

Information Item

Joint Meeting of the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Policy and Technical Advisory Committees (MAWSAC and TAC)



Meeting Date: December 11, 2024

Topic

Examples of 2024 MAWSAC and TAC accomplishments and influence on regional water supply planning-related efforts

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minnesota Statute 473.1565
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Division/Department:	Environmental Services, Water Resources

Background

The Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC) is responsible for assisting the Metropolitan Council in its water supply planning work. MAWSAC's work is supported by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Metropolitan Council is working on various water supply-related plans and projects, and MAWSAC (with TAC input) had several opportunities over 2024 to lay the groundwork for and contribute to regional plan and policy formation and project implementation.

This report provides examples (not a complete list) of how MAWSAC and TAC influenced the Metropolitan Council's regional development guide, Water Policy Plan, Metro Area Water Supply Plan, and other regional plans and projects in 2024:

- Ensuring a range of perspectives are included in MAWSAC and TAC
- Providing input to regional policy and planning efforts
- Guiding the Metro Area Water Supply Plan update, including subregional engagement
- Informing and promoting projects that support the committees' recommendations

Ensuring a range of perspectives are included in MAWSAC and TAC

Filling vacancies on MAWSAC

The following new members joined MAWSAC: Tiffany Determan (Isanti County), Julie Jeppson (Anoka County), and Xp Lee (City of Brooklyn Park). An orientation meeting was held for new MAWSAC members on September 3, 2024.

Filling vacancies on TAC

The following new members joined TAC: Rich Hibbard (Saint Paul Regional Water Services), Seng Thongvanh (City of Savage), Karla Peterson (Minnesota Department of Health), and Tom Wesolowski (City of Shoreview). An orientation meeting was held for new TAC members on May 28, 2024.

Providing input to regional policy and planning efforts

Input to 2050 Water Policy Plan update

MAWSAC and TAC provided input to develop and review the draft 2050 Water Policy Plan at committee meetings (January 9, 2024; March 12, 2024) and through stakeholder engagement workshops. One notable impact of MAWSAC and TAC input was the development of the water sector workforce development policy.

Input to 2050 Land Use Policy

MAWSAC and TAC goals for connecting land use and water supply were used by Met Council land use policy writers to shape land use objectives, policies, and actions. Two notable impacts of MAWSAC and TAC input are 1) the objective to respect the relationship with land and water as a foundation for regional growth, and 2) the more specific inclusion of Drinking Water Supply Management Areas in the land use policy to direct growth away from sensitive ecosystems and water sources.

Input to the Imagine 2050 Outcomes and Measures Dashboard

The Met Council Community Development Research team is leading the development of a slate of dashboard measures to track progress on regional goals, including those supported by sustainable water supply. Since July 31, 2024, Water Resources staff leading the Metro Area Water Supply has met multiple times with staff leading the creation of the draft slate of metrics to share ‘SMART goals’, regional indicators and performance measures in the Metro Area Water Supply Plan, to ensure that MAWSAC and TAC recommendations informed the final dashboard.

Guiding the update of the Metro Area Water Supply Plan

Drafting updated content for the Metro Area Water Supply Plan

In 2024, committee work focused on the update of the Metro Area Water Supply.

1. At the joint MAWSAC-TAC meeting [January 9, 2024](#), the committees were updated about the Water Supply Planning Atlas, which provides a base of technical information and context for water supply planning. An update on subregional engagement efforts was also shared. The committees reviewed and discussed the updated Water Demand Projection approach, and they provided input on draft Metro Area Water Supply Plan, Water Policy Plan, and ‘3 Plans Coordination’ work.
2. At the TAC meeting on [March 12, 2024](#), the committee primarily provided technical input on the draft subregional chapters of the Metro Area Water Supply Plan.
3. At the MAWSAC meeting on [April 9, 2024](#), the committee primarily provided input on draft subregional chapters of the Metro Area Water Supply Plan.
4. At the joint MAWSAC-TAC meeting on [May 15, 2024](#), the committees reviewed the complete draft of the Metro Area Water Supply Plan and identified changes needed before the committees would recommend its release for public comment.
5. At the TAC meeting on [June 18, 2024](#), the committee reviewed the updated local water demand projections, definitions for selected water supply planning terms, and a definition for sustainable water supply and related SMART goals.
6. At the MAWSAC meeting on [July 10, 2024](#), the committee reviewed the revised draft Metro Area Water Supply Plan, which reflected changes from the May 15 joint meeting and the June 18 TAC meeting. MAWSAC voted to release the revised draft for public comment.
7. At the joint MAWSAC-TAC meeting on [October 23, 2024](#), the committees reviewed public comments received on the draft Metro Area Water Supply Plan and provided input on proposed responses.
8. At the joint MAWSAC-TAC meeting on December 11, 2024, the committees took action regarding the approval of the updated Metro Area Water Supply Plan.

