



# 2027 WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

*Creating value in the built and natural environments*



**MINNEHAHA CREEK**  
WATERSHED DISTRICT

# A VISION OF BALANCED URBAN ECOLOGY

At the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD), we believe that healthy natural systems are integral to creating vibrant, resilient communities. This belief underpins our fundamental commitment to planning land and water together, as interconnected components that support ecological health, economic vitality, and quality of life.

In 2018, communities across the watershed endorsed this approach, recognizing that aligning local land use decisions with regional water resource goals ensures that every project delivers broader public value: cleaner water, restored ecosystems, resilient neighborhoods, and thriving communities.

“ Successful, sustainable, livable communities are built on a foundation of integrated planning — planning that recognizes communities as living organisms and takes into consideration all components of the urban ecology.

~ Balanced Urban Ecology Philosophy, 2014


## PARTNERING TO DELIVER SHARED BENEFITS

Integrated planning allows MCWD and our partners to envision projects that address multiple community needs at once.

By aligning land use, stormwater management, habitat restoration, transportation, parks, and community development, we create solutions that improve water quality and reduce flood risk while supporting local priorities.

Over the past decade, we've seen how this collaborative approach:

- ✓ Improves the natural environment
- ✓ Expands access to greenspace
- ✓ Enhances public safety
- ✓ Supports redevelopment
- ✓ Strengthens local economies



*In 2021, MCWD and the City of Victoria partnered to create the Wassermann Lake Preserve, a waterfront park anchored on the restored lake. The project resulted in a wetland and habitat restoration, improved water quality, and new park amenities for residents to enjoy, like a picnic shelter, trail system, boardwalk, and fishing pier.*

# A DECADE OF IMPACT

## DELIVERING TRANSFORMATIVE RESULTS

As MCWD prepares to update our 10-year plan, we're reflecting on the progress we've made and the results we've achieved with partners across the watershed, from cities, to business leaders and community groups, to institutions and private developers.

Over the last decade, we've put our philosophy to the test, implementing a two-track approach to deliver capital projects that provide lasting water resource and community benefits for the over 300,000 residents who live, work, and play within our watershed.

## PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

We're proud of all that we've accomplished together, and as we chart a course for the future, we're excited to carry this partnership approach forward and leverage integrated planning to address new challenges facing the watershed.

We invite our partners to join us in mapping another decade of progress toward a balanced urban ecology with our 2027 Watershed Management Plan! **Learn more about how to engage on pages 7-8.**

### FOCAL GEOGRAPHIES



By dedicating resources in a targeted area over several years, we deepen our understanding of local priorities, and create large-scale, lasting water resource benefits that are integrated with community needs.

### LAND & WATER PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM



We remain responsive to opportunities for regional impact that arise from the work of cities, counties, developers, and landowners by providing technical and financial support to their projects.

