

## 11.0 Public Involvement and Public Information

### 11.1 Issue Statements

The water quality of the BCWMC's water resources can be improved or protected by reducing the nonpoint source pollutants carried in stormwater runoff and increasing stormwater retention. Through watershed education efforts, desired behavioral changes, knowledge and abilities can be attained that will reduce nonpoint source pollution and increase stormwater detention. The BCWMC recognizes the importance of the public's role in this effort.

The BCWMC and the member cities have used various methods to educate/inform the public about BCWMC activities and water resource-related topics. Past public education and involvement efforts include: submittal of news releases to the local newspapers, presentations to city councils and city commissions/committees, setting up of BCWMC website and posting information on the site, participation in city water quality fairs, preparation of annual reports, the stakeholder involvement process for the planning process, the citizen involvement process used for the BCWMC flood control project, participation in the Metropolitan Council's CAMP program, and operation of a WOMP station on Bassett Creek (in cooperation with the Metropolitan Council). The BCWMC wishes to implement an effective public involvement and public information program. Care will be taken to coordinate activities with the cities to avoid duplication of effort.

### 11.2 Goals and Policies

#### 11.2.1. Public Involvement and Public Information Goal

**Focus A: Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission** – Raise awareness of the watershed's existence and the role that the BCWMC plays in protecting water quality and preserving the watershed's health and aesthetics.

**Focus B: Public Involvement** – Enable the target audiences to have confidence in the BCWMC's expertise and participate in a meaningful way in the planning process and ongoing projects conducted by the BCWMC.

**Focus C: Changing Behaviors** – Raise awareness of the impact that individuals, businesses and organizations have upon water quality and motivate these audiences to change personal/corporate behavior that has a negative impact on water quality and the watershed.

## 11.2.2. Public Involvement and Public Information Policies

### 11.2.2.1 Policies Related to Focus A: BCWMC

- A. The BCWMC will relay the following key messages regarding the BCWMC:
- *The Bassett Creek Watershed is a 40-square mile region that drains into Medicine Lake and the Mississippi River. The watershed encompasses all or parts of nine cities: Crystal, Golden Valley, Medicine Lake, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, New Hope, Plymouth, Robbinsdale, and St. Louis Park.*
  - *The watershed's lakes and streams merit protection because they enhance the urban environment, offer recreational opportunities, store and convey stormwater, and recharge water supply aquifers.*
  - *Established in 1967, the BCWMC is a sub-regional planning and policy making unit of government that works to alleviate flooding and to protect lakes, streams and wetlands from pollution within its nine member cities.*
  - *The BCWMC is an advocate for sound water management practices, and policy and enforcement authority comes only through its member cities.*
- B. The BCWMC's relay of the key messages will inform the target audience of the following:
- *The general location of the entire watershed and that they live or do business within the Bassett Creek watershed.*
  - *What a watershed is and why it's important to them and their community.*
  - *What problems face the watershed.*
  - *The BCWMC exists, what it has accomplished, what authority it has and what its mission is.*
  - *The BCWMC's current goals, work program and upcoming events.*
  - *How the BCWMC is funded and governed.*
  - *How to contact/learn more about the BCWMC.*
  - *Which agencies to call upon for water quality advocacy and water quality regulation enforcement.*
- C. The BCWMC will relay the key messages to the following target audiences:
- *People who live along lakeshores, streams or wetlands.*
  - *Elected and appointed officials within the watershed.*
  - *Businesses that have special impact upon the watershed (lawn care companies, developers, engineers, consultants, etc.).*

- *Businesses located within the watershed.*
- *Residents (homeowners & renters) who live within the watershed, with particular focus on people who live along lakeshores, streams or wetlands.*
- *Local government staff working within the watershed.*
- *Recreational water body users in the watershed.*
- *Environmental and special interest groups.*

D. The BCWMC will develop the following standard BCWMC information:

- *Introduction letter/packet about the BCWMC for city officials and key staff.*
- *BCWMC logo.*
- *Redesigned BCWMC letterhead to include a succinct mission statement.*
- *Standard BCWMC identifying paragraph (to be used in every news release and communication vehicle).*
- *Traveling educational display (to be used at fairs, special events, etc. with related focus).*
- *Summary of BCWMC annual report (brief).*
- *One page fact sheet about the watershed.*

E. The BCWMC will evaluate its success at relaying key messages regarding the BCWMC.

Evaluation could consider the following:

- *How many times was the standard identifying message printed/disseminated to target audiences?*
- *Test awareness/knowledge by piggy-backing on city-sponsored resident surveys.*
- *Are there indications of a stronger base of knowledge about the BCWMC (e.g., do the type of questions raised at BCWMC meetings demonstrate this?).*
- *A pre- and post-knowledge survey, if funds become available. However, funding priority should be given to focus areas B (public involvement) and C (changing behaviors).*

### **11.2.2.2 Policies Related to Focus B: Public Involvement**

A. The BCWMC will relay the following key messages regarding public involvement:

- *The BCWMC cares about the watershed and has the expertise necessary to enhance water quality and protect the watershed's future.*
- *The BCWMC values citizen input and needs citizen participation and support to balance interests and protect the watershed.*

- *The BCWMC has adopted a revised watershed management plan.*
  - *The BCWMC conducts on-going water quality monitoring projects.*
- B. The BCWMC's relay of the key messages will inform the target audience of the following:
- *The focus of the BCMWC's revised watershed management plan.*
  - *What projects/regulations the BCWMC is proposing and why.(Audience has a clear understanding of the problem that must be addressed, why this regulation/project remedies that problem, what other solutions were considered, and what the cost and timeline of the project/regulation is.)*
  - *How to have input into the regulation/project plans proposed by the BCWMC.*
  - *How to propose projects or new initiatives for consideration.*
  - *Why the BCWMC has adopted a regulation or is undertaking a project.*
  - *How these regulations/projects will impact the community as well as an individual's property and personal behavior.*
  - *How to volunteer to help with water quality monitoring projects and that citizen service is valued by the Commission.*
- C. The BCWMC will relay the key messages to the following target audiences:
- *Residents (homeowners & renters) who live within the watershed*
  - *Residents directly affected by a proposed project/regulation*
  - *People who live along the lakeshore (homeowner associations, etc.)*
  - *Elected and appointed officials within the watershed*
  - *Local government staff working within the watershed*
  - *Businesses located within the watershed*
  - *Businesses directly affected by a proposed project/regulation*
  - *Recreational water body users in the watershed*
  - *Environmental and special interest groups*
  - *Middle school and high school science teachers*
  - *Youth/students*
  - *Potential sources of volunteers: civic groups, churches and synagogues, businesses, etc.*
- D. The BCWMC will recruit volunteers to conduct monitoring and participate in shore clean-up activities (e.g., adopt-a-stream, adopt-a-wetland programs).
- E. The BCWMC will provide training sessions for volunteers who participate in monitoring activities (e.g., sample collection, etc.).

- F. The BCWMC will inform the public of BCWMC-sponsored volunteer opportunities through fact sheets, news releases, short videos for local government cable TV, etc.
- G. The BCWMC will support storm drain stenciling programs in the watershed.
- H. The BCWMC will develop and implement a recognition program (certificates, letters of appreciation, events, thank you ads, etc.) for BCWMC volunteers.
- I. The BCWMC will evaluate its success at relaying key messages regarding public involvement. Evaluation could consider the following:
- How many times was the message printed/disseminated to target audiences?
  - Has the discourse been more respectful and meaningful?
  - How many meetings/open houses were attended and how many attended?
  - Do meeting attendees feel listened to and informed (use evaluation forms at meetings to measure satisfaction)?
  - Has the number of volunteers or number of volunteer hours increased?
  - Were more projects initiated because of increased volunteer availability?
  - A pre- and post-knowledge survey, if funds are available.

### **11.2.2.3 Policies Related to Focus C: Changing Behaviors**

- A. The BCWMC will relay the following key messages regarding changing behaviors:
- *Individual/corporate behavior can have either a positive or negative impact on water quality and the watershed.*
  - *Leaves and grass clippings must be kept off the paved surfaces to protect water quality.*
  - *When it's necessary to fertilize lawns, phosphorus-free fertilizer should be used to avoid harming water quality.*
  - *No chemicals should be dumped into the street or down drainage openings.*
  - *Homeowners and businesses adjacent to lakes, wetlands, streams and waterways can enhance water quality and the beauty of their property by landscaping shorelines with native plants rather than turf grass.*
  - *Boaters should remove milfoil from boat trailer/engines.*
  - *Erosion from construction sites can harm the watershed.*