Supporting subregional approach to engagement and content development for the updated Metro Area Water Supply Plan

In its [2022 report](#) to the Minnesota Legislature and Metropolitan Council, and in subsequent meetings, MAWSAC and TAC have supported “establishment of a new subregional water supply



planning approach that leverages subregional water supply working groups and informs regional and local policy and plan updates.”

With MAWSAC and TAC’s guidance, Metropolitan Council water supply planning staff drafted a proposed approach to subregional engagement that was shared with local water supply stakeholders from across the region at a [workshop on March 15, 2023](#). The proposal for a subregional approach was confirmed.

Over the summer of 2023, subregional boundaries were determined, core teams of Metropolitan Council staff and local leads were established, and workshops were designed and scheduled. Workshops, surveys, and interviews were conducted in all seven subregions over the fall and winter of 2023 and into the early spring of 2024. Ultimately, there were 23 engagements over seven months, which generated subregionally-specific information about what successful water supply planning looks like for the subregion, challenges and opportunities, and preferred strategies.

After a [region-wide workshop on February 29, 2024](#), which included participants from all seven subregions, approximately 150 people had contributed to the subregional planning effort. MAWSAC and TAC members who participated include Mike Huang, Valerie Nepl, Pat Shea, Scott Anderson, Robert Ellis, and Jim Westerman. Seventy-six cities and townships were represented along with 44 non-community organizations such as watersheds, counties, state agencies, consulting firms, private large-volume water users, nonprofit/advocacy groups, and one tribe.

Subregional input shaped the subregional chapters of the updated Metro Area Water Supply Plan and is expected to lead to ongoing collaboration on plan implementation.

Informing and promoting Metropolitan Council water supply planning-related projects

In 2024, MAWSAC and TAC provided input to start prioritizing potential projects that could help to implement the Metro Area Water Supply Plan (regional action plan). A [list of potential projects](#) were shared at the joint MAWSAC-TAC meeting on October 23, 2024 and input was requested through a follow-up survey.

Also in 2024, Metropolitan Council worked with various partners to advance several projects that were recommendations in the [2022 MAWSAC report](#).

Regional Water Demand Projections

Because understanding water demand is strongly connected with MAWSAC’s principles, goals, and planning approaches, Metropolitan Council staff proposed an updated method to project total water demand for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area for municipal groundwater and surface water systems and private wells. The total water demand in the metro region includes demands from municipal water systems (surface water and groundwater systems), private high-capacity wells, and private residential water wells. While the work was done specifically in support of the regional Metro Area Water Supply Plan update, it may also be useful to communities as they do their own planning work.

MAWSAC was introduced to and provided input on the proposed approach at their [August 8, 2023](#) meeting. A revised approach was shared with TAC for input at their meeting on [October 10, 2023](#). Committee input continued to shape the approach at meetings on [January 9, 2024](#), [March 12, 2024](#), [May 15, 2024](#), and [June 18, 2024](#). Water demand projections were released for public review along with the 2050 Water Policy Plan and the rest of Imagine 2050 on [August 14, 2024](#).

Multi-Community Wellhead Protection Planning Pilot in the West Metro

In the [2022 report](#), MAWSAC and TAC recommended “subregional support for multi-community planning of infrastructure and source water protection projects, where challenges and benefits extend beyond political boundaries of one community” and “subregional work groups collaborate with MDH and others to recommend ways to streamline wellhead protection plan update process and encourage communities with overlapping DWSMAs to work together through Minnesota Rules” (Table1 rows D.1 and D.3).



Over the years, stakeholders in the west metro expressed interest in working together on shared wellhead protection planning. Metropolitan Council, MDH and west metro water supply stakeholders have been working on a [pilot project](#).

In 2023 and 2024, delineation and vulnerability assessment work was done through a Met Council contract with Barr Engineering Company and in close consultation with the Minnesota Department of Health). In 2024, work also began on Phase 2: shared implementation planning. Lessons learned through this pilot project are being used to inform future MDH wellhead protection planning work and revision of Minnesota Administrative Rules for wellhead protection ([Chapter 4720](#)).

Continuation of Industrial Water Conservation with the Minnesota Technical Assistance and Intern Program

In the [2022 report](#), MAWSAC and TAC recommended “identifying and evaluating existing and potential mitigation measures that could help reduce the risk of identified hazards and hazardous events” including “expanding technical studies with U of M on the effectiveness of current and past water efficiency practices (turfgrass, industrial, and commercial practices).”

