



Info Item: Water Policy Plan Public Comment Update

Environment Committee

December 10, 2024

Jen Kostrzewski



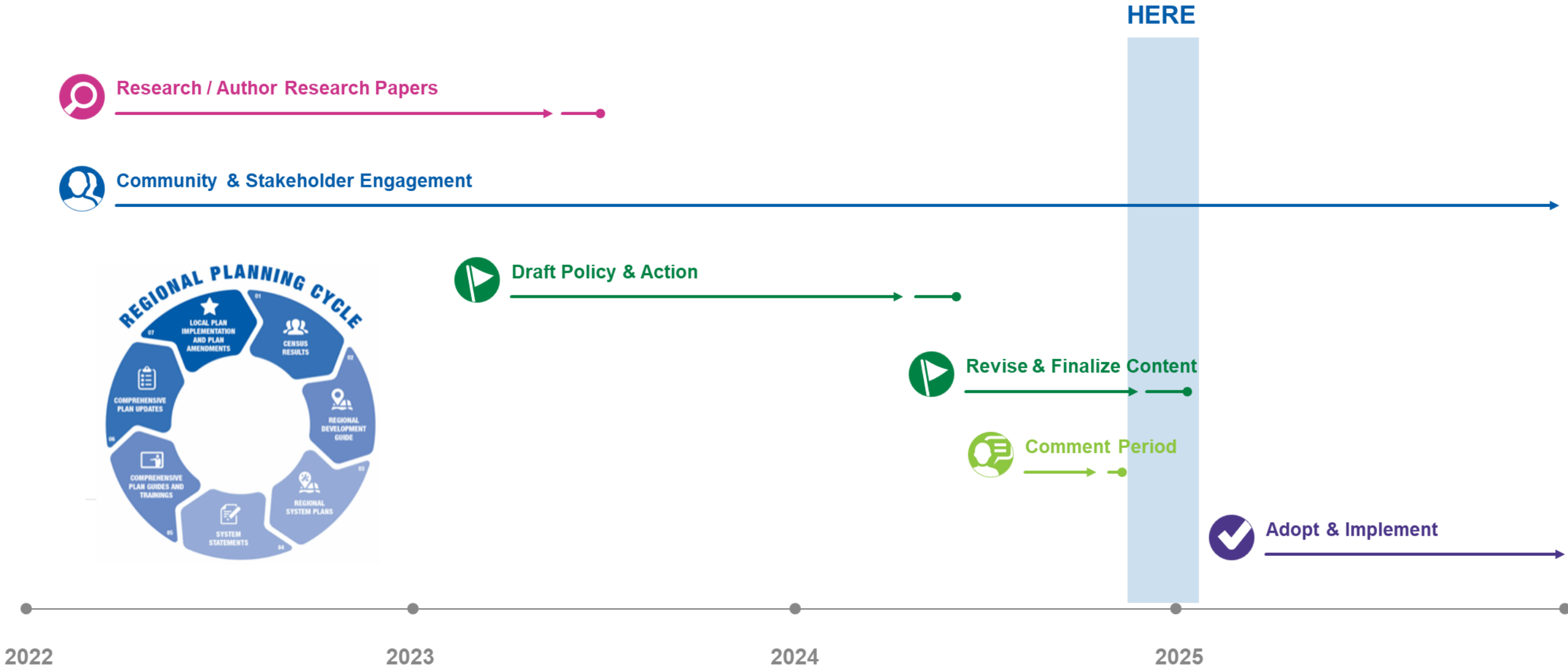
Imagine 2050: Water Policy Plan



High-quality water is essential for a healthy environment, thriving economy, and public health.

- Create climate-resilient water resources, ecosystems, and water infrastructure through innovative design and adaptive planning.
- Optimize regional water protection, planning, and infrastructure investments.
- Promote universal accessibility to water services and benefits.
- Maintain watershed-based management strategy that fosters collaboration across political boundaries.
- Integrate water management, from water supply to wastewater systems to surface waters.

Plan timeline



Regional plan elements

Values 1

Values are core beliefs or principles that guide the work of the Met Council, our expectations of partnerships, and our policy and program development.

Vision 2

Our vision is what we want to achieve for the region through our policies, practices, programs, and partnerships.

