MWMO

Where impact flows.

Mississippi Watershed Management Organization

2025 Annual Activity & Financial Report

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

All metro-area watershed management organizations are required to submit an activity report, financial report and financial audit annually within 120 days of the end of the organization's fiscal year.

This report meets the requirements of the Metropolitan Water Management Act (MS 103B.231) and Minnesota Rules 8410.0150. The intent of an activity and financial report is to provide an annual snapshot or record of where this organization is in meeting its mission, goals and objectives, and what its goals and objectives are for next year. This record is important — not only to meet rule requirements but also for future organization board and staff members to understand why past decisions were made and directions were taken.

Key components of the required reporting are:

- Budgets and expenditure information
- Annual workplan and evaluation of past workplan
- Status of local water management plan adoption
- Summary of monitoring data
- Permit and enforcement activity
- Status of wetland plans and banking

This report is organized by MWMO areas of expertise and activity. The workplan description is delivered at an area of activity or expertise level rather than at an individual staff level. Individual workplans are adjusted quarterly to reflect and meet the ever-changing work environment of the MWMO, while areas of activity and expertise needs are driven by annual budget processes of the watershed and its members.

This report may be updated periodically throughout the year. The most recent version will be available on the MWMO's website at mwmo.org.

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ORGANIZATIONAL SUMMARY

Formation and History

The MWMO encompasses 25,309 acres (39.5 square miles) of fully-developed urban lands and waters within the Minneapolis–St. Paul metropolitan core area. The original members included the cities of Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Minneapolis, Saint Anthony Village, and Saint Paul, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the University of Minnesota.

Key Events in the History of the Organization

The first draft of the MWMO Plan was published in December 1986, crafted to meet the then-current Minnesota Chapter 509 requirements. This plan tackled challenges in water quality, land use, and pollution — including point and nonpoint source pollution, groundwater contamination from past industrial and commercial practices, and storm sewer drainage issues — though it was never approved by the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) or the MWMO Commission.

In 2000, the University of Minnesota withdrew from the organization. During second-generation planning (1997-2000, adopted in 2001), the MWMO recognized its members' financial constraints and developed new funding strategies. The MWMO sought inclusion as a Special Taxing District (per Minnesota Statutes 275.066) and, in 2001, became the first joint-powers WMO to secure an ad valorem levy authority needed to advance its plan goals and objectives. Additionally, MWMO land in Falcon Heights and Lauderdale was placed in the Capitol Region Watershed District during its formation by BWSR. In September 2002, the organization hired its first two full-time staff members to execute the plan.

The Mississippi River is, as the MWMO's primary natural resource and the urban nexus of the Twin Cities, driving our work. It provides essential ecosystem benefits and supports activities such as hydroelectricity, barge access, habitat and wildlife corridors, recreational amenities, diverse land uses (industrial, commercial, and residential), public drinking water, and stormwater and municipal wastewater discharge. Within the MWMO boundaries, surface water either flows directly overland or drains through pipes to the river, and groundwater generally follows the same path.

The MWMO is one of several entities that have developed plans to tackle critical watershed issues within the MWMO, and coordinating these plans and the entities that drafted them is imperative to effective watershed management. The complex network of private and public agencies — federal, state, regional, municipal, and local — involved in water and natural resource management , and in land-use planning and development, must collaborate to achieve mutual goals. By aligning their land use and environmental policies,

projects, and programs in a complementary, non-duplicative manner, these agencies can optimize both financial and human resources.

Following the dissolution of the Six Cities Watershed Management Organization in 2011, the Cities of Columbia Heights, Fridley, and Hilltop became members of the MWMO in July 2012, joining the Cities of Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Lauderdale, and Saint Anthony Village, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Together, these entities entered a revised Joint Powers Agreement (under Minnesota Statutes 471.59) that now defines the MWMO.

The MWMO expanded its Watershed Management Plan to include the new member cities, and in 2014, restructured its staff to better support its water quality, water quantity, and habitat goals. Depending on the season, the MWMO may have up to 20 staff members across all employment categories — full-time employees, temporary or seasonal employees and interns.

Approved in January 2022, the current plan builds on past studies and actions to tackle a variety of issues deemed significant by the MWMO Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC), the MWMO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the MWMO Board of Commissioners. It incorporates new priorities including Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), climate adaptation and Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) maintenance.

VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Vision Statement

To lead, to inspire, to act, to educate, and to create a shared vision for a river system with ecological integrity.

Mission Statement

To lead, and to foster stewardship of the watershed with actions that promote civic ownership and responsibility and through measures that achieve diverse and functional ecosystems.

Tagline

“Protect it. Pass it On.”

Summary of 2025 Services and Operations

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

18

NUMBER OF FTES

16

FTE AVERAGE LENGTH OF SERVICE

4.5

FTE TURNOVER RATE

0%

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND INITIATIVES REVENUE

$5.6M

CAPITAL ASSET REPLACEMENT REVENUE

$101K

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION REVENUE

$2.2M

TOTAL 2025 LEVY

$7.8M

Board of Commissioners

The governing body of the MWMO is its commission, which consists of seven voting commissioners. All appointments to the commission are made in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 103B.227 and Articles III and IV of the MWMO Joint and Cooperative Agreement. These statutes and articles, together, lay out the appointment process and powers of the MWMO Board of Commissioners.

Notices of all vacancies and appointments shall be published at least 15 days prior to filling a vacancy in a legal publication of the member's community seeking a commissioner. The council of each member shall appoint one commissioner to represent the member to the commission. Each commissioner shall serve until his or her successor is appointed.

Member councils may select and appoint alternates to the commission in the same manner as commissioners. In the absence of a member's commissioner, the designated alternate may vote and act in the commissioner's place. The alternate shall serve a term concurrent with the member's commissioner. The council of each member shall determine the eligibility and qualifications of its commissioner and alternate.