B. The BCWMC's relay of the key messages will inform the target audience of the following:

- *Changing individual/corporate behavior has a cumulative, positive impact on water quality and the watershed.*
- *Leaves and grass clippings are the greatest cause of excessive algae growth in lakes and ponds.*
- *Most Twin Cities soils are already high in phosphorus and don't need more. Because phosphorus contributes to excessive algae growth, it's best to use a phosphorus-free fertilizer.*
- *How to identify phosphorus-free fertilizer (middle number on bag) and where to buy it.*
- *Lawn care businesses can give themselves a marketing edge by offering and promoting environmentally friendly lawn care practices.*
- *Retail outlets will receive free advertising/recognition for selling phosphorus-free fertilizer.*
- *Residents and business employees understand the difference between storm sewers and sanitary sewers and know how to properly dispose of chemicals.*
- *Homeowners and businesses adjacent to wetlands know the benefits of native plants, where to obtain them and how to attractively landscape with them.*
- *Boaters can identify milfoil and understand why it should be removed.*
- *Citizens can recognize harmful construction site practices and know whom to contact to report problems.*

C. The BCWMC will relay the key messages to the following target audiences:

- *Residents (homeowners & renters) who live within the watershed*
- *Residents and businesses located along shorelines*
- *Elected and appointed officials within the watershed*
- *Local government staff working within the watershed*
- *Recreational water body users in the watershed*
- *Environmental and special interest groups*
- *Architects, engineers, contractors, and developers*
- *Building and grounds caretakers and professional property managers*

- *Middle school and high school science teachers*
- *Youth/students*

D. The BCWMC will evaluate its success at relaying key messages about changing behaviors. Evaluation could consider the following:

- How many times was the message printed/disseminated to target audiences?
- Test awareness/knowledge by piggy-backing on city-sponsored resident surveys
- A pre- and post-knowledge survey, if funds are available.
- Water quality improvements
- Visible increase in native plantings along shorelines
- Fewer reports of illegal dumping
- Fewer reports of harmful construction practices

#### **11.2.2.4 Policies Related to All Three Focus Areas**

A. The BCWMC will fund communications efforts that provide education coordination between the member cities and BCWMC. The BCWMC will also explore/implement joint education and outreach opportunities/programs with the member cities, adjacent WMOs, and other stakeholders.

B. The BCWMC will update and maintain its website and use it to communicate with and provide information to the public. Examples of website communication include:

- *Posting of BCWMC meeting notices, agendas, minutes*
- *Posting of BCWMC annual reports*
- *Posting of BCWMC Plan*
- *Online subscription service for newsletter, special notices, news releases, etc.*
- *Photo/virtual tour of Bassett Creek watershed*
- *Posting of introductory information/fact sheets about BCWMC*

C. The BCWMC will incorporate public involvement and public education efforts into all of its proposed projects. Examples of applicable public involvement and public education efforts include:

- *“Before” and “after” photos (or photo renderings) of proposed projects.*
- *Notices to lakeshore groups, homeowner associations, boat owners and others directly affected by proposals/projects*
- *Notices to builders/developers, lawn care services and other businesses directly affected by proposals/projects*
- *News releases to city newsletters, environmental group/special interest newsletters, local newspapers, etc.*
- *Open houses for the public*
- *Public hearings prior to policy/project adoption with opportunities for citizen input and questions*
- *Presentations to city officials and key staff*
- *Policy/project fact sheet to send upon request and distribute at meetings*
- *Brief cable television presentation on project/proposal*

D. The BCWMC will form citizen committees on an as-needed basis and only if there are meaningful tasks for the committee to accomplish.

E. The BCWMC will distribute BCWMC meeting notices and agendas to city officials and key staff. The meeting notice and/or agenda will include a description of the key discussion item(s).

F. The BCWMC will begin a signage program to install informational signs at BCWMC watershed projects (existing/proposed), major BCWMC water bodies, monitoring sites, demonstration projects, adopt-a-stream/wetland sites, etc.

G. The BCWMC will make a brief presentation annually to city and county officials regarding the BCWMC’s mission and current/proposed projects.

H. The BCWMC will hold an annual tour, event and/or orientation for interested citizens.

I. The BCWMC will develop a one-page fact sheet about related agencies and how citizens can report water quality problems or possible rule violations.