**1,200 LBS.**

**nutrient pollution  
reduced**

**112 ACRES**

**restored wetlands  
and habitat**

**10,700 FEET**

**restored shoreline  
and streambank**

**300 ACRES**

**new publicly  
accessible greenspace**

**3 MILES**

**new trails and  
boardwalk**

# PREPARING FOR A WETTER FUTURE

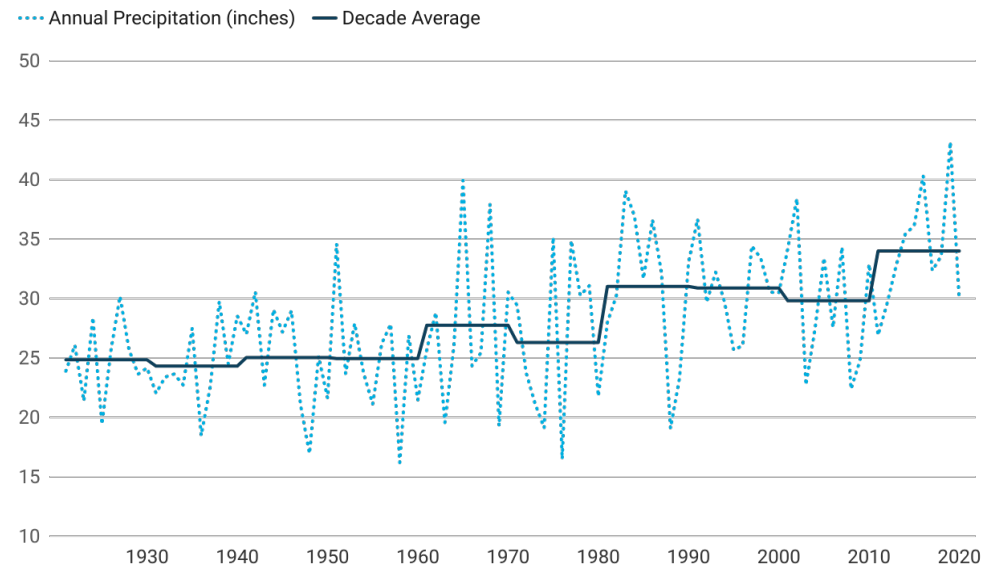
Communities across the watershed are experiencing shifting precipitation patterns, including the wettest seven-year period on record from 2013 -2019, followed by consecutive years of drought in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

According to the MN Department of Natural Resources State Climatology Office, Minnesota is projected to continue trending warmer and wetter, with more variability and more frequent and intense rainfall events.

**These changing conditions are placing new pressures on our land and water systems.**

*Since 1940, annual rainfall in the Twin Cities has been steadily increasing as the region experiences warmer and wetter weather patterns. From 1920 to today, annual precipitation averages from each decade have increased by nearly ten inches. Data source: Minnesota State Climatology Office.*

## Twin Cities Annual Precipitation 1920 - 2020



## IMPACTS OF EXTREME WEATHER

While flooding is not new to the region, heavy rain can strain aging infrastructure, reduce available storage, threaten public safety, and create challenges for residents, businesses, and public facilities. More intense storms can heighten these impacts across communities, particularly where historic land-use decisions have filled wetlands, straightened streams, and limited water storage on the landscape.

**“ Urban areas are increasingly subject to flash flooding due to the removal of vegetation, covering of ground cover with impermeable surfaces, and construction of drainage systems.”**

~ MN State Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2024

*A resident walks through floodwaters on a Minneapolis street in 2014. Photo Credit: Star Tribune*