Commissioners

Connie Buesgens
COMMISSIONER, CHAIR
CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS AND CITY OF HILLTOP

1021 44th Ave. NE
Columbia Heights, MN 55421
763-788-5872

Lona Doolan
COMMISSIONER, VICE-CHAIR
CITY OF SAINT ANTHONY VILLAGE

3511 Harding St. NE
St. Anthony, MN 55418
612-850-8184

LaTrisha Vetaw
COMMISSIONER, TREASURER
CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

350 S Fifth St., Rm. 307
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-673-2204

Jeffrey Dains
COMMISSIONER
CITY OF LAUDERDALE

1891 Walnut St.
Lauderdale, MN 55113
651-645-7068

Michael Lukes
COMMISSIONER
CITY OF ST. PAUL

2522 Marshall St. NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418
612-746-4970

Ann Bolkom
COMMISSIONER,
CITY OF FRIDLEY

6821 Hickory St. NE
Fridley, MN 55432
612-308-2096

Meg Forney
COMMISSIONER
MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

3201 Zenith Ave. S
Minneapolis, MN 55416
612-230-6443

Alternate Commissioners

Michael Rainville
ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER
CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

350 S 5th St., Rm. 307
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-203-1459

Mary Gaasch
ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER
CITY OF LAUDERDALE

1891 Walnut St.
Lauderdale, MN 55113
651-645-5918

Jan Jenson
ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER
CITY OF ST. ANTHONY VILLAGE

3301 Silver Lake Rd.
St. Anthony, MN 55418
612-782-3301

Bertha Risdahl
ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER
CITY OF HILLTOP AND CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS

1021 44th Ave. NE
Columbia Heights, MN 55421
612-746-4970

Charles Rucker
ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER
MINNEAPOLIS PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

2117 West River Rd. N
Minneapolis, MN 55411
612-230-6443

Open
ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER
CITY OF FRIDLEY

Open
ALTERNATE COMMISSIONER
CITY OF ST. PAUL

Citizen Advisory Committee

The MWMO Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meets at the request of the MWMO Board of Commissioners to assist in managing the water resources of the MWMO. The scope of responsibilities for the CAC includes reviewing funding proposals (e.g., Planning and Action Grants through the Stewardship Fund program), reviewing the MWMO's annual capital budget, and participating in planning for the watershed. Other responsibilities may be assigned to the CAC by the Board of Commissioners as needed. The CAC provides review and feedback in the form of recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

Applications are accepted year-round, and open positions are filled throughout the year. Applications submitted to replace incumbents are due by December 15 each year. Appointments are for one year and are renewable annually. Up to two at-large positions may be filled by people who live outside of the MWMO boundaries. All CAC members may be contacted through the MWMO office.

CAC Positions

Columbia Heights (one)
Sarah Evanson

Fridley (one)
Open

Hilltop (one)
Open

Lauderdale (one)
Open

St. Anthony Village (one)
Natalie Warren

Saint Paul (one)
Open

Minneapolis (five)

Akia Vang	North
Mary Fitzgerald	Northeast
Open	South
Jared Langer	Southwest
Gareth Becker	Downtown

At-Large Positions (five)

Perry Dean	Minneapolis
Allison Graper	Minneapolis
Sam Westlund	Minneapolis
Open	
Open	

Staff

The MWMO Board of Commissioners first hired staff in September 2002. The Board of Commissioners established, and now maintains, personnel policies and structures to attract and retain qualified personnel to implement MWMO activities. This is accomplished by encouraging continual performance improvement through well-administered training, salary and performance review programs.

In addition to its own full-time employees, the MWMO shares human resources and financial management staff with the City of St. Anthony Village. The MWMO also hires part-time regular and seasonal employees and interns as needed to complete its annual plan of work.

2025 MWMO Staff

Executive Director
KEVIN REICH
kreich@mwmo.org
612-746-4971

Projects and Planning Director
NANCY STOWE, PE
nstowe@mwmo.org
612-746-4978

Senior Planner-Project Manager
DAN KALMON, AICP
dkalmon@mwmo.org
612-746-4977

Outreach Program Manager
ABBY MOORE
amoore@mwmo.org
612-746-4981

Monitoring, Assessment, and Research Program Manager
EMILY RESSEGER, PE
eresseger@mwmo.org
612-746-4980

Planner-Project Manager
EMMY BASKERVILLE DOECKEL
ebaskerville@mwmo.org
612-746-4989

Outreach-Project Manager
ADAM FLETT
aflett@mwmo.org
612-746-4988

Administrative and Facility Operations Manager
SHAMEKA GHERAU
sgherau@mwmo.org
612-746-4970

Planner-Project Manager
AARON GOEMANN
agoemann@mwmo.org
612-746-4983

Water Resources Data Analyst
MIRAE GUENTHER
mguenther@mwmo.org
612-746-4976

Environmental Specialist
EVA HANSON
ehanson@mwmo.org
612-746-4986

Communications Manager
AKADIA JOHNSON
ajohnson@mwmo.org
612-746-4982

Water Resources and Instrumentation Specialist
DUSTIN MCHENRY
dmchenry@mwmo.org
612-746-4985

Environmental Outreach Coordinator
MICHELLE SPANGLER
mspangler@mwmo.org
612-746-4974

Environmental Specialist
MARY THELEN
mthelen@mwmo.org
612-746-4987

Community Outreach Specialist
MARY YANG
myang@mwmo.org
612-746-4975

Water Quality Intern
ASHLEY BINSTOCK

Technical Communications Intern
NIXON PFEIFFER

FT Employees Leaving the MWMO in 2025
NONE

2025 Shared Staff

The MWMO shared the following staff with the City of St. Anthony Village in 2025:

Accountant
TRENTON SAX
trenton.sax@savmn.com
612-782-3320

Finance Director
SHELLY RUECKERT
shelly.rueckert@savmn.com
651-249-3827

Human Resources Coordinator
JILL SPEIDEL
jill.speidel@savmn.com
612-782-3314

Consultants

In accordance with Minnesota Statutes 103B.227, subdivision 5, the MWMO sends out requests for proposals for legal, professional and technical (engineering) and consultant services at least once every two years (in the fall of even-numbered years).

At its annual business meeting in January, the MWMO Board of Commissioners reviews and approves a list of approved consultants. The board reserves the right to alter the list at any point in order to meet the organization's needs.

The following is a list of organizations that provided services to the MWMO in 2025:

Accounting

CITY OF ST. ANTHONY VILLAGE

3301 Silver Lake Rd.
St. Anthony, MN 55418
651-782-3301

Financial Audit

REDPATH AND COMPANY

55 E Fifth St., Ste. 1400
St. Paul, MN 55101
651-426-7000

Engineering

BARR ENGINEERING

4700 W 77th St.
Minneapolis, MN 55435-4803
952-832-2600

EMMONS AND OLIVIER RESOURCES

651 Hale Ave. N
Oakdale, MN 55128
651-203-6001

HOUSTON ENGINEERING, INC.

7550 Meridian Circle N, Ste. 120
Maple Grove, MN 55369
763-493-4522

STANTEC

2335 West Highway 36
St. Paul, MN 55113
651-636-4600

SRF CONSULTING GROUP

2550 University Ave. W, Ste. 345N
St. Paul, MN 55441

Payroll and Financial Services

CITY OF ST. ANTHONY VILLAGE

3301 Silver Lake Rd.
St. Anthony, MN 55418
651-782-3301

Banking and Investments

4M FUND

5298 Kyler Ave. NE
Albertville, MN 55301
763-497-1490

MULTI-BANK SECURITIES, INC.

