

Imagine 2050: Water Policy Plan Outline

The Water Policy Plan (formerly the Water Resources Policy Plan) is part of the Metropolitan Council’s decadal Regional Development Guide (RDG) and sets regional policies to ensure the prosperous and economical growth of the Twin Cities metropolitan region. As a part of the RDG, the Water Policy Plan will connect with and define how the regional vision, values, and goals apply to the Metropolitan Council’s water planning and regional wastewater services.

Imagine 2050 is the RDG under development and is scheduled to be adopted by the Council by the end of 2024. The current values in this guide are:

<p>Equity</p>	<p>We value the people and communities of our region. Our region is economically and culturally vibrant. We also recognize, however, the harm and disparities that injustices, including racism, have created.</p>
<p>Leadership</p>	<p>We value those in our region who inspire and motivate others for positive change. Our region is known for its civic engagement. We need broad and inclusive leadership to help confront the significant challenges we face around equity, climate change, safety, and other pressing issues.</p> <p>To maximize the potential of our region and its communities, we turn to leadership that is diverse, collaborative, culturally competent, and innovative. We encourage this kind of leadership across all sectors including business, government, non-profit, and education.</p>
<p>Accountability</p>	<p>We value being effective in our work and achieving measurable outcomes. Our region is known for its research, initiatives, and collaborations. We must be open to criticism and clearly understand when we are not achieving results or have harmed communities.</p> <p>We recognize that we can maximize our effectiveness by being in partnership with others. We will also be transparent and flexible so that we can change course when needed.</p>
<p>Stewardship</p>	<p>We value our region’s resources. Our resources include our natural, economic, and financial resources as well as our infrastructure. We recognize that these resources may be vulnerable over time to changing conditions, including from climate change.</p> <p>We must design our systems and allocate our resources in ways that can be sustained over time and support the needs of future generations.</p>

Additionally, *Imagine 2050* contains cross-cutting regional goals. Collectively, these goals describe and support an overall vision for the region and set the policy agenda for the subsequent chapters (formerly System and Policy Plans – Transportation, Parks, Water Resources, and Housing Policy Plans).

Imagine 2050 Cross Cutting Regional Goals	
Our Region is Equitable and Inclusive	Racial inequities and injustices experienced by historically marginalized communities have been eliminated; and all residents and newcomers feel welcome, included, and empowered.
Our Communities are Healthy and Safe	All our region’s residents live healthy, productive, and rewarding lives with a sense of security, dignity, and wellbeing.
Our Economy is Dynamic and Resilient	Our region meets the opportunities and challenges faced by our communities and economy including issues of choice, access, and affordability.
We Lead on Addressing Climate Change	We have mitigated greenhouse gas emissions and have adapted to ensure that our communities and systems are resilient to climate impacts.
We Protect and Restore Natural Systems	We protect, integrate, and restore natural systems to protect habitat and ensure a high quality of life for the people of our region.

The Water Policy Plan contains Policies, Objectives, Commitments, Actions (Strategies), and Expectations that carry the Council’s regional values and cross-cutting goals through the areas of water planning and wastewater collection and treatment services. Additionally, the Metro Area Water Supply Plan and the Regional Wastewater System Plan provide more detailed information and strategies to help implement regional policies locally.

Environmental Services’ service commitments of Partner, Plan, and Provide frame regional policy actions in the 2050 Water Policy Plan. They are the cornerstones of Environmental Services’ mission and concisely describe our internal and regional obligations to our partners, city and townships, businesses, industries, colleagues, and most importantly, to the residents of the metro region.

Imagine 2050: Proposed Water Policy Plan Commitments	
Partner	ES partners with national, regional, and local organizations and experts to work towards water sustainability, climate resilience, and equitable water outcomes.
Plan	ES collaboratively develops plans to protect, enhance, restore, and sustainably manage the region’s water resources.
Provide	ES provides essential water planning services to the entire region and wastewater treatment and collection services to 111 communities.

The table below outlines proposed objectives and policy areas for the 2050 Water Policy Plan. The presence of icons indicates the need for diverse strategies that connect the many water planning and management arenas that ES staff work in.