- J. The BCWMC will recognize/award lawn care firms that offer environmentally friendly options, and businesses or organizations with watershed-friendly landscaping and ground maintenance practices.
- K. The BCWMC will utilize existing watershed education and behavior-modification communications tools (e.g., programs/materials developed by its member cities, such as the award-winning Plymouth educational materials for the Medicine Lake and Parkers Lake watersheds materials).
- L. The BCWMC will support environmentally friendly lawn and landscape care. This support could include the following:
- *Development/dissemination of fact sheets/reminders on lawn care. One set would be targeted at lakeshore groups, homeowner associations, etc. and another set would be targeted at builders/developers and lawn care services.*
  - *“Before” and “after” photos of turf grass vs. native plantings*
  - *Traveling educational display at lawn care fair and other relevant local events*
  - *Community education classes and presentations at local events on lawn care and landscaping with native plantings*
  - *News releases on lawn care to city newsletters, environmental group and special interest newsletters, local newspapers, etc.*
  - *Short video on lawn care for local government cable TV.*
  - *Lawn signs for lawn owners who practice environmentally friendly lawn care*
  - *Development/dissemination of fact sheets at retail stores selling fertilizer*
  - *Development/dissemination of fact sheets on landscaping with native plants*
  - *Development/dissemination of fact sheet for professionals on site design and property maintenance practices that promote clean water*
- M. The BCWMC will arrange for presentations and disseminate fact sheets for the following:
- *Boat owners regarding Eurasian watermilfoil.*
  - *Builders regarding construction practices.*
- N. The BCWMC will support the development of a speaker’s bureau for garden clubs, homeowner associations, neighborhood meetings, etc.

- O. The BCWMC will develop a brief report on its Plan for the future.
- P. The BCWMC will support a Citizens Academy. This is a program conducted in a classroom setting to educate citizens about the BCWMC and best management practices. Generally, the academy is held one evening per week over a one-month period with a class size of about twelve citizens.
- Q. The BCWMC will support pilot programs aimed at specific “target” audiences.
- R. The BCWMC will communicate complex and/or technical issues in a manner that is appropriate for the audience.
- S. Each city shall adopt an ordinance that enforces the Minnesota State Law limiting the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. The BCWMC shall develop, in conjunction with the cities, an education program that educates residents about the importance of soil testing to determine their laws nutrient needs. Education programs will include factual information regarding the affects of phosphorus and nitrogen on the water quality of lakes, wetlands, and streams. The effort expended in implementing these education programs will be consistent with available resources.

### **11.3 Background**

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The BCWMC has used the following methods to provide information to the public and/or involve the public in BCWMC activities:

**Website** ([www.bassettcreekwmo.org](http://www.bassettcreekwmo.org)) – The BCWMC posts a variety of information on its website, including information about the BCWMC and its watershed (watershed map, commissioners, alternates, and staff information), BCWMC meeting information (agendas, minutes), BCWMC development requirements, water quality information, BCWMC annual reports, and information related to the second generation plan.

**Press releases** – The BCWMC issues press releases to inform the public about upcoming public forums, open houses, etc. and BCWMC initiatives.

**Presentations** – The BCWMC presents watershed-related information to city councils and other interested groups.

**Volunteer monitoring efforts** – The BCWMC participates in the Metropolitan Council’s CAMP and the Hennepin Conservation District’s River Watch Program, both of which use citizen volunteers to collect data on the BCWMC’s lakes and streams.

**Watershed Outlet Monitoring Program (WOMP)** – The BCWMC participates in the Metropolitan Council’s WOMP, which provides public information regarding the stream flow and water quality of Bassett Creek.

**Meeting packets** – The BCWMC distributes its monthly meeting packet (meeting agenda, meeting minutes, and background materials) to the Commissioners, alternates, staff, and various interested parties.

**Stakeholder Involvement Program** – As part of the BCWMC planning process, the BCWMC developed and implemented a detailed stakeholder involvement program. The key elements of the program included the following:

- Press release giving public notification of planning process initiation.
- Press release giving public notification of open forum.
- Open forum and open house to introduce planning efforts.
- Formation of Steering Committee to provide oversight of the planning process.
- Formation of three advisory groups: Policy Advisory Group, Technical Advisory Group, and Citizen Advisory Group. These three advisory groups met numerous times and developed recommendations for the second generation plan. The Steering Committee summarized all of the advisory groups’ recommendations into a table, which is included in Appendix D. This Plan contains many new policies that are the direct result of these recommendations.

**Technical Advisory Committee** – The BCWMC amended its bylaws in 2001 to create a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Each member city may appoint a member and alternate member to the TAC. The TAC provides technical review and advice to the BCWMC.