1000 Town Center, Ste. 2300
Southfield, MI 48075

RBC WEALTH MANAGEMENT

250 Nicollet Mall, Ste. 2000
Minneapolis, MN 55418
612-371-2811

NORTHEAST BANK

77 Broadway St. NE
Minneapolis, MN 55413
612-379-8811

Legal

KENNEDY AND GRAVEN, CHARTERED

470 Pillsbury Center, 200 S 6th St.
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612-337-9215

Information Management and Technology

METRO-INET

2660 Civic Center Dr.
Roseville, MN 55113
651-792-7092

Other Service Providers

ANOKA CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1318 McKay Dr. NE
Ham Lake, MN 55304
763-434-2030

BRAUN INTERTEC

11001 Hampshire Ave. S
Minneapolis, MN 55438
952-995-2000

RUTH MURPHY

442 Summit Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55102

FORTIN CONSULTING

215 Hamel Rd.
Hamel, MN 55340
763-478-3606

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

455 Etna St.
St. Paul, MN 55304
763-434-2030

MMC ASSOCIATES

1312 Portland Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55104
651-647-6816

THREE RIVERS PARK DISTRICT

3000 Xenium Ln. N
Plymouth, MN 55441
763-694-7651

FRESHWATER SOCIETY

2424 Territorial Rd., Ste. B
St. Paul, MN 55114
651-313-5800

WILDERNESS INQUIRY

808 14th Ave. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55414
612-676-9400

SPARK-Y

681 17th Ave. NE, Unit 101
Minneapolis, MN 55413

Communications/Website

WINDMILL STRATEGY

1227 Tyler St. NE #180
Minneapolis, MN 55413
612-521-4286

THE WEHRMAN COLLABORATIVE, LLC

310 1/2 Main St. S
Stillwater, MN 55082
855-849-5050

LITTLE CO

501 1st Ave. NE, Ste. 210
Minneapolis, MN 55413
612-375-0077

04

PLANNING

Purpose

Planning provides direction to the MWMO's activities. Our planning efforts clarify and integrate the MWMO's goals, responsibilities, and future courses of action. Through planning, we coordinate the implementation of MWMO standards and goals by member organizations and maintain involvement with Mississippi River regional working groups.

Objectives

- Develop and maintain the MWMO's role in water management.
- Keep the MWMO's Watershed Management Plan current to address new circumstances and changing priorities.
- Develop plans for new watershed initiatives.
- Review and approve local management plans and amendments that impact water and natural resources.
- Develop consensus among constituents for managing resources in the watershed.
- Work with member organizations on the implementation of ordinances, standards, plans, and enforcement.
- Participate in regional working groups for protection and improvement of the Mississippi River.
- Provide administrative assistance to start operations for water quality treatment systems funded by grants.

2025 Planning Implementation

MWMO completed, continued or began the following planning and administrative services in 2025:

10-Year Watershed Management Plan Amendment

In 2025, the MWMO assisted our Member Cities with their upcoming Local Water Planning efforts by completing a minor amendment to the 10-Year Watershed Management Plan. The amendment includes MWMO's DEI and Climate Change planning efforts underway and MWMO's updated Capital Improvement schedule.

10-Year Watershed Management Plan Implementation

Climate Action Framework

In 2025, staff worked through a series of workshops to develop the content needed for the MWMO Climate Action Framework. Information and ideas gathered from staff were combined with analysis of other available data to develop a vulnerability assessment of the watershed

in the face of climate change. EOR worked with staff to develop a list of goals and strategies to position itself as a key partner in developing a climate-resilient watershed. This framework will guide staff in partnering with other organizations on future climate-related capital projects and programmatic initiatives.

Equity Strategic Action Plan

Staff completed the first two improvements identified by the MWMO Equity Strategic Action Plan, developed in 2023. Staff developed a GIS tool to identify areas within our watershed with high potential for interaction among diverse cultural groups. From there, they identified specific areas within the watershed to prioritize resources.

On the financial side, staff formalized administrative procedures to select and contract service providers and vendors in an effort to advance equitable spending goals. Staff also implemented accountability measures to monitor who is receiving grants through the Stewardship Fund and ensure that underserved communities received or benefited from at least 50% of awarded grants.

Towerside District System Administration

In 2025, staff completed a legal agreement needed to transfer the District Administrator's role to the existing Landowners. During this time, staff continued to serve as the District Administrator for the Towerside District System, which supports connected habitat, privately owned public places, and surface stormwater (HPS). Responsibilities included hiring and managing

professional services needed for ongoing operations and maintenance of the system. Landowners continued to pay for all the professional services and O&M work completed in 2025.

The MWMO continued its membership on the Towerside Technical Advisory Committee, which consists of a mix of experts on stormwater, energy, zoning, affordable housing, architecture, public realm, restorative systems, etc., who will provide support services for the neighborhood review committees that approve development projects in the area prior to the plans advancing to the cities.

Upper Harbor Reciprocal Easement Operating Agreement (REOA)

The Upper Harbor REOA was established to ensure the successful implementation of the District System that supports connected habitat, privately owned public places, and surface stormwater (HPS) throughout the 14 redevelopment projects encompassing the 50-acre site.

In 2025, MWMO's Planning staff served as the Upper Harbor Terminal site's District Administrator. They were responsible for implementing the REOA legal agreement guiding the holistic management of habitat, public spaces, and surface stormwater (HPS) within the Upper Harbor District System.

The District Administrator made modifications to the REOA agreement, composed capital grant and phasing loan agreements and met with owners of Parcels 3, 4, 5, 7, a staff from Minneapolis Public Works and CPED to agree on design changes to the District System that

will support redevelopment on these parcels in 2026. In addition, they continued to manage active District System projects at the Upper Harbor site, including: The City of Minneapolis's District System Parkway buildout, The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Common Reuse System and The City of Minneapolis's Southern Regional Treatment and Common Reuse System.

2026 Planning Work Plan

2026 Local Water Plans

In 2026, the MWMO will start meeting with our Member Cities to collaborate on their upcoming Local Water Planning.

Operations and Maintenance Plan

MWMO staff will continue working on plans to improve the operations and maintenance outcomes of MWMO's grant-funded capital projects.

Climate Action Framework

Staff will complete MWMO's Phase II Climate Action Framework in 2026.

Equity Strategic Action Plan

Staff will continue the implementation of the MWMO's Equity Strategic Action Plan by:

- Reviewing the Stewardship Fund grant program to make sure that it is accessible, appropriately supportive and adequately funded to serve diverse communities.
- Streamline tracking and create accountability measures to easily monitor and measure equitable spending in the administrative/facilities area.