Following that recommendation, Metropolitan Council continues a successful, collaborative partnership with the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP) at the University of Minnesota, working together to address the metro-area need for industrial sector water use efficiency awareness and water use reductions. This includes MnTAP technical assistance and the MnTAP Intern Program to assist businesses with identification and implementation of water efficiency projects.

Since the partnership began, MnTAP has worked with numerous operations in the metro providing a range of practical suggestions to improve industrial water efficiency. Since the program started, MnTAP, with Metropolitan Council support, has made over 300 water efficiency recommendations representing potential annual water savings of around 500 million gallons per year. Through the third quarter of 2024, MNTAP made recommendations to industries to save 133,883,000 gallons of water in which 23,546,000 gallons of savings have been implemented to date for 2024.

Continuation of Partnership with University of Minnesota Turfgrass Science Program

In the [2022 report](#), MAWSAC and TAC recommended “identifying and evaluating existing and potential mitigation measures that could help reduce the risk of identified hazards and hazardous events” including “expanding technical studies with U of M on the effectiveness of current and past water efficiency practices (turfgrass, industrial, and commercial practices).”

Following that recommendation, Metropolitan Council continues to partner with the University of Minnesota Turfgrass Science Program. In 2024, the Metropolitan Council authorized its Regional Administrator to execute a contract amendment with the University of Minnesota for continuation of educating citizens of the Twin Cities metro area about lawn water conservation by reinforcing current outreach efforts and creating new educational materials for homeowners in the form of online videos, signs, pamphlets, and in-person workshops.

Examples of some of the work sponsored by the Metropolitan Council that the University of Minnesota has done include:

- Outreach by [Lawn Water Conservation Educator Gary Deters](#) and [Master Gardener Kim Sullivan](#)
- [An exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair](#) on smart watering practices and other low-input lawn care practices
- [Turfgrass responses to drought study](#) conducted by Jillian Turbeville
- [Irrigation Efficiency Educational Trailer](#), which promoted WaterSense-labeled irrigation controllers and visited over a dozen neighborhoods, fairs, and events

In October 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s [WaterSense](#) program recognized the Metropolitan Council with an Excellence in Promoting WaterSense Labeled Products Award for supporting the turfgrass trailer which promoted WaterSense-labeled irrigation controllers.



To learn more, please visit the University of Minnesota's [Irrigation Resources page](#).

Continuation of the Water Efficiency Grant Program

In the [2022 report](#), MAWSAC and TAC recommended the “regional creation of grants for communities to support water efficiency and reuse programs or projects” in their 2022 report to the Minnesota Legislature and Metropolitan Council (Table 1, row D.7).

This recommendation builds on and commits to continuing strong support by and for local water supply stakeholders.

In 2024, Metropolitan Council continued to administer a Clean Water Fund-supported [water efficiency grant program](#) that provides grants to communities to support the purchase and installation of products that reduce water use.

Thirty-seven communities participated in the 2022-2024 program; they were awarded a total of \$997,920. Forty-one communities are participating in the 2024-2026 program; they were awarded a total of \$1,096,880. Since the program started in 2016, it has incentivized the replacement of water-using devices with more than 15,000 water-efficient alternatives through city and township programs which, when implemented, are estimated to save more than 200 million gallons of water each year.

In October 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program recognized the Metropolitan Council with an Award for Excellence in Promoting WaterSense Labeled Products. This was the third Excellence Award the Metropolitan Council has received for its water efficiency efforts.

Three Plans Coordination

MAWSAC and TAC provided input to a collaborative effort by the Met Council, Minnesota Departments of Health (MDH) and Natural Resources (DNR) to align local water supply plan expectations and technical assistance at meetings on [January 9, 2024](#), [March 12, 2024](#), and [June 18, 2024](#).

Water supply stakeholders have repeatedly requested more agency coordination and streamlined or consolidated planning processes. Minnesota Statutes 473.1565 charges MAWSAC and TAC to assist the Metropolitan Council with planning activities that include making recommendations for clarifying the appropriate roles and responsibilities of local, regional, and state government in metropolitan area water supply and for streamlining and consolidating metropolitan area water supply decision-making and approval processes.

Minnesota Departments of Health (MDH) and Natural Resources (DNR) and Metropolitan Council (MC) are all responsible for supporting the region's diverse water supply stakeholders. One of the primary ways these organizations do this is by directing communities and public water suppliers to develop and implement local plans that sustainably manage water supplies. Each organization has a different focus, different planning timelines, and different staff and financial capacities, but all are closely related.

