

# **Feedback from the October 19, 2006 Stakeholder Input Meeting on the Metropolitan Council's Draft Metro Area Water Supply Planning Report to the Legislature**

## **WATER SUPPLY MASTER PLAN**

### **Questions/Answers**

**1. When will the master plan be completed?**

**A:** The water supply master plan is anticipated to be completed in 2008, and the master plan will be updated every ten years, which is the same timeframe as the required updates of the local comprehensive plans.

**2. What time period and what region will be covered by the water supply master plan?**

**A:** The water supply master plan will be based on the Metropolitan Council's Regional Framework which currently provides growth forecasts out to 2030. The resource analysis will also consider informal growth forecasts used to project sewer needs to 2050. Forecasts and water availability will be analyzed community by community within the metropolitan area. However, much of the resource evaluation will include area encompassing multiple communities. Resource evaluation will not necessarily be limited to the 7-county metropolitan area.

**3. Is the master plan going to look into the concept of interconnections?**

**A:** Yes, the master plan will include a variety of water supply alternatives to help communities adequately meet the demands of their customers. Interconnections will be one such alternative discussed in the master plan.

### **Comments**

- 1.** It should be made clear that the water supply planning process is an iterative process and that the water supply master plan is dynamic and will reflect new information about water resource availability and limitations as it becomes available.
- 2.** The Council should clarify how a water "availability analysis" would differ from water supply "limitation analysis." It should not be assumed that there are limitations until availability is established.
  - o One suggestion was to first establish availability and then look at the limitations for utilizing the water that is available. Limitations can include natural (drought/climate), resource limitations, political and legal (fens and trout streams), and Mississippi River headwaters release limitations.

3. The water supply master plan should also consider the following:
  - o Importance of CLIMATE on both ground water, surface water and water use demand
  - o Importance of public perception on the use of resources and the need for water conservation
  - o Relationship between watersheds the water supply planning process
  - o Discussion of water rights issues, particularly for surface water suppliers
  - o Discussion of water supply alternatives including interconnections
  - o Determination of acceptable levels of impact on surface water features
  - o Examination of the potential for well interference

## **WATER DEMAND AND AVAILABILITY**

### **Comments**

1. Include statutory and regulatory water resource limitations in the water limitations analysis, such as the protection of trout streams and calcareous fens and Mt. Simon/Hinkley aquifer.
2. Develop Mississippi River low flow action plan that meets the needs of all those that rely on the Mississippi River for water supply and their livelihood.
3. Reach a consensus on base data in order to eliminate competing analyses.
4. Determine if there is a need for the development of a data clearinghouse. If a clearinghouse is developed, determine who will maintain and update it and if the clearinghouse will provide the data or information about where the data can be found.

## **REGULATORY PROCESS**

### **Questions and Answers**

1. **What is the timeframe for implementing the proposed regulatory process?**  
**A:** The water supply master plan is anticipated to be completed in 2008. Any legislative changes that require local water supply plans be consistent with the master plan will not go into effect until after the publication of the master plan. Therefore, the local water supply plans due between 2006 and 2008 will not be required to be consistent with master water supply plan. Interim process changes will help to streamline the process in the interim.
2. **Once a well is installed, will the appropriations permit/water supply plan be updated to reflect the installation?**

**A:** Yes, the proposed regulatory process will be an iterative process. As more information about aquifer extent and productivity becomes available the local water supply plans will be required to be updated. The new information gathered from well pumping tests will also be included in updates of the water supply master plan.

**3. The benchmarks outlined in the 10-year permit plan are not easily attainable by some communities due to variables such as rate of growth, lot sizes and soil types. What happens if a community does not meet the benchmark?**

**A:** (Provided by DNR) The benchmarks are based on metropolitan area averages and national information, they were developed as goals for communities. A community can still be eligible for a 10-year permit if it demonstrates the use of best management practices related to the areas of the benchmarks.

**4. Will communities still be able to appeal water appropriation permit decisions? If so, how will the process change?**

**A:** Yes, communities will continue to be able to appeal appropriation permit decisions and the appeals process will not change from its current format.

## Comments

1. The master water supply plan and the regulatory process should reflect how the process will work for communities where there are water supply uncertainties or known limitations (i.e. does there need to be a parallel track for those communities where the DNR does not have enough information to approve a 10-year permit, or will the DNR approve the 10-year permit but with specific stipulations).
2. The master water supply plan should be flexible enough to meet the unique situation in each community while protecting the water resources.
3. There should be criteria or thresholds that require communities to revisit/update their water supply master plan.
4. The connection and conflict between water resources and water use needs to be addressed.
5. Proposed conservation efforts should allow flexibility by communities (e.g. water rates are designed different ways in different communities and shouldn't have to be the same for all).
6. For the 10-year permit, the benchmarks will be impossible to meet for many communities, it's up to the DNR reviewer to determine if the conservation measures are adequate and which may be somewhat arbitrary.
7. There is a need for a single regional water conservation message. The Metropolitan Council should take on the responsibility of

implementing this message and providing educational materials to communities throughout the metropolitan area.

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

(NOTE: Discussion primarily focused on the proposed recommendation that the legislature should support funding for the Minneapolis Water Works (MWW) and St. Paul Regional Water Services (SPRWS) interconnection. There was agreement that the interconnection was a good first step at offsetting water supply limitations from the Mississippi River.)

### **Questions and Answers**

**1. How much of the cost to develop the MWW and SPRWS interconnection would the state cover?**

**A:** The Minnesota Department of Health's request in 2005 was for \$10 million of the \$33.8 million estimated project cost; the two systems would split the remaining amount based on a risk analysis percentage.

### **Comments**

1. While the MWW and SPRWS interconnection is a good first step in offsetting short-term water supply emergencies, other alternatives will need to be established to deal with longer-term water supply limitations.
2. Since the MWW and SPRWS interconnection will be setting precedence for the development of interconnections, more explanation is needed as to how other sub-regional and regional backups and interconnections will be supported or evaluated for support.
3. Criteria for receiving state or regional funding for interconnections needs to be established.
4. Identification of legal indemnification for supplying water to another municipality in an emergency. Also concerns of blending waters of different quality and the potential for violation of regulations by the blended water.

## **GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING**

### **Comments**

1. Concern surrounding where the money is going to come from to support long-term water supply planning (specifically, are communities going to be surcharged to cover the costs?)
2. Under current policy the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities does not support water supply becoming a metropolitan system.