Towerside District Systems Phase II

In 2026, MWMO will work with MPRB and Wall Companies to arrive at a final design that connects habitat, surface stormwater, and integrated public spaces (HPS) on the site.

Towerside District Stormwater Administration

In 2026, staff will continue transferring administrative duties to the Oppidan organization. Per the Stormwater Management Declaration and Easement Agreement (SMDEA), Oppidan owns the parcel responsible for long-term management of the Towerside District Stormwater System.

Upper Harbor Reciprocal Easement Operating Agreement (REOA)

In 2026, the MWMO's planning staff will continue to serve as the Upper Harbor Terminal site's District Administrator through 2030. They will be responsible for carrying out the REOA legal agreement guiding the holistic design, construction, and management of habitat, public spaces, and surface stormwater (HPS) within the Upper Harbor District System.

In addition, as part of the Upper Harbor Terminal Reciprocal Easement Operating Agreement (REOA), parties agreed that the MWMO will work individually with each parcel owner as their parcel redevelops to identify areas within the project where the community can contribute specific design ideas for public places within the project.

05

ASSESSMENTS

Purpose

The MWMO's watershed assessment and research activities seek to develop a scientific base of knowledge that characterizes physical, chemical, cultural, historic, biological, social, economic, organizational and political resources of the MWMO to guide planning and management decisions in the watershed.

Objectives

- Conduct assessments within the watershed to define the ecological, physical, biological, cultural, social, economic, organizational and political characteristics of the MWMO.
- Conduct project-based diagnostic and feasibility studies.
- Provide information to support other MWMO projects and activity areas.
- Provide watershed information to organizations inside and outside MWMO boundaries.

2025 Assessments Implementation

The MWMO completed the following Watershed Assessment activities in 2025:

East Phillips Feasibility Study

MWMO has completed a feasibility study in partnership with Hennepin County, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the City of Minneapolis to identify water quality and habitat improvements within the East Phillips Neighborhood of Minneapolis. The impetus for this study is a series of transportation and park projects planned for implementation within the next five years.

The concentration of projects, combined with the importance of providing resources to communities in the City's Southside Green Zone, provides a timely opportunity to identify water quality and habitat improvements that can be layered into the proposed transportation and park/community open space projects to maximize cost and resource effectiveness.

To capitalize on this opportunity, a feasibility study was completed that identifies and evaluates a suite of options that address the goals as outlined below, while applying an equity lens developed through previous and current input from the community:

1. Identify and assess opportunities within the study area to improve water quality discharging to the Mississippi River, stacking water conservation or volume reduction, where feasible;

2. Identify areas of high ecological value, prioritizing native plants, trees, and wildlife and pollinator habitat; and

3. Through previous and current input from the community, identify local equity and public health improvement opportunities.

Watershed-Scale H&H and Water Quality Modeling

In 2014, the MWMO launched an initiative to develop detailed hydrology and hydraulics (H&H) models and water quality models across its jurisdiction. The H&H models are used to simulate and inform the management of flooding throughout the MWMO, while the water quality models are used to estimate pollutant loading from the landscape into MWMO waterbodies. Results of the modeling initiative help the MWMO and its member communities better understand the functioning of our stormwater systems and prioritize the placement and design of future capital projects. The MWMO is divided into multiple project areas for this effort. In 2025, the development of an H&H model was completed for the final 3,146-acre 35W South area in Minneapolis within our watershed.

Cordia Energy Building Feasibility Study

Cordia Energy Center Minneapolis (Cordia Energy) is located in downtown Minneapolis and has been serving downtown Minneapolis for decades with steam- and water-driven power, heating and cooling resources. MWMO staff along with partners, Green Cities Accord and Cordia Energy, conducted a comprehensive feasibility study to explore opportunities to mitigate urban heat island effects and create habitat through the installation of trees or other vegetation on the structure's roof or walls, opportunities for water conservation and water quality improvement measures, and the potential for water storage and reuse through irrigation of green spaces on the Cordia property or throughout other downtown areas in collaboration with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, City of Minneapolis, and Downtown Improvement District.

The project partnership has received the final feasibility study and is currently considering options for green space development and water reuse that could result in the development of a water resource sufficient to satisfy the irrigation demands of the Cordia Building and over 60% of the Downtown Improvement District. Key takeaways from the study are that significant rooftop or built-environment water reuse and habitat development opportunities do exist within the downtown Minneapolis area, but most prospective rooftop or within-building projects will require careful consideration of each building's use and functionality, as well as comprehensive structural engineering analyses. The study was completed in 2025, and the design phase is currently underway.

SART Performance Assessment

In 2016, the MWMO, City of St. Anthony Village, City of Minneapolis, and Hennepin County collaborated to construct an underground stormwater treatment system that diverts stormwater runoff from approximately 600 acres of fully developed urban land use in the City of St. Anthony Village and County State Aid Highway 88. The facility has a primary treatment component consisting of a swirl chamber to remove particulate matter, floating trash, and debris from stormwater. The facility has a secondary treatment system designed to remove soluble pollutants from the stormwater. It is a key research component for determining the effectiveness of available and emerging treatment technologies, such as iron sand filtration, filter media with activated alumina, alum flocculation, ionization, ozone, and other future technologies. New technologies can be plugged into the system and monitored for their effectiveness at pollutant removal and the cost of operation.

The MWMO has been monitoring its performance since 2016, which has revealed some performance challenges over the past few years, primarily in the secondary treatment area. The MWMO is assessing the causes of the lower-than-expected performance by reviewing the original design calculations, as-built plans, and several years of monitoring data, reviewing system hydraulics and concerns related to tailwater issues, and considering alternative technologies for secondary treatment and a potential retrofit.

SART Retrofit Feasibility Study

In 2025, a performance assessment identified challenges, including tailwater from the adjacent trunk line, lower-than-designed inflows to the primary chamber, and baseflow causing extended loading of the secondary chambers. This ongoing feasibility study evaluates retrofit options — such as modifying the diversion weir, installing a backflow preventer, adjusting pump set points, and exploring alternative secondary treatment technologies — while assessing water quality benefits, costs, and recommending a preferred option for design and construction.

Lake Sullivan Water Quality

Sullivan Lake, located within the City of Columbia Heights (City), is classified as a shallow lake by the MN Department of Natural Resources and listed as impaired for excess nutrients by the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). It receives a relatively high pollutant load for its size. In addition to serving as an important recreational amenity, it removes pollutants from stormwater before it flows via pipes into the Mississippi River. A study is being conducted to determine the lake's ecological processes and the drivers behind its declining water quality trends, which have been revealed through multiple years of monitoring.