Goals 3

Our goals will broadly describe the desired end states that we want to achieve for the region.

4 Objectives

For each area of Met Council responsibility, achievable results that advance each regional goal.

5 Policies

Statement of the Met Council's intent and approach to regional issues or topics, independently and in its roles with partners.

6 Actions

Specific strategies or activities to implement policies and achieve goals.

Who commented

111 Comments

- 1 Federal Agency
- 1 State Agency
- 1 MC Advisory Committee
- 4 Counties
- 4 Watershed Organizations
- 14 Cities
- 1 Water Supplier
- 3 Non-Governmental Organizations
- 11 Residents

Gender

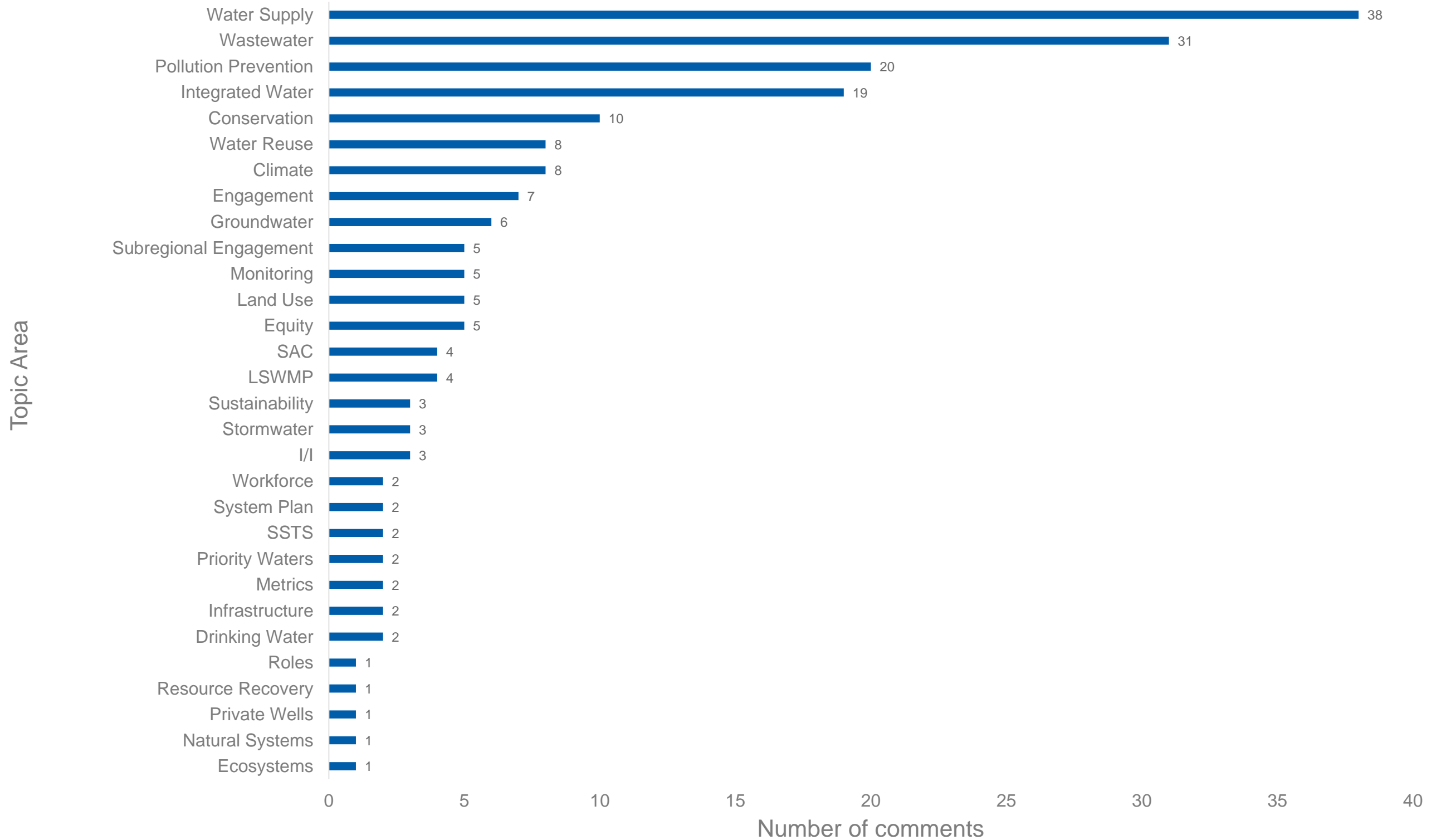
67% identified as men
13% as women
6% as transgender
14% preferred not to answer

