

Executive Summary

Water resources have sustained this region for millennia, and wise use of this natural wealth can ensure a water-rich future for generations to come. Achieving sustainable water resources calls for a multifaceted regional strategy grounded in the Metropolitan Council's *2030 Regional Development Framework*. The *Framework* provides direction for the region as it grows in population from 2.6 million people in 2000 to 3.6 million in 2030.

This update of the Council's *Water Resources Management Policy Plan (Policy Plan)*, in response to the new *Framework*, seizes on the opportunity to integrate water resources management and protection with planning for the region's growth. Best management practices for surface water runoff in both new development and redevelopment protect the quality of the region's lakes and rivers and, in some cases, restore previously lost natural features. Convening local communities to create solutions to prevent localized water supply shortages ensures that residents and businesses will have the water they need without damaging the environment. Careful planning of the region's largest wastewater collection and treatment system results in the most efficient use of major public investments and protects public health.

This *Policy Plan* contains guidelines for developing and maintaining service systems that support development and for which the Council has some statutory responsibility, including wastewater service, surface water management and regional water supply.

The Council is committed to working collaboratively with state and federal agencies, local and county governments, watershed management organizations, interest groups and the public to ensure the protection of the region's rich water resources as the region continues to grow.

Water Supply

Use the Council's planning authority to support local efforts to ensure that the regional water supply is sufficient to meet the region's needs, is protected from contamination and is conserved by its users.

Surface water and groundwater sources provide the region with the water it needs for daily life. Despite the relative abundance of water in the Twin Cities area, the resource cannot be taken for granted. Potential limitations on supply include: population growth in areas not served by high-yielding aquifers; competing demand between groundwater withdrawal and protection of surface water features; reduced recharge caused by potential drought conditions and by an increase in impervious surface (rooftops and pavement); and aquifer contamination. The region must address water availability, management and use to ensure a sustainable supply for future generations.

The Council will work with communities to promote and support efficient use of water resources. It will:

- Update the regional water supply plan.
- Review local water supply plans as required by state law.
- Establish and facilitate subregional task forces as needed among communities that face water supply limitations.
- Participate in regional planning efforts for drought and emergency events.
- Promote water conservation and development practices that help protect the water supply.
- Work with partners to develop an institutional framework for coordinated regional and subregional water supply planning and management.
- Investigate reusing wastewater effluent.

Surface Water Management

Promote nonpoint source pollution control efforts to minimize pollution from runoff into rivers, lakes and streams.

Surface water management designed to protect water quality and reduce the quantity of stormwater runoff is critical to the region's continued economic prosperity and quality of life. The *Framework* established a benchmark that the water quality leaving the metropolitan area is as good as the quality of water entering the metropolitan area.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency indicates that over 90 percent of the pollution of the nation's waterways is from nonpoint source pollution runoff. Point source controls alone cannot adequately begin to address the pollution attributed to nonpoint sources. Without major efforts to control nonpoint source pollution, the metropolitan area will not achieve its benchmark of non-degradation.

The Council will continue to work in partnership with local governments, watershed organizations, and other public and private entities on a variety of efforts to reduce nonpoint source pollution, including:

- Ongoing monitoring of water quality in the region's lakes, rivers and streams.
- Technical assistance to help the Council's partners institute best management practices that reduce stormwater runoff, prevent erosion and flooding, and maintain or improve water quality.
- Review of local comprehensive plans, watershed management plans, local surface water management plans, environmental permits and other documents to ensure that communities are fulfilling their nonpoint source pollution reduction requirements and therefore reducing the impacts on the region's wastewater system.

Wastewater Service

Provide high-quality, efficient and cost-effective regional wastewater service to support the 2030 *Regional Development Framework*.

The metropolitan wastewater collection and treatment system is a critical element in the region's future development. To keep costs within reason, metropolitan service is

focused on the urbanized area of the region. In order to accommodate its projected population growth, the region in the next 25 years will need to invest \$3.7 billion to maintain, replace and expand its wastewater treatments facilities, including interceptors and treatment plants. The Council works closely with communities and regulatory agencies to ensure that costly regional infrastructure, which is designed to provide multiple communities with service decades into the future, can be efficiently built and operated. The Council will continue to implement a fair system of fees and charges that will enable it to meet wastewater regulatory requirements, maintain and repair wastewater infrastructure, and provide additional capacity for the region's growth.

A major issue threatening the efficiency of the wastewater collection and treatment system is inflow and infiltration (I/I)—clear water that finds its way into the local sewers, especially during major rainfall events. The Council, in this *Policy Plan*, explains how it will work with communities to reduce I/I to reasonable amounts so that the system continues to have adequate capacity to serve future growth. The Council will:

- Establish I/I goals for all communities discharging wastewater into the metropolitan disposal system.
- Require communities served by the metropolitan disposal system to include an I/I reduction program in their comprehensive plan.
- Potentially limit increases in service to communities with ongoing excessive I/I.
- Starting in 2007, institute a surcharge program to provide funding for I/I reduction efforts.
- Starting in 2013, institute a demand charge for communities that do not meet their I/I goals.

This *Policy Plan* also sets the Council's direction for working with Rural Growth Centers and rural areas on wastewater collection and treatment issues. The plan establishes criteria whereby the Council can evaluate requests from Rural Growth Centers which are experiencing major growth to have the Council acquire and operate local wastewater treatment facilities. The plan outlines circumstances where the Council might cost-share system improvements with local communities.

The Council will continue its policy of not allowing connections to the metropolitan disposal system in rural areas. The Council will also continue to use its review authority to ensure that communities that permit the construction of private wastewater systems ensure that these systems are installed, maintained, managed and regulated consistent with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency rules.