Based on a more complete understanding of the lake's limnological behavior to pollutants entering from the upstream watershed and being released from the bottom of the lake, as well as public opinion and input, reasonable improvement goals are being developed for the lake, i.e. either to meet the state standards if possible or goals that are deemed more appropriate for Sullivan Lake that will result in a healthier and more sustainable ecosystem. Based on the agreed upon goals, various long-term improvement scenarios are being developed to aid in future project planning.

2100 Marshall Street NE Shoreline Access and Improvement Study

MWMO staff became aware of a collaborative effort by the owners of the Sample Room restaurant along the Mississippi River and by development group The Vessel to create a shoreline access and thermaculture space for restaurant guests and thermaculture enthusiasts. Staff recognized that such an effort represents an opportunity to enhance public access to the Mississippi River, improve shoreline habitat, and make measurable progress towards accomplishing MPRB's Above the Falls strategic plan. MWMO initiated a feasibility study to develop options for expanded public access to the Mississippi River, improved shoreline habitat, and the connection of MPRB properties by bike and pedestrian trails along the shoreline. MPRB properties within the study area include Gluek Park, located south and adjacent to The Sample Room, and an undeveloped property located north and adjacent to The Sample Room.

Lowry Avenue Water Quality Feasibility Study

The Lowry Avenue Outfall Water Quality Study is evaluating pollutant loads across the 148-acre urban subwatershed draining to the outfall at the intersection near Lowry Avenue and Marshall Street in NE Minneapolis. This study is also reviewing the spatial distribution of pollutant load across the pipeshed, identifying any pollution contribution hotspots, structural or non-structural opportunities to improve pollutant removal before discharge to the Mississippi River, and developing a conceptual framework of those opportunities sufficient to conduct a comparative feasibility study.

The study also includes an assessment of whether an additional 22 acres of untreated stormwater north of Lowry Avenue NE could be conveyed to an existing regional sand filter or conveyed to MWMO's stormwater treatment facility. The study is ongoing and is expected to be completed in 2026.

Marshall Street NE Corridor Pipeshed Feasibility Study

In conjunction with Hennepin County's plan for a 2027 reconstruction of Marshall Street NE from Lowry Avenue NE to E Hennepin Avenue, MWMO staff saw an opportunity to examine the subwatersheds draining to each outfall to the Mississippi River (river) that cross Marshall Street via storm sewer. The intent of this study is to identify opportunities for Hennepin County, the City of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and/or the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization to improve water quality, enhance urban habitat, and mitigate local flood risk.

This study is ongoing and is examining the subwatersheds draining to the Mississippi River across the portion of Marshall Street NE being reconstructed in 2027 to identify opportunities for the installation of stormwater treatment practices that produce significant regional stormwater quality or flood enhancements, and establishment of urban wildlife habitat corridors to connect existing habitats, parks, etc. to the Mississippi River. Highly productive and feasible opportunities within the above focus areas will be selected for initial (30%) design services with the intent that construction coincide with the future Marshall Street Reconstruction project.

1516 and 1600 Marshall Street NE Shoreline and Access Feasibility Study

1516 and 1600 Marshall Street NE are being redeveloped into residential apartments. The developer has agreed to allow a bike path from Marshall to the shore of the Mississippi River. The MWMO and MPRB staff recognize this development as an opportunity to enhance the Mississippi River shoreline between Broadway Street NE and the BNSF railroad bridge to the north. MWMO is partnering with MPRB to develop plans to ecologically enhance this shoreline, construct an outlook over the river at the west end of the new path, and create a non-motorized boat access. This feasibility study will analyze and provide recommendations for alternative scenarios to ecologically improve the Mississippi River shoreline from Broadway Avenue NE to the BNSF bridge located between Mississippi River miles 855 and 856, provide pedestrian and bike access to the shoreline directly from Marshall Street NE along the south boundary of a property, that is undergoing redevelopment, and to establish both a new river outlook and a non-motorized boat access along the previously described shoreline. This work aligns with the MPRB Above the Falls Plan, including shoreline restoration, the development of corridors for public access to the Mississippi River, and the expansion of ecosystem connections between the river and upland habitat pockets.

Karst Study

Current Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) guidelines significantly restrict the MWMO and its partners' ability to construct stormwater infiltration systems, as much of the watershed is classified as Active Karst, where infiltration is discouraged, and costly geotechnical investigations are typically required. These requirements make it difficult to fund small-scale projects with local governments, nonprofits, and small businesses. In summer 2025, MWMO staff consulted with geologists from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota Geological Survey to assess sinkhole and groundwater contamination risks within designated Active Karst areas and preliminarily concluded that MPCA guidelines may be overly conservative for parts of the MWMO where hazardous karst conditions are less likely. MWMO retained professional engineering services to update its infiltration limitations database, identify where small infiltration practices can be safely implemented, develop safe design parameters, and provide recommendations to refine MPCA guidance based on a more detailed, site-specific assessment of karst-related risks.

Sculpture Garden and Parade Field Reuse Repair Feasibility Study

In 2016–2017, MWMO partnered with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and the Walker Art Center to reconstruct the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden with sustainable features that reflect the site's natural hydrology. MWMO funded native plantings, engineered soils, and a water reuse system tied to the Spoonbridge and Cherry sculpture.

The system was designed to capture and reuse municipal water from the Spoonbridge and Cherry sculpture into an 80,000-gallon cistern for irrigation of the garden and Parade Baseball Field. However, due to equipment issues and limited documentation, the reuse system has not functioned as intended and lacks adequate monitoring data. The ongoing study will assess system issues, recommend solutions with cost estimates, and provide thorough documentation for operations and maintenance to ensure resilient operation into the future.

4300 Central Avenue Stormwater System Study

Jackson Pond is a stormwater retention pond that was first built in 1965 in Columbia Heights, MN, to improve flooding issues. In 2015, MWMO helped fund a capital project to retrofit the pond to improve holding capacity and to treat stormwater for phosphorus and suspended solids using an Iron-Enhanced Sand Filter Bench.

As the developer of the 13-acre site seeks to create a multifamily and mixed-use development, assurance must be guaranteed that the regional flood control and water quality benefits currently provided by Jackson Pond will continue to be provided with the new development.

Therefore, a feasibility study is currently underway to evaluate development scenarios that would both maintain the continued regional stormwater benefits and develop the parcel in a way that enhances the community's quality of life, including urban ecological health and habitat creation.

