

Information Item

Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee



Meeting Date: November 14, 2023

Topic

Multi-Community Wellhead Protection Plan Pilot Project Update

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

Background

Safe and reliable drinking water is a public health priority for the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). Protection of drinking water resources under the State Wellhead Protection (WHP) Program is implemented on a city-by-city basis. As a result, each city has different implementation actions of their plan and a focus to protect their own drinking water source. The West Metro has many areas where one city's drinking water supply management area (DWSMA) area extends beyond that city's border; meaning a city may be dependent on the protection actions taken by their neighbor to protect their drinking water supply source.

MDH, Metropolitan Council, and Public Water Systems (PWS) are evaluating alternative drinking water planning approaches to the current "city-by-city" approach with a pilot project. This pilot project offers the opportunity to explore multiple benefits that a multi-community WHP plan may provide. MDH will use the approaches and lessons learned from this pilot to evaluate new plan development and implementation options to consider during WHP Rule revisions.

Vision

Develop a coordinated and collaborative approach to protect and safeguard regional drinking water sources that reduces barriers and improves local drinking water protection implementation in overlapping DWSMAs or where DWSMAs extend into a neighboring city.

Benefits

Benefits to Communities:

- Collaboration by cities to protect shared, regional aquifers
- Use of updated regional groundwater model, at no cost to systems
- Reduced time required for individual city WHP planning and implementation
- Improved consistency in WHP implementation priorities based on same regional scale groundwater model, vulnerability assessment, and delineation work
- Coordinated and prioritized implementation activities on a sub-regional scale yielding more consistent and protective outcomes
- Improved local and State coordination and communication in managing drinking water resources

- Increased amount of grant dollars available by collaboration on projects
- Coordinated regional drinking water protection and understanding of how to protect drinking water across multiple cities

Benefits to Minnesota Department of Health:

- Reduced time for WHP review and reduced number of plans needing review
- WHP implementation priorities based on same regional scale groundwater model, vulnerability assessment, and delineation work
- Improved local and State coordination and communication in managing drinking water resources

Benefits to Metropolitan Council:

- Furthers mission to help improve drinking water resources across the metropolitan area
- Supports the work direction of the guiding committees, the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC) and its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

High-level approach

The approach is expected to occur in some key phases:



Funding and technical assistance will be provided by both MDH and Metropolitan Council to support establishing the Pilot Group including:

- Facilitation of all meetings with external facilitation support
- Hiring a consultant to work with communities to develop goals, implementation strategies, and activities to protect drinking water in the DWSMA
- Technical assistance from MDH and Met Council hydrologists and planners
- MDH extensions on existing WHP plan for participating communities

Learn more

A presentation about the project was shared at the 9/18/2023 meeting of the Clean Water Council. Presentation slides can be found on pages Look for pages 133-143 of the [meeting packet \(PDF\)](#). The presentation is from minutes 3:38:57 to 3:56:54 of the [video recording](#).

