

# Regional Water Supply Planning

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Today, the Twin Cities metropolitan area is relatively water-rich. However, the region's steady population growth, combined with localized water supply issues, may challenge the availability of traditional sources to meet future demand in some communities. The Metropolitan Area Master Water Supply Plan provides a collaborative framework that ensures adequate, sustainable supplies for future generations.

## Rationale for water supply planning

Whether public or private, all water supplies are drawn from an essential natural resource that is shared by the entire region. The challenge of providing citizens with an adequate supply of water cuts across community boundaries. Municipalities, however, have generally made independent resource evaluations and water supply system investments, without considering the cumulative impact of water withdrawal throughout the region.

As the region's population growth accelerates and new businesses develop, some water suppliers in the metro area will confront greater challenges than others in providing their customers with an adequate

supply. Without a forward-looking plan for supply development, it is likely that costly, time-consuming and politically challenging supply limitations will become more frequent and more acute.

In response to the need for such a plan, the Minnesota Legislature directed the Metropolitan Council to "carry out planning activities addressing the water supply needs of the Twin Cities metropolitan area...." (Mn. Stat. 473.1565), which includes:

- Developing and maintaining a base of technical information upon which to make sound water supply development decisions, and
- Developing and periodically updating a regional master water supply plan, approved by the Department of Natural Resources.

The 2005 Legislature also 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.

## Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee consists of 13 members and includes a representative from the Minnesota Department of

Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Natural Resources, and the Pollution Control Agency. In addition, two members are officials representing metropolitan area counties, and five are officials representing local government. The chair of the Metropolitan Council chairs the Advisory Committee and a member of the Council serves as vice chair.

The Advisory Committee met regularly from 2006 through 2008 to help guide activities throughout the design and development of the Master Plan. Members crafted principles and recommendations, and provided direct input during the plan's development. The Committee provisionally approved the plan in March 2009, and is expected to forward the plan to the Metropolitan Council for its approval later this year.

Regular meetings of the committee will continue through 2010 in order to help guide implementation of the Master Plan.

## Components of the Water Supply Plan

The Master Water Supply Plan draws upon existing state, regional and local water supply programs to create an integrated base of technical information

needed for sound water supply management. An array of data sets, applications, analyses, maps, sub-regional scenarios and community profiles, along with a report, constitute the Master Plan. [The entire Master Plan](#) is available on the Metropolitan Council's website.

The Master Plan provides a framework for ensuring a sustainable water supply for current and future generations. At the center of the plan is a water availability analysis. The analysis drew upon regionally accepted natural resource data to evaluate potential impacts of groundwater withdrawals based on projected demand and climate conditions. This analysis, conducted in close cooperation with agencies and stakeholders, included the development of a metro groundwater flow model designed to predict water supply impacts based on projected demand.

### **Overall supply is adequate**

Regionally, the analysis found that supplies are adequate to meet future water demands, but that some communities may not be able to continue to rely on the same sources that they do today without adverse impacts to the aquifer, other wells or surface water features. Specific findings of the analysis are in the plan and its community profiles.

The profiles provide community-specific data on water demand, water supply sources and issues associated with using those sources. The Master Plan outlines specific actions communities can take to address the identified issues.

Some communities are already taking those actions, which include monitoring groundwater levels and surface-water features, developing resource-protection thresholds, increasing conservation, and using alternative sources such as other aquifers, surface waters, or cooperating with neighboring communities.

By identifying potential supply issues in the profiles, water suppliers will know what issues they will need to address before requesting a new water appropriation permit or an increase to their existing permit. Furthermore, the plan outlines response actions that communities will likely need to take as part of their appropriation requests.

### **Stakeholder involvement**

Local governments, counties, state agencies, private consultants, nonprofits and others played an important role throughout the development of the Master Plan. The plan establishes a process for continuing this collaborative approach to water supply planning. As new information becomes available, it will be

incorporated in future analyses to improve the region's understanding of the available water supplies.

### **Funding sources**

Ongoing water supply planning is dependent upon ongoing funding. The Legislature initially permitted the Council to use the remaining proceeds of approximately \$2 million from an old solid waste bond issue for the development of the Master Plan. The governor recommends that \$938,000 of Clean Water Funds be dedicated to the Metropolitan Council for the 2010-2011 biennium. These funds will be used to help communities ensure adequate supplies for future generations without unacceptable social, economic or environmental consequences.

### **For more information...**

**Water Supply Planning:**

[www.metrocouncil.org/environment/WaterSupply/index.htm](http://www.metrocouncil.org/environment/WaterSupply/index.htm)

**Water Supply Advisory**

**Committee:** [www.metrocouncil.org/environment/WaterSupply/Committee.htm](http://www.metrocouncil.org/environment/WaterSupply/Committee.htm)

**Regional Master Water Supply**

**Plan:** [www.metrocouncil.org/environment/WaterSupply/masterplandraft.htm](http://www.metrocouncil.org/environment/WaterSupply/masterplandraft.htm)

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