Owámniyomni Okhódayapi Mill Race Environmental Investigation

In 2024, the MWMO began partnering with Owámniyomni Okhódayapi, a Dakota-led nonprofit, to support their work to transform five acres of land at Owámniyomni (St. Anthony Falls) into a place of restoration, education, healing and connection. A central feature of the Owámniyomni project is the Mill Race, a historic open channel below St. Anthony Falls that once served mill operations. The Mill Race is now disconnected from the river and receives polluted runoff from historic mill tunnels and storm sewers. Conceptual designs for the Owámniyomni project envision reconnecting the Mill Race to the river to restore flow, improve habitat, and enhance public access.

MWMO monitoring in August 2024 identified high levels of E. coli entering the Mill Race from several pipe inputs, as well as elevated nutrient and metal levels within the channel. The sources of pollution are unknown, as the area around the Mill Race was among the first to be developed into the City of Minneapolis, and includes a tangle of storm sewers, sanitary sewers, mill tunnels, and other conveyances. Information about sediment and historical conditions within the Mill Race is also limited.

MWMO is conducting an environmental investigation of the Mill Race, including a review of historical records, mapping of inputs, and additional field investigations. The findings will inform design decisions to ensure successful water quality improvements and healthy habitat connections at Owámniyomni.

TABLE 1.

WATERSHED ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION

	2024 spending	2025 spending	2026 (anticipated)
Watershed Assessments Budget	**$245,000**	**$900,000**	**$658,500**
East Phillips Feasibility Study	$51,505	$77,753	—
Sylvan Hills Park Study	$39,308	$3,400	—
Watershed-Scale H&H Modeling	—	—	$227,500
Cordia Energy Building	$56,165	$44,929	$27,755
SART Performance Assessment	$23,689	$4,809	—
Lake Sullivan Water Quality	—	$40,677	$24,980
2100 Marshall Street NE Shoreline and Access FS	—	$91,931	—
Lowry Avenue WQ FS	—	$34,313	$70,400
Marshall Street NE Corridor Pipeshed FS	—	$22,389	$76,538
1500-1600 Marshall Street NE Shoreline and Access FS	—	$309	$85,000
Karst Study	—	$45,073	—
Sculpture Garden and Parade BB Field Reuse FS	—	$7,265	—
4300 Central Avenue Stormwater System Study	—	$19,851	$40,000
SART Retrofit FS	—	$30,900	$30,043
2024-2026 Assessments initiated and TBD	$868	$24,556	$100,000
WA non-project specific professional services	$16,628	$167,196	$203,785
TOTAL	**$188,162**	**$587,392**	**$658,500**

2026 Assessments Work Plan

New assessment projects for 2026 have not yet been identified. The MWMO will reserve staff and program resources to support feasibility studies, watershed assessments, retrofit evaluations and other assessment work as opportunities emerge throughout the year.

Maintaining this capacity allows the organization to respond to emerging projects, partner requests and newly identified opportunities that align with program goals. A summary of assessment projects initiated in 2026 will be included in the Annual Report.

06

CAPITAL GRANTS

Purpose

MWMO's Capital Project Grants fund water quality and ecosystem health enhancements within the MWMO watershed. These projects provide unique and innovative solutions for stormwater management in highly developed urban areas. They also provide opportunities for community partnerships to build understanding, knowledge, and initiative related to water, habitat, and natural resource issues and solutions.

Objectives

- Encourage the integration of the stormwater system with other infrastructure systems — e.g., energy, water supply and reuse, and wastewater treatment — to create greater efficiencies for all infrastructure systems.
- Participate as members of project teams from ideation through design and implementation.
- Build the MWMO's capital improvement project (CIP) list with opportunities to collaborate on capital projects that meet both MWMO and member organization goals.
- Strengthen our ability to reach key audiences by collaborating with other MWMO activity areas.
- Leverage funding sources to acquire key parcels of land within the MWMO that will lead to the establishment of water quality and habitat improvements.

Beginning in 2024, three categories of Capital Grants and projects were identified to direct the MWMO in implementing our objectives. The three categories are Riverfront, Green Zones and Opportunity Sites.

Riverfront

Riverfront grants are awarded for environmental and community improvement projects along the shoreline of the Mississippi River. Of particular interest to the MWMO currently is the area of the Mississippi River north of Nicollet Island, which has historically been privately owned and industrially developed and lacks access for the community to connect with the river. This area represents a great opportunity to influence projects that contain stacked benefits, including ecological restoration, water quality improvement to waters discharging into the Mississippi River, and reconnecting the surrounding communities to the Mississippi River.

Green Zones
(watershed-wide, liken to Mpls. Green Zones)

Green Zone grants provide funding for stormwater, water quality, flood reduction, water conservation, habitat, and community projects that are geographically located within communities that were historically or are currently exposed to environmental and social injustices, including high proportions of people living in poverty, lower overall median income, higher racial diversity, higher ground surface temperatures, and lower tree canopy coverage than other census tracts within the MWMO's jurisdiction. Within these "Green Zones," Staff identified areas of high cultural interaction or areas with significant social and economic activity. Projects identified within this category provide substantial water quality and habitat benefits to MWMO's ecosystem.

Opportunity Site Grants

Opportunity Site grants represent other projects that have high-scale water quality improvement potential and demonstrate significant cost-benefits results, making these projects exceptional opportunities to meet the MWMO's watershed goals.

2025 Capital Projects Implementation

In 2025, the MWMO completed, entered into, or continued agreements and allocated grant funds for the projects listed below.

More information about each project is available at https://www.mwmo.org/projects/.

Riverfront Grants

Upper Harbor Terminal Northern Common Reuse System and Ephemeral Stream

2026 – 2027 will be the continuation of a multi-year planning and construction effort at Minneapolis' Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT), which includes a spring installation of a reuse force main and a UV treatment skid that will provide treated water to MPRB's Common Reuse System and Ephemeral Stream on Parcel 2 of the UHT development site. The Common Reuse System consists of infrastructure for collecting, storing, and distributing stormwater runoff for reuse. It includes an underground storage tank, conveyance infrastructure, UV treatment, and a pumping system. Reuse water is intended for use at an ephemeral stream and for landscape irrigation. The Ephemeral Stream is a constructed network of surface stormwater features. Water flow will occur during and shortly following precipitation events and is intended to support a living stream system favorable to macroinvertebrate taxa such as mayflies, dragonflies, and damselflies. Both the Common Reuse System and Ephemeral Stream are scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2026.

Upper Harbor Terminal Southern Regional Treatment System

Substantial completion of the Southern Regional Treatment System occurred in the Fall of 2025. The final connection between the Southern Regional Treatment System and the Common Reuse System depends on the development timing for Parcel 5, which will provide future overflow for the Common Reuse System.

