

Metropolitan Council Priority Waters List

The Twin Cities seven-county metro area has more than 950 lakes and hundreds of miles of rivers and streams. The Metropolitan Council is establishing a Priority Waters List to help focus limited resources on sustainably managing these waterbodies. This new list builds on the success of our Priority Lakes List, created in 1982 and last updated in 2015, by adding rivers and streams.



The Priority Waters list is being developed to anticipate future needs: It will be a tool to help Council leaders and water resources staff effectively distribute resources and make decisions. This list is designed to be useful as a tool for a variety of future projects, and some of the first uses will be to:

- Guide how the Council allocates resources to monitor, assess, plan for, and improve the region's waterbodies.
- Provide a key lens for developing policies and activities to include in the 2050 Water Resources Policy Plan. It will inform how the Council can align with the priorities of local, regional, and state partners, and provide value for those partners.
- Offer insights to other organizations as they prioritize projects and spend their valued resources.

PRIORITY WATERS LIST APPROACH



Waterbodies included on the Priority Waters List have been determined by our staff to be regionally significant based on the benefits these waterbodies provide. The Council believes these are the most important waterbodies to protect and improve as the region continues to grow and change. This approach supports the Council's mission to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region, and directly supports the five outcomes from our most recent regional development guide, Thrive MSP 2040: stewardship, prosperity, equity, livability, and sustainability.

The Priority Waters List focuses on waterbodies deemed regionally significant based on their benefits. This was determined using regional scale datasets. Just because a waterbody is not on the Priority Waters List does not mean it does not have value. That waterbody still may be a priority for an individual city or local community.

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SCORING PROCESS

The waterbodies of the Twin Cities region were evaluated for the Priority Waters List by calculating scores for the categories listed below. While these seven categories do not represent all potential benefits of a waterbody, these categories had datasets available to produce a quantifiable score. The scores from each category were combined into an overall score for each waterbody. The waterbodies on the Priority Waters list have the top overall and/or category scores.



Drinking water protection

The likelihood that a waterbody may impact the quality of a regional drinking water source if degraded.



Recreation and tourism

The ability of a waterbody to support visitors and different types of recreation on the water or on shore, such as swimming, boating, fishing, or walking along a trail.



Healthy habitat

The likelihood that a waterbody provides good habitat for native wildlife and vegetation to live and thrive.



Tranquil connection

An estimate of a waterbody's potential to provide a tranquil outdoor experience, free from distractions of human activity.



Equity

An estimate of a waterbody's accessibility to communities that may generally have more limited access to benefits waterbodies can provide.



Industry and utility

The degree to which a waterbody provides or supports utility or economic benefits for the region.



Science and education

The extent to which a waterbody supports use for scientific studies or environmental education.

HELP US SHAPE THE PRIORITY WATERS LIST

While the Priority Waters List has been created primarily as an internal tool, we are seeking feedback on the list from a wide swath of individuals in the region: water resources professionals, planners, engineers, elected officials, and engaged residents. Gathering this feedback from outside the Council will help ensure this list supports and reflects the values of the region.

A draft of the Priority Waters List is available for review on the Council's Priority Waters website at <https://metrocouncil.org/Wastewater-Water/Projects/Priority-Waters-List.aspx>. The site also includes more information on project background, context, data, and methods, plus a form to provide feedback. Please feel free to review the content on the website and provide comments using the feedback form.

Questions?

Email Emily Resseger, project manager, at emily.resseger@metc.state.mn.us, or call her at 651-602-1033.