Age

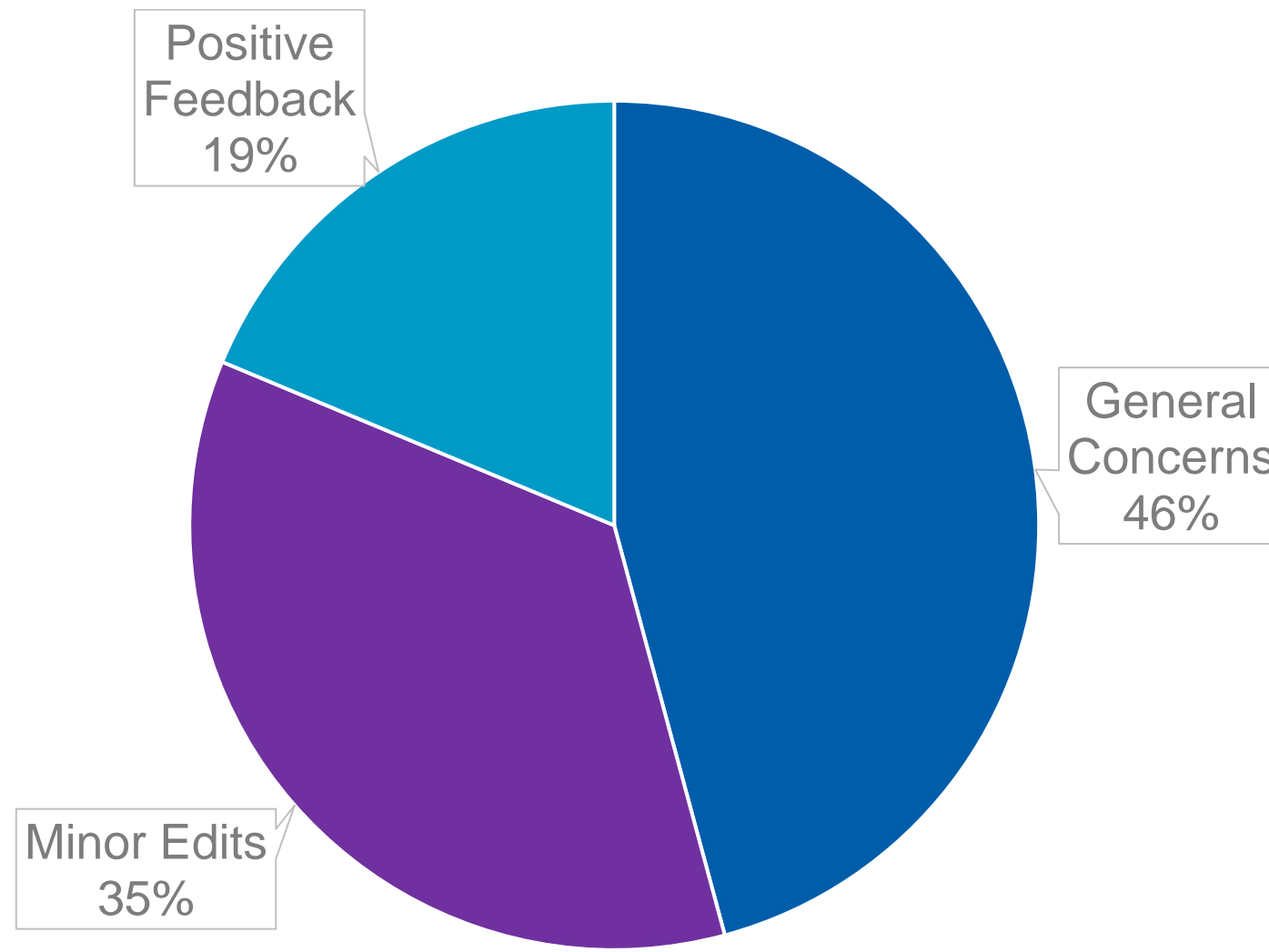
18-24: 8%
25-34: 38%
35-44: 8%
45-54: 15%
55-64: 15%
65-74: 8%
75-84: 8%