When connected, the two systems will generate and cycle water through a 50-acre system of connected habitat, public places, stormwater basins, and living streams, all of which will exist at various levels of design and completion after the 2026 construction season.

Graco Park Development

The MWMO awarded the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) a Capital Project Grant of up to $480,000 to fund native habitat restoration, stormwater management features, and a heated sidewalk snowmelt system for the planned Graco Park at Sibley Street NE between Eighth Avenue and 10th Avenue NE in Minneapolis. Construction of this new park was substantially completed in 2025, and the grant was closed.

Graco Park includes a multi-use, net-zero building with a geothermal heat source, walkways, gathering spaces, a trail under the Plymouth Avenue bridge that connects to Boom Island Park, public access to the river, and extensive integration of native habitat restoration and stormwater management features, including an innovative heated sidewalk feature.

Monitoring of the function of the geothermal-heated sidewalk feature and the establishment of the site's native vegetation will continue in 2026 and beyond.

Ole Olson Park

Ole Olson Park, located along the west bank of the Mississippi River in North Minneapolis, is currently undergoing expanded habitat enhancement and shoreline restoration as part of the development of a trail connection between Ole Olson Park and the 26th Avenue Overlook. This project will restore and expand prairie habitats that will stabilize slopes and reduce soil erosion. On a portion of the site, steep slopes, likely formed by previous industrial users, have been reshaped to a more gradual slope. The more gradual slope helps ensure native plant establishment, enhances access to the river, and reduces the need for retaining walls. An existing prairie habitat restoration project at Ole Olson has also been expanded to better connect to the 26th Avenue Overlook project that MWMO supported in 2019. The project was mostly constructed in 2025; native seeding and planting will occur in Spring 2026, and the MWMO will support 3 full years of native vegetation support and maintenance work through 2029. No grant funds were requested or distributed in 2025. We expect the majority of the grant funding will be distributed back to the MPRB in 2026.

Green Zone Grants

Phillips Green Stormwater Infrastructure

The City of Minneapolis Public Works Department incorporated green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) into a traffic-calming and pedestrian-safety improvement project in the Phillips Neighborhood. A total of five GSI basins and two areas of sustainable landscaping have been constructed at two intersections: East 24th Street and Elliot Avenue, and East 24th Street and 10th Avenue South. This will result in an estimated reduction of 76 pounds per year of total suspended solids (TSS) and 0.42 pounds per year in total phosphorus (TP) that flow to the Mississippi River. The basins were planted with native vegetation, providing pollinator and wildlife habitat. No grant funds were requested or disbursed in 2025. We expect the majority of the grant funding will be disbursed in 2026.

One Southside

Southside Community Health Services is currently redeveloping a 0.7-acre site located at 1010 Lake Street in the Midtown-Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis. The redevelopment project will incorporate highly visible, innovative stormwater management features to provide both water quality and habitat benefits to the MWMO watershed, as well as health benefits for their staff, patients, partners, and the South Minneapolis community.

The redevelopment includes a terraced water feature that treats stormwater, a water reuse storage tank to store and use for irrigation, and permeable pavers with an engineered underground storage chamber. The entire system is designed to intercept, collect, retain, and reuse stormwater runoff from the site. It also provides native habitats for pollinators and wildlife, as well as for community enjoyment. The project will result in an estimated reduction of 200 pounds per year of total suspended solids (TSS) and 0.61 pounds per year in total phosphorus (TP) that flow to the Mississippi River. The project is currently under construction and is expected to be completed in 2026, and the grant closed.

Opportunity Site Grants

Bottineau Field Park Stormwater Enhancements

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) initiated construction of the Bottineau Field Park Improvements Project in Northeast Minneapolis in 2025. Recreation improvements include upgrades to walking paths, sports courts, play equipment, and a new splash pad. MWMO and MPRB staff have collaborated to bring habitat restoration and low-impact stormwater management features to Bottineau Field Park, above and beyond the minimum required stormwater management criteria. This included installing a large tree trench and permeable pavers, as well as restoring a habitat corridor adjacent to the railway on the west side of the park. This project was mostly constructed in 2025 and will be completed fully in the spring and summer of 2026. No grant funds were requested or disbursed in 2025. We expect the grant funding to be fully disbursed in 2026.

North Columbia Green Infrastructure

Following extensive outreach and engagement in 2019, the MWMO and its partners began installation of new stormwater best management practices (BMPs) at the Columbia Golf Course and Columbia Park in October 2020. The project expanded an existing wet stormwater pond and constructed one new dry pond and one new wet basin at the golf course park, along with the necessary storm sewer improvements to convey stormwater. As part of the Northeast Stormwater Management Initiative, these upgrades improve water quality, restore habitat, enhance the playability of the golf course, and improve the flood resiliency of the park, golf course, and upstream neighborhoods.

Construction and habitat restoration work were mostly completed in 2022; final grading of the new wet basin and vegetation establishment occurred in 2023; and final vegetation establishment occurred in 2024 and 2025, marking the additional two-year maintenance phase in which the MWMO will further support the restoration areas. The MWMO hosted trainings in 2024 and 2025 for the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board staff on native vegetation maintenance techniques, and they are now prepared to take over the maintenance in 2026 and beyond.

Sylvan Hills Park Regional Treatment

The City of Fridley reconstructed Sylvan Hills Park with a combination of surface and underground stormwater treatment features, including curb cuts, storm sewer pipe redirection, and an underground pipe diversion to bring off-site water into the neighborhood park. The park captures stormwater from around 77 acres and is designed to treat water from up to a 1.1-inch rainfall event. Stormwater features include infiltration basins, bio-swales, and an underground infiltration tank. Estimated annual water quality benefits include the removal of over 16.1 pounds of total phosphorus and over 5,000 pounds of total sediment annually.

Flooding will also be reduced locally. Additionally, over 20,000 square feet has been planted in native vegetation, and one of the infiltration basins has been installed adjacent to the planned playground and designed to be a nature-focused play area. The project was substantially completed in 2025, with a portion of the grant funding being disbursed back to the city. The remaining grant funding is expected to be disbursed in 2026.

Northrup King Campus Redevelopment

Artspace Projects, Inc. (Artspace), a nonprofit arts organization specializing in creating, owning, and operating affordable spaces for artists and creative businesses, received approval for an MWMO Capital Project Grant of up to $750,000 for the Northrup King Campus Redevelopment Project. The Northrup King Campus is approximately 13 acres and is located at 1500 Jackson Street NE in Minneapolis.