SUSTAINABLE WATERS: Ensure clean, abundant waters for current and future regional needs.



We see the connections between drinking water, water resources, and wastewater and strive to integrate our work and management to serve the region and its water to meet the needs of current and future generations. Environmental Services employs numerous strategies to achieve sustainable waters objectives including convening partners, new monitoring and wastewater treatment technologies, conservation efforts, and planning and technical assistance. We work with and support our partners to achieve the goal of clean, abundant waters.

CLIMATE: Create climate-resilient water sources, ecosystems, and water infrastructure through mitigation, innovative design, and adaptive planning.



The region is already experiencing the impacts of climate change. Our winters are warming, the frequency and intensity of storm events have shifted from historical record, and we are projected to experience more extreme heat and drought events. We support work to enhance resilience to help communities adapt to these changes. In partnership with the State of Minnesota and local communities, we work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt our practices to protect the infrastructure investments of the region and better understand the impacts to both surface and groundwater, to protect both water supply and our high-water quality.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Maximize water infrastructure investments and identify future investment opportunities that result in benefits at multiple scales.



We put significant investment into water infrastructure for stormwater, wastewater, and assistance for local water supply. We work to optimize the existing investments and thoughtfully and responsibly plan future infrastructure to sustain and serve our growing region. We have a responsibility to the region to protect our water resources through maintaining regional wastewater infrastructure and expanding service as necessary with community input.

FUNDING: Sustainably fund water protection and planning efforts.



We perform critical work and services to the region including water resources and water supply planning and wastewater treatment. This work must be supported now and into the future. We will continue to work to secure funding and grants for our efforts as well as to support local communities in those pursuits through providing grant funds including conservation and inflow and infiltration.

HEALTH: Protect public and ecosystem health to maintain, restore, and enhance a high quality of life across the region.









Through our breadth of services, we will continue to protect public and ecosystem health for the region and those downstream. The protection of these critical resources will allow our region to be successful, support growth, and improve the health and well-being of our residents. Examples of how we work to protect public and ecosystem health include wastewater treatment, water quality monitoring, source water protection, and technical assistance.

EQUITY: Ensure that equitable water benefits and water services are accessible and shared amongst all residents and communities.



We work for all residents to have access to clean, safe, and affordable water for drinking, recreation, cultural, and other social or commercial uses. The ecosystem benefits of our abundant and clean natural waters and water service providers are necessary for public health and all communities and people in the region deserve those benefits. We will support vulnerable communities in identifying water service and benefit gaps and provide resources for the work necessary for a more equitable water future for all.

The table below highlights the connections between the Imagine 2050 Regional Goals and proposed Water Policy Plan Objectives. A filled circle represents a direct connection; a hollow circle represents an indirect connection.

	Our Region is Equitable and Inclusive	Our Communities are Healthy and Safe	Our Economy is Dynamic and Resilient	We Lead on Addressing Climate Change	We Protect and Restore Natural Systems
	○	○	●	●	●
	○	●	○	●	●
	○	●	●	○	●
	○	○	●	○	●
	○	●	○	●	●
	●	●	○	●	○

Proposed Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
 - a. Purpose of plan
 - b. Components of plan (and what they do)
 - i. Water Policies
 - ii. WW System Plan
 - iii. Regional WS Plan
- II. RDG connection to water
 - a. Vision, Values, Goals
 - i. What are they? Focus on the ties to water / natural systems
 - ii. Include some reference to water values work done for us/state
 - iii. Include some reference to the value of water and water service for ecosystem, economic, community, and individual well-being
- III. ES Principles and Role
 - a. Principles:
 - i. **Integrated water planning:** Actions in any water sector (Wastewater, Water Resources, Water Supply Planning) are connected and impact all waters in the built and natural environments. In short, integrated water planning is planning over the entire water cycle including all natural and human influences.
 - 1. What does integrated water planning look like?
 - a. Partnering
 - b. Planning
 - c. Provide Services
 - 2. Who do we plan with?
 - a. Internally at the Council
 - b. Externally with Agencies, communities, watersheds, and other stakeholders
 - c. How we work with those we serve/impact....
 - 3. Connected MWSP Principles
 - a. Water supply planning is an integral component of long-term regional and local comprehensive planning.
 - b. Wise use of water supplies is critical to ensuring adequate supplies for future generations.
 - c. All hydrologic system components, naturally occurring and human-built, must be carefully evaluated when planning water infrastructure.
 - d. Interjurisdictional cooperation is a viable option for managing short-term water supply disruptions and for sustainably meeting long-term water supply needs.
 - e. The quality of the region's water is a critical component of water supply planning.
 - ii. **Utilize existing frameworks:** The metro area has a robust water planning and wastewater operations system with many actors – community water and wastewater utilities, watershed management organizations, and regional, county, state, and federal agencies.