2050 WPP Comments by Topic Area

Comments may have fallen into multiple categories

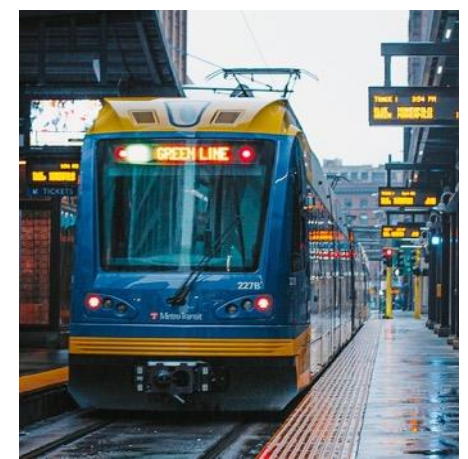


Requests in comments



Positive feedback

- The Water Policy Plan provides a framework for integrated water planning and management (wastewater, water supply, stormwater, and natural waters) for the region to secure a clean and plentiful water future.
- Excellent effort to include multiple perspectives and stakeholders into the development of the plan.
- Dividing the [Metro Area Water Supply] plan by subregion is essential in ensuring there are not “one-size-fits all” policies. The place-based narrative was consistently unique for all subregion plans, highlighting your commitment to an equitable process.
- Water Sector Workforce Development Policy - We’re very happy to see workforce as an inclusion in the plan. We appreciate the collaborative emphasis and focus on K-12 audiences. One opportunity is mapping industry specific skills and needs.
- I think our draft water policy has been very well put together by the all the members on the task force. I am very interested in reviewing what other stakeholders share and how we can incorporate those ideas into the policy.
- The collaborative approach has been a real game changer in developing this policy. I highly encourage this approach on future policy endeavors.



General concerns

- The Met Council taking on new water regulatory authorities
- Implying that our water supply a is system
- Minnesota State Water Governance Framework and agency collaboration
- Integrating one water, climate, and equity implications instead of financial only
- Water sustainability
- Need for stronger ecosystem focus
- Water infrastructure age and viability
- Water equity
- Multiple benefits of resource recovery
- Land use density requirements
- Liquid waste drop off sites
- SAC program costs & charges
- Aquifer recharge
- Water affordability

Social Pinpoint concerns about:

- Spreading Pollution
- Aquifer Depletion
 - Lead Pipes
 - Climate Change
 - Wastewater Reuse
- CECs & Forever Chemicals
 - Farming Practices

Minor edits

Examples

- Clarifying agricultural water uses –beyond commercial and irrigation
- Discussing multiple water sources for water supply (surface and groundwater)
- Updating maps and figures with improvements
- Clarifying policy and action intentions
- Adding definitions (e.g. Water Reuse, Water Conservation, Water Efficiency)
- MUSA and LTSA distinctions
- Naming more partners explicitly (e.g. Soil and Water Conservation Districts)
- Clarifying our own and other agency governmental roles and responsibilities better
- Include public-private partnerships, and other economic development partnerships
- Promote circular economies
- Add connections with emergency preparedness
- Tightening plan language

Integrated policy is complex



- Land use policy has put water considerations at the heart of their Objective 1. We are working with CD staff to support this effort.
- Climate and Natural Systems minimum requirements may overlap with minimum requirements in the WPP, we are working through these with CD staff to ensure we are not asking locals to do twice the work.
- We have committed to working with Housing in regard to SAC rates and affordable housing requirements, this work will continue after adoption of the plan.
- We will have to apply the anti-displacement and EJ frameworks as we do our capital program work.

Example revisions (1/4)



Comment: Page 11: Sustaining plentiful and clean water: Why is green infrastructure singled out as the recipient of stormwater. There are many other stormwater management facilities that exist in the metropolitan area. Also, it is far more common for stormwater to not be treated prior to release into natural receiving waters than to receive treatment via green stormwater infrastructure or other best management practice. Implying that all stormwater is treated, and infiltrates is a mistaken impression.

