

Information Item

Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee



Meeting Date: March 15, 2022

Topic

Lessons learned from 2015 Master Water Supply Plan update.

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minnesota Statutes 473.1565
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Lanya Ross, Environmental Analyst, 651-602-1803
Division/Department:	Environmental Services/Water Supply Planning

Background

Metropolitan Council is statutorily required to develop and periodically update a metropolitan area master water supply plan (MWSP). The MWSP was first developed in 2010 and updated in 2015. The MWSP is being updated again, and the committee will guide this effort supported by their 2022-2023 work plan.

Committee members are asked to review the 2015 MWSP before the March 15th meeting: (<https://metro council.org/Wastewater-Water/Publications-And-Resources/WATER-SUPPLY-PLANNING/MASTER-WATER-SUPPLY-PLAN-2015/Master-Water-Supply-Plan,-Chapters-1-8.aspx>)

Please reflect on the following questions prior to the meeting:

1. How have you seen the MWSP used?
2. What do you want to know more about the process to create the MWSP?
3. What sticks out?
4. What do you want to see but don't?
5. Do a word search for terms or topics of interest to you and your community
 - What are those terms/topics? What is top of mind for you, your community?
 - Are those terms/topics in the MWSP?
6. Review the Table of Contents:
 - Are any major water supply concerns missing?
7. Review MWSP Goals (Chapter 2, page 19 in pdf). Did we meet the goals from the MWSP? Why or why not? What goals or outcomes would you hope to see for the MWSP?

Examples of past responses to the MWSP and the process to update it

The following are comments from the public, from the Community Technical Work Group, and from MAWSAC about the process to develop the 2015 Master Water Supply Plan. These were captured through the public review process and in work group and committee meetings:

- “The City of Richfield commends the Metropolitan Council on its **responsiveness to the regional concerns that were raised during the early development of the plan** and its willingness to pause and reshape the direction of the plan. The City is also supportive of

the Council's holistic and integrated planning efforts to develop the region in ways that are sustainable and cost-effective.”

- “The **process that integrated local subject matter experts helped the Plan** reflect the realities of the water "business" here in the Twin Cities area, and accordingly, will realistically guide water supply planning efforts to accommodate the expected growth in our region.”
- The **value of collaboration** was repeatedly mentioned during the public review period. Several commenters **supported efforts to enhance water conservation and reuse work** in the region, which has been a recurring theme heard throughout the plan development process. Multiple comments asked for **more clarification about how the Metropolitan Council and DNR work together** to review plans and permits.
- Community Technical Work Group (pre-cursor to TAC) members heard stakeholder feedback that the Council’s **willingness to make changes to the draft plan improved the document** and **appreciated that the Community Technical Work Group was involved in the discussion and had input** into the draft. That led to a fairly high level of comfort that the MWSP is a document that water utilities and communities can work with going forward. The creation of the TAC reflected well what water utilities and communities were trying to accomplish when they asked to be part of the process.
- As MAWSAC reviewed the final plan and the public review process, they talked about the **viability of sub regional partnerships** to balance the regional and local perspectives. Somehow, we **need to acknowledge that there is not one solution that can be implemented across the board**. Should it be regional or sub regional? This relates to early input heard at the beginning of Thrive MSP 2040 process: “one size does not fit all.”
- MAWSAC members also shared questions such as:
 - **Are all the plans (water, land use, parks, etc.) integrated into the same time frame**, or are communities going to be submitting each section independently for review?
 - **Is it okay if state water agencies on MAWSAC abstain from voting to approve the MWSP**, if they haven’t had enough time to go through their internal review and approval processes?

Observations from Metropolitan Council Water Supply Planning staff

The following Council staff observations and suggestions were shared at a December 2021 gathering of the subregional water supply work groups, which MAWSAC and TAC members were invited to join:

The process used to develop the 2015 MWSP focused on regional objectives and strategies, with less focus on local settings. It can feel like “one size fits all” as communities implement the regional plan locally. Based on stakeholder feedback, we could consider a new approach that sets objectives and strategies that better consider differences in local issues. This will depend on working with communities to collaboratively develop and implement the plan.

The 2015 MWSP process was more of a top-down model: Metropolitan Council and communities collaborated to develop plan, which MAWSAC approved. Communities were engaged, but they did not identify objectives and solutions that fit them. Going forward, water supply planning in the region could benefit from a more grassroots model, where the regional plan is developed in closer partnership with communities and communities are more directly engaged in identifying issues, objectives, and strategies that fit them.

The outcomes of the 2015 MWSP included high-level regional guidance, but it was not fully collaborative. It could have better supported local sustainability goals and taken better advantage of opportunities like economies of scale. As the MWSP is updated, high-level regional goals could be better linked to specific local objectives, guidance and strategies. This process could create better collaboration, build local resiliency, and take better advantage of economies of scale.