Coordination and collaboration between these groups is necessary to protect our water for future generations.

1. Connected MWSP Principles

- a. Regional and local cost-effectiveness and fair cost-sharing are considered when identifying water supply options.
- b. An understanding of the region's long-term water supply availability and demand is necessary to identify a specific community's or subregion's water sources.

iii. **Metric-based policies:** It is hard to quantify policy success without accountability. We will provide policy options with associated metrics and measurable outcomes where possible, to demonstrate the effectiveness of our water policies and actions. AND define effectiveness WITH those we serve and impact.

b. What is Regional Planning? What is our role?

- 1. Plan and policy development
- 2. Regional and local implementation- local plan requirements
- 3. Desired Regional Objectives
 - a. Infrastructure Investments
 - b. Water Quality
 - c. GW/SW Connections
 - d. Land use/water planning
 - e. Sustainable Quantity
- 4. Assessment of outcomes and policy measures
 - a. Gaps and new challenges Identified
 - b. Research challenges and new issues
- 5. Strategy and solution ID
 - a. Engineering and other technical solutions
 - b. Tool and information development
 - c. Community guidance
- 6. ... and back to policy development

c. Operational context – system plan departures, completeness, consistency, conformity, etc.

- i. Link to ES Asset Management System (ongoing value delivery)

IV. Regional water context and problem ID

a. Natural waters + built environment come together to form our water system

- i. How do we define regional water sustainability: refer to water sustainability framework
- ii. Important to include what sustainable utilities / water infrastructure looks like
- iii. Tie in with economic growth, development, social and cultural development, public and individual health

b. How water moves through the region from precip to sources to uses to waste and recovery and back to sources

c. Water does not adhere to municipal/political boundaries but is managed within them

d. Changing climate and weather

- i. Current conditions

- ii. What can we expect going forward?
 - e. Source water protection, water quality, and emerging contaminants
 - i. Current conditions / challenges / how did we get here?
 - ii. What this means for communities/people going forward?
 - f. Land use and development connection
 - i. Different communities have different needs and challenges
 - 1. Many different landscapes in the metro, differing land uses and development, differing natural landscapes
 - ii. Rural challenges
 - iii. Growth and development
 - iv. Water disparities
 - 1. What are they? (Natural and Service-based)
 - 2. Equitable outcomes and USWA guidance
- V. Goals and objectives
 - a. How do we achieve a sustainable water sustainability for the region?
 - i. Plan, partner, and serve
 - ii. Elevating to the system of water management overall (EPA, regulation and economics vs triple bottom line,), what are we advocating for broader systems change?
- VI. Policies/programs
 - a. Should address how we are going to approach challenges stated above
 - i. What are the broad policy areas that frame our work
 - b. Should address expectations for county, community, and watershed partners
 - i. Should Include Local water plan reqs, local water supply plan requirements, and comp sewer plan requirements and review processes
 - c. Measurable
- VII. Wastewater system plan
- VIII. Metro area water supply plan
 - a. Approach to regional water supply planning (including more specific water supply roles and how Council's' role in water supply differs from ww or watershed work)
 - b. Highlights of the region's water supply context
 - c. Regional water supply action plan (?? - is this best located in the WRPP policies/programs section?)
 - d. Regional water supply performance measures
 - e. Subregional plans that the Council commits to supporting
- IX. Appendix: Local Plan Requirements
- X. Appendix: Water Planning Data