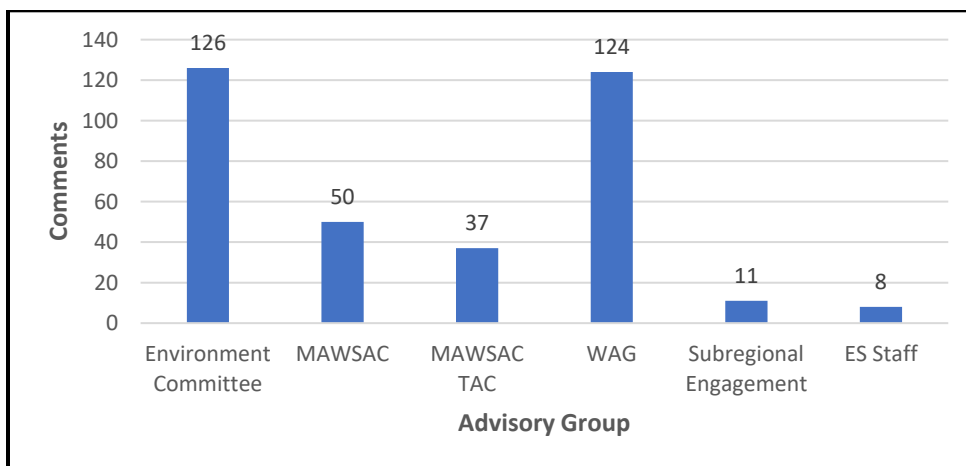


Figure 1. Advisory Group Comments

Below are specific examples of comments that have been received and addressed in the draft Plan with edits to the Plan in italics.

- Integrated Water (MAWSAC): Is there anything that defines water sustainability for the region, specifically for groundwater? For the subregions? We struggle with what the targets are for achieving this in order to plan out projects and programs to address water sustainability and whether they're making a dent in the projected need.  
*Definitions have been added for Water Sustainability, Sustainable Water Supply, and Sustainable Water Use.*
- Integrated Water (WAG): Still curious what working to address issues that transcend water organization boundaries to promote enhancement of local/regional waters means for the Council? Preparing a plan, helping other agencies prepare plans, help WD's and WMO's prepare plan, etc. Clarification would help implementation. Previous comments apply still? Is this primarily through local comp plan requirements? What is different in this approach compared to watershed & local water plan statute requirements? It could be helpful to show how the Met Council goal/objective here is in addition to those requirements or what is unique in this goal.  
*Added language within Partner, Plan, and Provide Actions to better define the Met Council roles in convening, collaborating, and providing technical assistance to watershed organizations, city planners, and local water providers.*
- Water-Centered Growth (WAG): Regional planning needs to come before local planning and reviewed through a water sustainability lens.  
*Edited language: Integrated water management, including sustainable water approaches are critical parts of land use decisions, planning protocols, and procedures through comprehensive water planning from both a regional and local perspective.*
- Conservation & Sustainability (Subregional Engagement): Map critical recharge areas (possibly include in land use?).  
*New Plan Action added: Work with agency partners and universities to map recharge areas and groundwater-dependent ecosystems and their groundwater-sheds and assess their vulnerability to increased pumping or opportunity for recharge.*

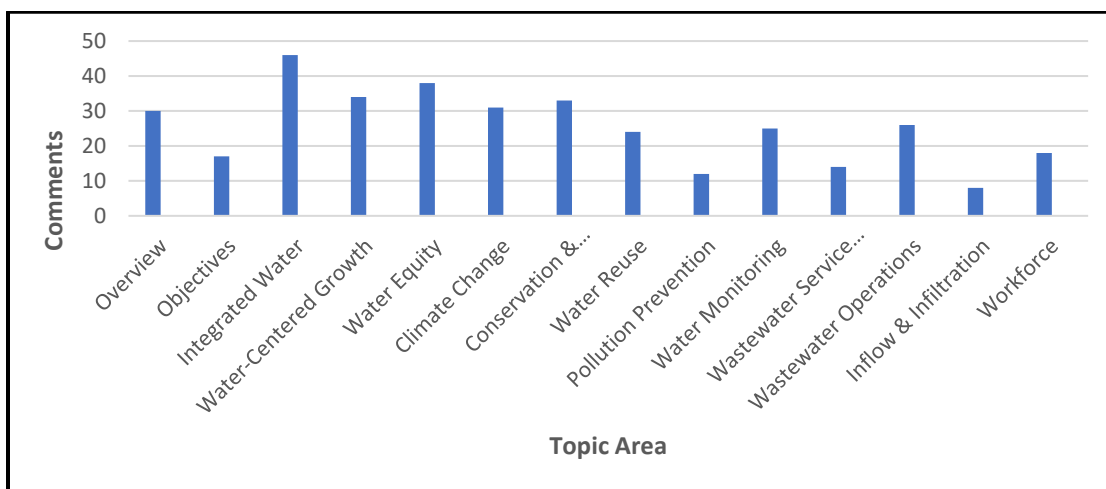


Figure 2: Comments by Topic Area

## Next Steps

Staff are still compiling the comments received from the four most recent engagements. We will work to address them and the other incomplete comments in preparation for the Environment Committee's final review in July 2024.