

WATER SUPPLY PLANNING FACTS



Metropolitan Council coordinates water supply planning

The Twin Cities metropolitan area is home to nearly three million people, over half of Minnesota's population. Securing their safe and plentiful drinking water, while protecting the region's diverse water resources, requires coordinated and ongoing effort.

Today the seven-county region is relatively water-rich. However, the region's steady population growth, increased groundwater pumping, changing land use, and variable weather and climate may challenge some communities' ability to use traditional water sources to meet future demand.

Water supply planning is a collaborative effort

Although the Council has investigated water supply issues for decades, it was in 2005 that the Minnesota Legislature gave the Council specific responsibility for water supply planning, including creation of the region's first Metropolitan Area Master Water Supply Plan.

At the same time, the Legislature established the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee to assist the Council in its water supply planning activities and to advise Council staff in developing the Master Plan. To gather input on the plan and its components, the Council engaged regional planners, municipal water suppliers, government officials and interested citizens. The Council also created a technical advisory group to ensure the accuracy of data and usability of its analysis.



Photo caption: Council water supply staff work in close partnership with communities, and state and federal agencies, to help address water supply issues, develop solid data and technical tools, and update the region's water supply master plan.

Master Plan creates framework for sustainability

The Master Plan has a single goal: to ensure sustainable water supply for current and future generations. It provides a framework for water supply development that does not harm ecosystems, degrade water quality or compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Master Plan sets forth seven principles:

- Water supply planning is an integral component of longer-term regional and local comprehensive planning.
- Understanding the region's long-term water supply availability and demand is necessary to identify a specific community's or sub-region's water sources.
- All hydrologic system components, naturally occurring and manmade, must be carefully evaluated when making water infrastructure plans.
- The quality of the region's water is a critical component of water supply planning.
- Interjurisdictional cooperation is a viable option for managing short-term water supply disruptions and sustainably meeting long-term water supply needs.
- Regional and local cost-effectiveness and equity are considered when identifying water supply options.
- Wise use of water supplies is critical to ensuring adequate supplies for future generations.

Technical information supports wise water supply decisions

To help make informed and effective water supply decisions, stakeholders identified the following planning needs:

- Up-to-date and more detailed water demand and water resource information
- Water availability analyses to identify potential water supply issues the region and communities may face in the future
- Tools, resources and guidance to enhance water supply decision-making

The plan draws upon existing state, regional and local water supply programs to address these technical needs. It also establishes an ongoing process to update the information, analyses and tools. Key tools include:

- Conservation Toolbox, an online water conservation resource for communities
- Metro Model 2, a regional groundwater flow model
- Make-A-Map, an interactive online water supply information map

The Master Plan's strong foundation of accessible technical information, coupled with the foundational principles, offers local and state decision-makers both the tools and guidance they need to avoid costly, time-consuming delays in water supply development.

As planning continues, the collaborative process established during plan development also continues as does the work of the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee. Currently, the Council is integrating water supply planning into the seven-county area's Regional Development Framework (Thrive MSP 2040) and supporting policies. Local governments will need to ensure that local water supply plans, wellhead protection plans and comprehensive land use plans are consistent with the goals and data in the Master Plan.

Water supply planning funded by multiple sources

The Council's water supply planning activities, including development of the Master Plan and its supporting tools, were funded through an internal Metropolitan Council transfer of two million dollars from an unused solid waste planning bond. Implementation of the Master Plan has been supported by additional funding from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment's Clean Water Fund.

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