

Executive Summary

The 2005 Minnesota Legislature directed the Metropolitan Council (Council) to “carry out planning activities addressing the water supply needs of the metropolitan area” (Minnesota Statutes, section 473.1565). Specifically, the Council is charged with developing a base of technical information for water supply planning decisions and to prepare a water supply master plan for the metropolitan area. The legislature also established a Water Supply Advisory Committee to assist the Council in its planning activities, and directed the Council to submit regular reports to the legislature detailing progress. The first report is due by the date the legislature convenes in 2007, and subsequent reports are due every five years thereafter. This document satisfies the requirement of Minnesota Statutes, section 473.1565, subdivision 3 as the first report to the legislature.

In implementing the legislature's directive, the Council organized its work efforts in two phases. Activities in Phase I which was completed with submittal of this report included:

Taking inventory and developing initial assessment. The Council collected information and data on metropolitan area water facilities, water sources and resource monitoring locations to determine where information and data gaps occur. In addition, current and projected water demands were evaluated and resource limitations identified.

Coordinating with stakeholders. The Council worked closely with the Water Supply Advisory Committee by presenting periodic updates, reports and materials for discussion on topics of concern to the committee. The Council also sponsored three public workshops to solicit input from local communities and other interested parties. In addition, the Council gathered input from various technical work groups focused on specific aspects of its planning efforts.

Preparing a report to the legislature. This report provides background information, studies conducted, next steps and legislative recommendations in the following areas: water demand and availability, regulatory process, safety and security, and funding.

Phase II will begin in January 2007 and will culminate with the completion of the Regional Water Supply Master Plan in 2008. This phase will consist of the following activities:

Continued work technical studies and assessments. The Council will continue to perform studies on issues identified in Phase I as outlined in this report.

Continued enlistment of stakeholder involvement. The Council will continue to solicit input from the Water Supply Advisory Committee and other interested parties throughout the region. The advisory committee is set to sunset December 31, 2008.

Development of a regional water supply master plan. As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 473.1565 a master plan will be prepared which will include guidance for local water supply systems and future regional investment with an emphasis on conservation, interjurisdictional cooperation, and long-term sustainability. The plan will also address the reliability, security and cost-effectiveness of the metropolitan area water supply system and its local and subregional components.

Key Requirements of Minnesota Statutes, Section 473.1565, Subdivision 1 (with reference to their location in this report): (note, will be updated following editing)

- 1) Development and maintenance of a base of technical information:
 - Surface and groundwater availability **Pages 13–19**
 - Water demand projections **Pages 10–12**
 - Water withdrawal and use impacts **Phase II activity**
 - Modeling **Phase II activity**
- 2) Development and periodic update of a metropolitan area master water plan
 - Guidance for local water supply systems and future regional investments **Phase II activity**
 - Conservation **Page 25**
 - Interjurisdictional cooperation **Pages 8; 32-33**
 - Sustainability **Phase II activity**
 - Reliability and security **Pages 27–31**
 - Cost effectiveness of the metropolitan area water supply system **Phase II activity**
- 3) Clarifying appropriate roles and responsibilities of local, regional and state government **Page 21-24**
- 4) Streamlining and consolidating decision making and approval processes **Pages 23–25**
- 5) Long-term funding considerations **Page 33-34**

Summary, Next Steps and Recommendations

During Phase I of implementing the legislature’s directive, the Council collected a base of technical information including surface water and groundwater limitation analyses, water demand projections, water supply system, and water monitoring location information. Throughout Phase I it was made clear that it is important to evaluate water availability in the context of projected growth to ensure a sustainable and reliable supply throughout region. The issues raised during Phase I will be addressed during Phase II and the findings and recommendations of those issues and others will be presented in the master plan. The Council has identified the following recommendations and next steps to be performed during Phase II:

Water Demand and Availability

While supplies in the region are relatively abundant, additional analysis is needed to address areas with potential limitations and ensure the long-term sustainability of resources. The next steps can be summarized into four areas:

- Facilitate collection, sharing and analysis of regional data
- Improve understanding of water supply sustainability
- Examine water supply alternatives in areas where resource limitations are identified
- Develop an action plan for meeting the needs of communities during low river flow conditions

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Regulatory Process

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and Council each play a unique role in the water supply regulatory process. While coordination among these agencies does exist, there is still potential for improving coordination and streamlining the process. The following is a recommendation that would require legislative action:

RECOMMENDATION #1 - Approve changes clarifying agency roles in water supply plan review and consolidating into one statute the requirements of community water supply plans in the metropolitan area and link water supply planning to comprehensive planning

In addition to the legislative recommendation above, the following administrative actions will clarify agency roles and streamline the water supply regulatory process:

- Formalize current Council/DNR community water supply planning review process
- Support the DNR's efforts in streamlining water emergency and conservation plans and implementing the 10- year permit
- Develop a water conservation toolbox to help communities implement best management practices, improve water use efficiencies and meet requirements of the 10-year permit
- Work with the DNR and MDH to develop a single application system for multi-agency water supply system/water appropriation approvals

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Safety, Security and Reliability

State and Federal regulations require communities to identify and establish protocols for dealing with emergency, reliability and security issues. There are some aspects of safety, reliability and security that can be improved through a regional approach. The following legislative recommendation would improve the safety, security and reliability of the region's water supplies:

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RECOMMENDATION #2 - Support State funding for interconnections and other physical water system back ups to assure the reliability, safety and security, including economic security, of the region and State. Consistent with this recommendation, support an appropriate level of State funding for the proposed Minneapolis and St. Paul interconnection.

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In addition to the legislative recommendation above, the following next steps are intended to address safety and security in the region:

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- Evaluate and support state/regional activities that improve security and reliability of local water systems

- Support source water protection efforts and impaired waters initiative

Institutional Arrangements and Funding

There are currently 106 separate water utilities who manage water supplies in the region. There are funding mechanisms in place to finance development of these systems. However, there is currently no funding source for ongoing planning and In order to address potential institutional and funding issues, the following steps will be taken in Phase II:

- Work closely with local jurisdictions and the Advisory Committee to explore and identify governance mechanisms to implement needed improvements and programs
- Develop options for ongoing and long-term funding for metropolitan area water supply planning activities and capital improvements

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