In 2023, DNR, MC, and MDH began an effort to set a clear vision for what DNR, MC, and MDH can do together through their local planning responsibilities to secure a safe and sustainable water supply—for today and for future generations. In addition to a shared vision, this effort will also clarify roles and functions for each organization and establish a structure to ensure coordinated.

In 2024, MAWSAC and TAC input helped to shape the scope of work the agencies' collaborative work, better aligned the draft Metro Area Water Supply plan content with Met Council, DNR and MDH local plan expectations, and informed shared definitions to be used in guidance and technical assistance.

Input to the State Drinking Water Action Plan

On [April 9, 2024](#), MAWSAC heard a presentation from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), who is leading the development of the Minnesota Drinking Water Action Plan.

Knowing that agency alignment is a goal for MAWSAC and TAC and the Met Council, in the



summer of 2024, Met Council and MDH policy staff worked together to ensure that key elements of the updated draft Metro Area Water Supply Plan (MWSP) and Water Policy Plan are incorporated in the draft Minnesota State Drinking Water Plan. Participating staff included Jen Kader, Jen Kostrzewski, Judy Sventek, Lanya Ross, Frieda VonQualen, and Tannie Eshenaur.

Examples of MAWSAC and TAC priorities that appear in the draft Drinking Water Action Plan released for public review included:

9. A focus on private well testing, which was discussed and promoted by MAWSAC members in the [April 9th, 2024 meeting](#).
 - The State Drinking Water Action Plan goal to protect sources of drinking water includes actions that advance the MWSP descriptions of successful water quality, land use and water supply interactions, and sustainable water quantity in the metro region.
 - The State Drinking Water Action Plan goal to establish resilient drinking water infrastructure includes actions that advance the MWSP description of successful water supply infrastructure in the metro region.
 - The State Drinking Water Action Plan goal to ensure safe tap water includes actions that advance the MWSP description of successful water quality in the metro region.
 - The State Drinking Water Action Plan goal to anticipate and manage emerging risks includes actions that advance the MWSP description of successful water quality.
 - The State Drinking Water Action Plan goal to engage partners includes actions that advance the MWSP recognition that all the voices must be heard as community plans are made and implemented – so that the full range of diverse water supply needs are met.
10. Measures of success in the Metro Area Water Supply Plan were incorporated in measures in the State Drinking Water Action Plan.

Input to technical assistance for local controls to promote water efficiency

At the [July 10, 2024 MAWSAC meeting](#), committee members provided feedback to the 2024 Met Council Water Resources Policy and Planning summer intern regarding a project to help the Met Council provide better technical and planning assistance to communities in the Twin Cities Metro area. Specifically, an Excel database was created with examples of local controls and model ordinances organized by county and community designation type, so that the Met Council is better equipped to provide local planners with examples of policies, initiatives, incentives, and programs that could help them achieve greater water efficiency and smarter planning when it comes to water supply.

Water values research

In their [2022 report](#) to the Minnesota Legislature and Metropolitan Council, MAWSAC and TAC recommended “engaging communities to understand residents’ water values, to better understand the implications of the wide range of our region’s citizens view their water and to support more targeted and effective outreach” in their 2022 report to the Minnesota Legislature and Metropolitan Council (Table1, row A.8).

Met Council has been partnering with the University of Minnesota to identify and understand cultural water values across the Twin Cities region. This research provides guidance that can help the Council and its planning and water management partners to make just and equitable water decisions. The region’s residents generously shared their perspectives, offering an opportunity to incorporate those perspectives into regional policies, guide regional operations and engagement approaches, and provide support for local planning partners and utility customers. Perhaps most importantly, this study offers a framework for achieving equitable outcomes that include transparency, trust building, and culturally appropriate community-driven decisions.

An update on this work was provided to the [Met Council Environment Committee on January 23, 2024](#). A [final report](#) is available including insights, research methods and findings, and community-driven recommendations for equitable policy actions and strategies.



Classifying areas for recharge protection and enhancement activities in the metro region

In their [2022 report](#) to the Minnesota Legislature and Metropolitan Council, MAWSAC and TAC recommended “fill gaps, or assemble where needed, information such as: water supply source, **recharge** and runoff processes, and availability of groundwater and surface water”.

The Met Council contracted with Barr Engineering Company following an approach used by Washington County to leverage publicly available datasets to identify and classify areas within the seven-county metropolitan area (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington Counties) where changes in land use may have greater potential to alter the quantity and quality of groundwater recharge, thereby affecting the groundwater and surface water systems and the supported water supplies in the region. The report is in the final stages of review at the end of 2024. Results are expected in early 2025.

