

Met Council Water Resources Policy Plan

Notes from March 7th TAC meeting

Discussion on Issues and Categorization of the Issues from Jan 31st meeting

- Need to discuss agriculture somewhere in our issues/categories.
 - Council needs to find a way to define or indicate value of ag lands to the urban core.
 - Agriculture has an impact on our water resources.
 - Right now there is no good mechanism to reduce the loads from agriculture. All voluntary efforts. Need incentives to do the right thing.
 - Need to find a way to address issues coming from agriculture in the new Water Resources Policy Plan.
 - We need to look at agriculture policies for the metro area. Should metro agriculture be treated different than statewide agriculture? Develop Ag policies that are unique to metro area agricultural lands.
 - Agriculture issues need to be better tied to land use planning.
 - Points out the need to tie agriculture use and impacts on water in our land use conversations and policies.
 - Ag preservation should be a focus of the Council. Adds to general value of life. Original ag preserves program zoned ag land as not available for development; this inflated land prices. Property owners must be able to sell for development when they want to.
 - Food production is an issue for the metro area as well.
 - Ag policies have been negative, a collection of don'ts; nothing positive and no incentives.
- Baseflow protection should be added to the issue areas.
 - Baseflow and shallow groundwater should be clearly noted in policies and strategies
 - Streams are losing baseflow due to a number of factors
 - Need to look at effect on surface water resources from changes in groundwater
 - Need to break down the myths and beliefs on how the system works
 - In the sand plain, the upper 70' of groundwater is the same system as surface water it's just moving at a different rate or in a different direction.
 - If streams dry up due to loss of baseflow, biological impairment is meaningless. Baseflows greatly influence biotic TMDLs.
 - Aesthetic ponds, irrigation, lower infiltration amounts, timing of storms, and climate change all potentially reduce baseflow.
 - Need to get MPCA and Health dept to cooperate on areas where infiltration is allowed; well head protection areas result in only very small amount of land left where infiltration is allowed.
 - In Coon Creek watershed infiltration makes an imperceptible difference in stream flow. Would need injection wells (illegal), large scale water harvesting (like out west) or increased large scale infiltration ponding to improve streamflow.

- In some places it would be better to discharge stormwater directly into wetlands (rather than into BMPs) to preserve their water regime.
- Water supply category should really be a water availability category
- The word quantity should be replaced with availability
- Need to link wastewater management with water supply and surface water policies and activities.
- Need to bring together different disciplines to figure it out.
- Need for a metro water budget and/or need to have policies based on the difference geomorphic areas in the metro. Policies may not be the same for all areas. They are different issues and needs.
- Council should use “positives” and incentives to do the right thing, rather than “don’ts”

Thrive MSP 2040 Goals Discussion

Proposed Goals

- Natural areas and resources are preserved for future generations
- A vibrant and competitive economy offers opportunities for residents and employers
- Land use, urban form and infrastructure are coordinated to make the best use of public investment and to build livable communities
- Quality housing choices are available across the region for people in all life stages and of all economic means
- An interconnected, multi-modal transportation system links people, goods and places
- The region and its assets are resilient to the effects of a changing climate

Discussion

- Proposed Thrive MSP 2040 goals are at a good level.
- Should be renamed “development guide” so people know what it is.
- Missing goals for health and education
- Natural resources and water resources only covered in goal #1. Is this enough? They should be addressed in all goals or given equal value as other (transportation, housing) goals
- Need to add text to better explain the goals. Need to include the rationale.
- Need to expand the definition of assets and infrastructure to include natural infrastructure and not just concrete.
- Assets need to include natural resources and water (rivers, streams, lakes) and not just concrete.
- Need more of a supportive role for Council.
- Add “improved”, “protected” or “enhanced” to natural resources areas not just preserved. Preserved indicates the status quo.

Proposed WRPP Overall Goal Discussion

The region's water resources are sustainable, supported by a multi-faceted regional strategy that includes appropriate development patterns and densities, effective land uses, a balance between growth and protection of recharge areas, and the use of best management practices to maintain and improve the quality and quantity of our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater systems.