# A SHARED VISION FOR RESILIENCE

## A WATERSHED PERSPECTIVE

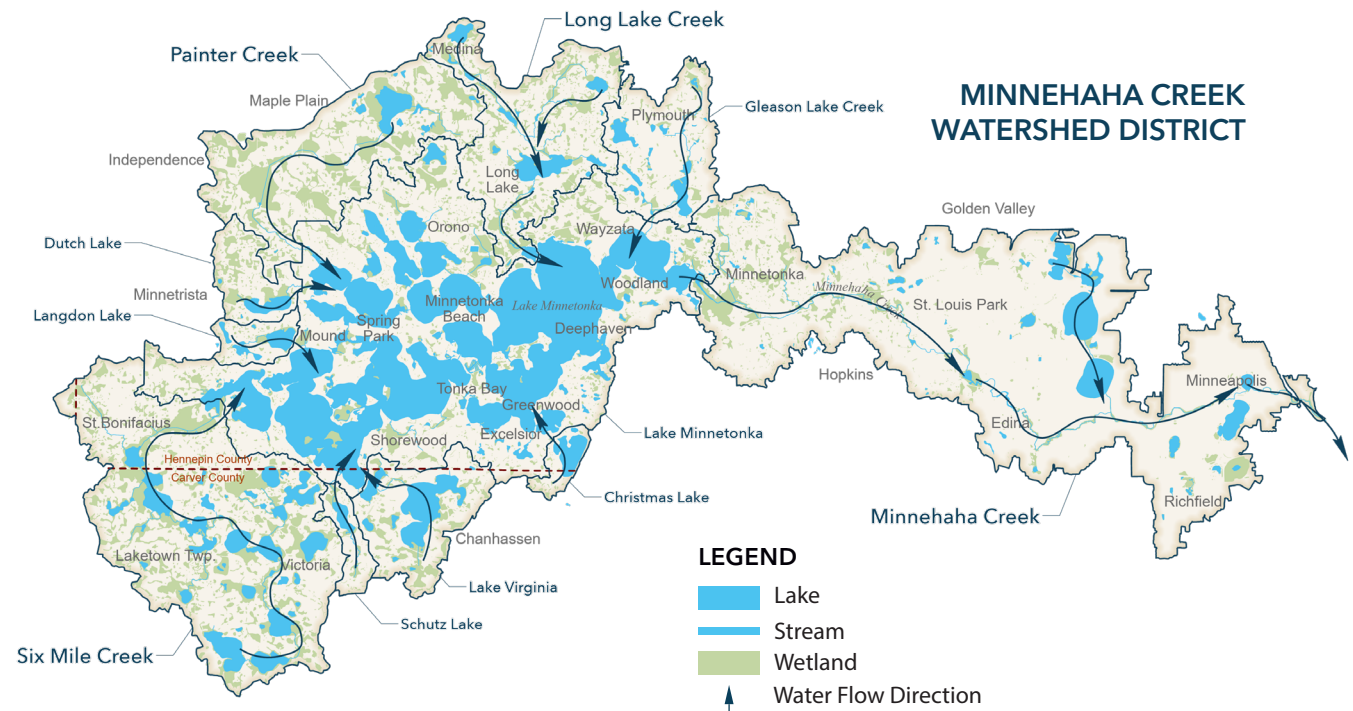
Watersheds are interconnected systems, so upstream decisions influence downstream conditions, and this is especially true during extreme rainfall events. As communities evaluate strategies to manage runoff, update stormwater systems, and reduce flood risk, MCWD's planning effort aims to build a shared understanding of how local actions affect the broader watershed.

## ADAPTING TOGETHER

Guided by principles of Balanced Urban Ecology, the 2027 Watershed Management Plan will invite communities to align land use, natural systems, and infrastructure through coordinated, integrated planning to adapt to a wetter future.

By evaluating vulnerabilities to flooding and identifying shared priorities, together we can better understand where policy changes, land use decisions, capital projects, or infrastructure updates offer the greatest benefit.

Together, this collaboration will support a cohesive, watershed-wide flood adaptation strategy—advancing policies and projects that reduce risk, protect natural resources, and build resilience to support thriving communities.



*The Minnehaha Creek Watershed spans 178 square miles in the southwest Twin Cities metro and includes over 120 lakes, several major streams, 29 communities, and portions of Carver and Hennepin counties.*

# BUILDING THRIVING COMMUNITIES

In the face of new challenges like increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, population growth, and development pressures, MCWD's 2027 Plan represents a renewed commitment to integrated planning, an approach that will allow us to address these challenges over the next decade, while working toward a vision of balanced urban ecology for the watershed's 29 communities.

## A NEW ERA OF INTEGRATED PLANNING

This approach isn't easy; innovative projects require creative problem-solving, coordination across disciplines, sound science, and strong community partnerships.

However, we've also learned first-hand that these projects can realize unparalleled results: inviting water into the landscape can be catalytic for achieving not only environmental benefits, but also supporting other urban planning needs like housing, greenspace, transportation, public safety, and more.

These projects have shown what's possible when we put our approach to the test, but **meeting tomorrow's challenges requires a coordinated plan developed for and by our partners across the watershed.**