Response: Thank you for your comment. We will revise the plan.

Revision: Water is supplied to homes, businesses, and industries by over 100 municipal community public water supply systems and tens of thousands of private and nonmunicipal public wells. Stormwater is conveyed through thousands of miles of stormwater infrastructure and collected in **green stormwater** infrastructure that allows it to ~~safely infiltrate to replenish the water table and groundwater system~~ **discharge to surface water bodies or infiltrate into groundwater.**

Example revisions (2/4)



Comment: The Water Policy Plan identifies working with agricultural landowners to help promote best management practices (i.e., pages 1-32, 1-37). Dakota County recommends the Metropolitan Council work with the soil and water conservation districts, watershed organizations or other local agencies that have established relationships and are a trusted source of information with the agriculture community.

Response: Thank you for your comment. We will revise the text to specifically include the soil and water conservation districts. The Met Council also recognizes the value of the soil and water conservation districts and will be continuing to build our relationships and coordination with them. We agree that they are often the best local partner to reach many landowners especially in agricultural areas.

Revision: Water-centered growth policy: d. Work with communities, watersheds, [soil and water conservation districts](#), agricultural landowners and businesses, and agency partners to identify, promote, and assess best management practices, including nature-based stormwater management.

Conservation and Sustainability policy: e. [Work with soil and water conservation districts, watersheds, or other local organizations that have established relationships and are a trusted source of information within the agricultural community.](#)

Example revisions (3/4)



Comment: Page 89/95, water conservation section “There will be regional watering restrictions.” I expressed a more nuisance view, that water restrictions and other elements of the drought plan should be based on the resource. Right now, we trigger water restrictions based on Mississippi flow that has nothing to do with the groundwater trends. We should be more specific to the resource we draw from. The regional nature of this comment would be more about a shared message between suppliers, broken down by water supply, for the metro area.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Met Council will revise the introductory text of the West Metro subregional action plan to “Triggers, outreach, and actions for drought response will be developed and implemented across the region, taking into consideration different water sources and users”. Additionally, an additional bullet will be added, “Communications about restrictions will be improved so that suppliers and users understand water restrictions.”

Revision: Water is a finite resource, and efficient use can help minimize the need for new investment in water supply infrastructure and protect natural resources which can be impacted by water levels.

If this strategy is successful, in 10 years:

- ~~There will be regional watering restrictions.~~ Triggers, outreach, and actions for drought response will be developed and implemented across the region, taking into consideration different water sources and users.
- Per capita water use will be reduced.
- Existing permit pumping limits will be consistently enforced.
- Use of grey water will increase.

Example revisions (4/4)



Comment: City Response: The Metropolitan Council is asked to clarify the change in and recommended new approach to wastewater and land use planning if the Metropolitan Council and cities are to no longer plan based on the MUSA boundary.

Response: Thank you for your comment. Language to better describe the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) has been added to the Wastewater System Plan. No change in the approach for wastewater planning is recommended in policy. The Wastewater System Plan contains the Long-Term Service Area which is an illustration of areas that can be served based on the capacity of existing water resource recovery facility sites. The MUSA represents the areas that already have regional wastewater service or are planned to receive service within the planning horizon. The current MUSA represents the areas agreed upon and authorized through the 2040 comprehensive planning cycle. through the 2050 comprehensive planning cycle, the Council will continue to work with communities to refine those areas to accommodate regional and local growth projections.

Revision: The Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) is a means to differentiate between urban and rural land to deliver efficient regional services, including wastewater service. It represents the areas that already have regional wastewater service or are planned to receive service within the planning horizon. The Met Council monitors available land and density of development while working with communities to refine those areas to accommodate regional and local growth projections. The Met Council ~~will~~ expands the regional wastewater system as needed to facilitate development in communities consistent with their approved comprehensive sewer plans.

Next steps



Dec
10

Bring comment report and proposed responses to Environment Committee

- Public comment report with responses

Dec
11

Get MAWSAC approval for Metro Area Water Supply Plan

- Green-lined & clean version of Metro Area Water Supply Plan

Jan
21

Obtain Environment Committee's recommendation to adopt the Water Policy Plan

- Green-lined & clean version of Water Policy Plan

Feb
12

Council adopts Imagine 2050 as new regional development guide



Questions?

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