Discussion

- Too wordy
- Concepts to include are improve, quality of lakes, rivers and streams, increase sustainability of groundwater systems.
- Should include multi-faceted regional strategy, aimed at improving quality of lakes..., sustainability , and that supports growth
- Suggested new wording: *The region's water resources are sustainable, supported by a multi-faceted regional strategy that includes a balance between growth and protection to improve and maintain the quality and quantity of our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater systems.*
- Quantity is not quite the right word, maybe sustainability or availability.
- Question: Basically this is the "mission statement" for the entire WRPP?
- Suggested new wording: *The region's water resources are supported by a multi-faceted regional strategy seeking to maintain and improve the quality and quantity of our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater systems.*

Policy Area Discussion

Policy Areas

1. Sustainability policy for water quality, water supply and wastewater
2. Land use decisions/resource protect (impact on water resources from land use decisions)
3. Watershed management concept/theme
4. Balanced approach to storm water and wastewater management
5. Regional perspective/ regional response on studies, plans, draft regulations, etc.
6. Collaboration, creativity and innovation
 - Promote new technologies, BMPs, and approaches
 - Promote flexibility
7. Technical assistance and resource information
 - Regional resource for data, monitoring efforts, assessments of water quality, BMPs to use, and other research efforts
8. Funding needs/sources
 - Provide grants
9. Others?

Discussion

- Suggested changing first proposed policy to add water availability in place of water supply
- Suggested policy area #3 should be expanded to include watershed based planning with local control and that this is different than the PCA HUC 12 approach
- Council should look at the "value of water" in the metro area.

- Water resource protection should be given equivalent consideration to other system areas.
- Have to communicate to the locals the value of water to them; currently they have the view that someone else is making us do this so they (someone else) should pay for it.
- Suggested policy area #8 should consider process to go to the Council for bonding rather than communities getting own bonds
- Suggested Council should coordinate all plans into one workable plan for metro area
- Suggested storm sewers are getting old and may have inadequate capacity in the future due to climate change and we should look at how this can be handled and impacts to the sewer system as an issue. Add mention of “treatment train” approach to managing stormwater to protect existing infrastructure.

Draft Water Resource Policies for WRPP Update Discussion

Draft Policies

1. The Council will work with local and regional partners to provide for sustainable regional water resources through effective wastewater, storm water, and water supply management.
2. The Council and region will work to preserve the quality and quantity of the region’s water resources (rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands) to support habitat and ecosystem health while providing for recreational opportunities, all of which are critical elements of our region’s quality of life
3. The Council will use a watershed based approach to protect the beneficial uses of the region’s water resources to obtain the maximum benefits for the money and efforts expended.
4. The Council will provide technical assistance, resource assessment information, and promote cost effective solutions to aid local governments and others in their efforts to reduce the impacts of nonpoint source pollution on area lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and natural drainage courses.
5. The Council will foster collaboration, facilitate the distribution of new technologies and research efforts, and convene discussion on regional issues related to water resource protection and restoration.
6. The Council with our partners will continue to collect and assess the essential data needed to evaluate the impacts our citizens are having on our water resources and measure our success in achieving regional water goals.
7. The Council will develop point and nonpoint source reduction strategies that incorporate phosphorus and nitrogen control in order to make progress in reducing impacts to Lake Pepin and ultimately to the Gulf of Mexico.

Discussion

- Suggested adding the word “state” to draft policy #1
- Need to include agriculture in policy
- Suggested changing policy #3 to support the existing watershed based approach
- Suggested changing policy #4 to the Council will provide technical and financial assistance in efforts to sustain the water and related resources or to create sustainable resources

- Suggested changing policy #5 to include applied research and that the Council should provide a clearinghouse role for information for metro area water managers
- Suggested changing policy #6 to imply Council should be a venue to go to in order to get data, advice, information
- MCES could provide guidance on monitoring and assessment of metro waters. Provide guidance to create coordinated approach to metro area water data collection so waters can be assessed on equal footing
- MCES needs to provide access to real time data. Most watershed districts have technical staff who are skilled at assessing data for local watersheds. Not relying on MCES for local assessment of data.
- MCES should fill data gaps in chloride assessment: spring events and long term groundwater monitoring
- Suggested there is a need to distinguish between geomorphic conditions.
- Suggested Council should have a role in looking at the value of water in the region
- Suggested we need to look at policy to make sure we are promoting sustaining and improving and not just maintaining.
- Suggested that as we build our transportation system and do our land use planning, there needs to be equivalent consideration of water – need water to be valued equally with transportation and wastewater. Frame value of waters at different scales.