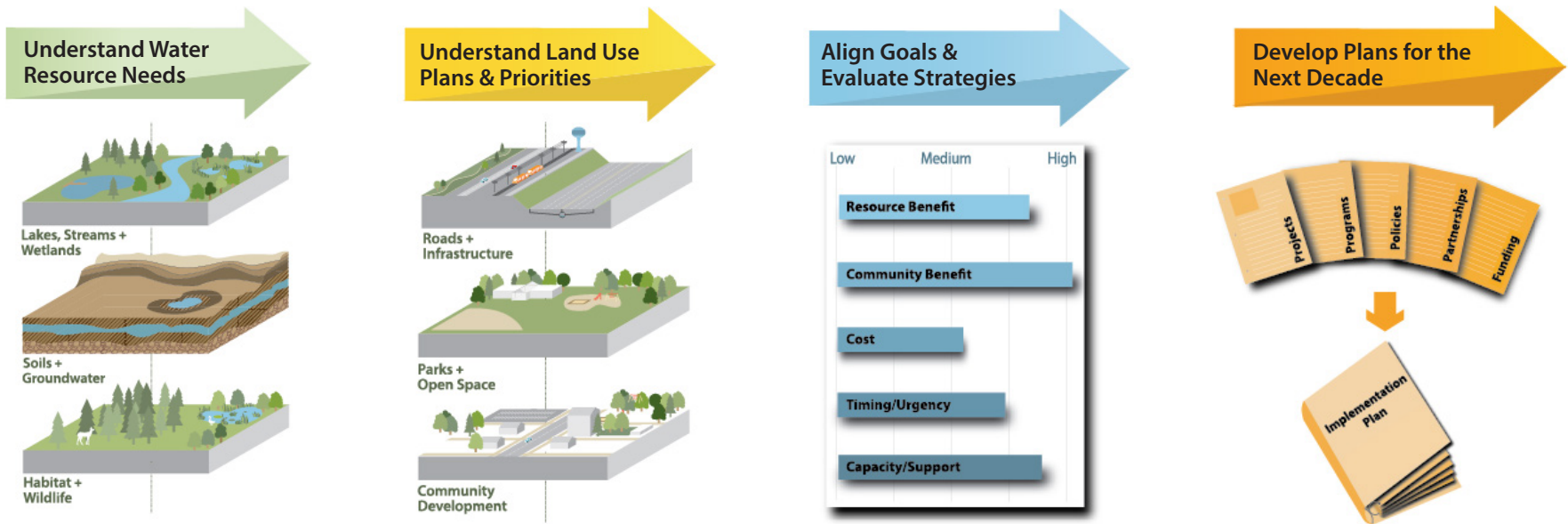


*"Arden Park is now a thriving park and urban oasis that offers an immersive nature-based experience and provides improved and increased access to a multitude of recreational opportunities, such as kayaking, paddleboarding, tubing, walking, ice-skating, and fishing."*

*~ USACE Engineering with Nature , Volume 3, 2024*

# PLANNING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

We need your help to shape this work and ensure we're all working toward a common goal: a thriving watershed. To accomplish this, over the next two years, we'll convene advisory committees with technical experts, planners, and policymakers from the watershed's communities to:



## LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED

We want your help to shape the future of our watershed.

Join us for a kickoff event to learn more about the plan process! Public partners, community leaders, and residents are welcome.

Scan the QR code to register for one of the two timeslots.



## PLAN KICK-OFF EVENTS

Tuesday, January 27, 2026

Minnetonka Community Center – Banquet Room  
14600 Minnetonka Blvd. Minnetonka, MN 55345

9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Presentation begins at  
10:00 AM

6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Presentation begins at  
7:00 PM

- or -

# SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE



*In 2023, water resource, public works, and community development staff from the watershed's communities met for a briefing on MCWD's approach to climate adaptation.*

## PROVIDE INPUT AND TRACK THE PROCESS

▶ **Advisory Committees:** MCWD will be convening Policy and Technical Advisory Committees to shape the development of our 2027 Plan. Policymakers and technical staff from the watershed's communities are invited to participate in regular meetings to provide input.

Fill out the Interest Form on our website at the link below.

▶ **Individual Meetings:** We're available to meet individually to share more information on the Plan update and gather your input and ideas.

▶ **E-Newsletters:** Sign up for our 2027 Plan email updates to track the process and engage at the link below!



Find these opportunities to engage and more at:  
[minnehahacreek.org/2027-watershed-management-plan-update](https://minnehahacreek.org/2027-watershed-management-plan-update)

## CONNECT WITH US

Reach out to our team to learn more about these and other ways to get involved!

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