Design work and cost estimates for stormwater management and habitat enhancement features were refined in 2021. The applicant proposed multiple ways to improve stormwater management for this historic site that currently has no stormwater practices, including two filtration tanks, a combined rate control and treatment tank (with up-flow filter), permeable pavement areas, tree trench filtration systems, sunken trenches along streets, bioswales, runnel conveyance, and reuse/cisterns. The project also includes native and pollinator-friendly plantings. Construction of the project began in the fall of 2024 and will likely be completed in the 2026 construction season. The majority of the grant funding will be disbursed in 2026.

Opportunity Crossing (3030 Nicollet Stormwater Infrastructure)

A stormwater reuse system and other green infrastructure have been installed at a multifamily housing development at 3030 Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis. Along with a new Wells Fargo branch, the project provides 110 units of affordable housing and affordable commercial condos that will be sold to local entrepreneurs.

Grant funds were used to support the final design and installation of the site's stormwater features. A rainwater harvesting system uses reclaimed stormwater runoff from the building's roof for toilet flushing and irrigation. A stormwater infiltration tank treats and infiltrates the runoff from both 3030 Nicollet Avenue and the adjacent parking lot to the north. A rain garden filters water from the roof overflow drains, while a permeable paver patio area captures and treats additional runoff. Construction began in 2024 and was completed in 2025. The majority of the grant funds were distributed in 2025, with a small amount of funding being held for final deliverables and data access. The grant will be closed out in early 2026.

5th Street NE Diversion Manhole

The design of the Fifth Street NE diversion manhole is associated with the Northern Columbia Green Infrastructure project, which began in 2020. For the first season of plant establishment in the northwest basin in 2024, the inlet continued to end with a pipe bulkhead on the east side of the Fifth Street NE curb line, upstream of two hydrodynamic separators. The design of the diversion manhole and connection between the storm sewer running north to south along Fifth Street NE was completed in 2023, and construction took place in the fall of 2024. The grant was paid out entirely and closed out in 2025.

Funding Availability and Outcomes

Table 2 on the following page shows the funding spent or anticipated to be spent over a three-year window for each MWMO Capital Project. Capital Projects are either identified in the MWMO's Watershed Management Plan as part of its Capital Improvement Program. Each year, funding is made available to allow for the completion of the projects identified in the plan ($5.569 million allocated for 2025).

TABLE 2.

SUMMARY OF CAPITAL PROJECT GRANTS

	2024 spending	**2025** spending	**2026** (anticipated)
Capital Implementation Program (CIP) Budget	$4,211,955	$5,569,418	$5,500,000
Riverfront Grants:			
Upper Harbor Terminal components	$1,820,354	$4,522,168	$2,107,133
Graco Park Development	$314,000	$166,000	—
2100 Marshall Street NE Shoreline & Access	—	$91,931	$32,939
Total Riverfront Grants	**$2,134,354**	**$4,780,099**	**$2,140,072**
Green Zone Grants			
Ole Olson Park	—	$311,557	$10,000
Sylvan Hills Park Regional Treatment	—	$202,469	$129,053
1900 Monroe	—	—	$775,000
Green Central Safe Routes to School	—	—	$20,000
Cedar Avenue – Little Earth Infrastructure	—	—	$260,000
Juxtaposition Arts Campus expansion	$32,351	—	—
Phillips Safety Improvements Green Stormwater Infrastructure	—	—	$125,000
Other project final close out payments	—	—	$25,120
Total Green Zone Grants	**32,351**	**$514,026**	**$1,340,173**

Table 2 continued on next page

SUMMARY OF CAPITAL PROJECT GRANTS CONTINUED

Opportunity Sites Grants	2024 spending	2025 spending	2026 (anticipated)
Columbia Heights City Hall Snowmelt System	$13,180	—	—
No. Columbia Green Infrastructure	$66,983	$43,186	—
5th Street Diversion Manhole Design Services	—	$320,000	—
Prospect North-Green Fourth	$8,967	—	—
37th Avenue Green Stormwater Infrastructure	$215,310	$59,459	—
Miscellaneous assessments	$10,769	—	$39,500
Northrup King Campus Redevelopment	—	—	$200,000
Fridley Hydrodynamic Separator	—	$42,113	—
Opportunity Crossing (3030 Nicollet Stormwater Infrastructure)	—	$232,500	—
One Southside	—	$230,000	—
Bottineau Field Park	—	—	—
Total Opportunity Sites Grants	**$315,209**	**$927,218**	**$239,500**
TOTAL PROJECTS GRANTS	**$2,481,914**	**$6,221,343**	**$3,578,745**

Capital Project-Related Watershed Management Goals

The following page includes a summary of progress made towards MWMO's Watershed Management Plan Goals via capital projects. The projects are associated with the year they have been deemed substantially complete.

Projects commenced in 2023 included: Xcel Energy Marshall Operations Center; Upper Harbor Shoreline; and 37th Avenue Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Projects commenced in 2024 included: Northrup King Campus Redevelopment; Ole Olson; Graco Park; Fifth Street Diversion Manhole; Green Central SRTS GSI; One Southside; 3030 Nicollet (Opportunity Crossing); and the City of Fridley Buchanan Street Hydrodynamic Separator.

Projects commenced in 2025 included: Sylvan Hills Park Regional Treatment, Bottineau Field Park Stormwater Improvements, and Phillips GSI.

TABLE 3.

CAPITAL PROJECT-RELATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN GOALS AND MEASURES ACHIEVED

	2023	2024	2025
Water Quality and Quantity			
Total Number of Projects	3	8	3
Total Annual TSS Removed (lbs.)	3,360	4,875	5,466
Total Annual P Removed (lbs.)	15.26	24.18	17.72
Total Volume Reused (gal.)	0	330,000	0
Total Volume Infiltrated (cu. ft.)	666,035	534,481	75,937
Urban Stormwater Management			
Infiltration Basin	13	15	6
Cistern	0	4	1
Filtration Basin	0	4	0
Permeable Pavement	0	3	1
Iron-Enhanced Sand Filter	0	0	0
Pretreatment	0	12	5
Streambank Stabilization	0	1	0
Habitat Restoration	1	5	3
Tree Trench	12	2	1
Ecosystem Health			
Vegetation Added (sq. ft)	134,818	567,565	66,904
Trees Added	121	261	13+

2026 Capital Grants Work Plan

The following projects with related assessments and planning will be completed in 2026.

Riverfront Grants

2100 Marshall Street NE Shoreline Access and Improvement Project

At the time of this report, the feasibility study for these properties is underway, as previously described. We expect this project to begin construction in 2026, with the ultimate goal of creating shoreline restoration and access along the Mississippi River. This project will be in collaboration with the MWMO, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Sample Room, and a development group, Vessel.

Upper Harbor Terminal

In 2026, District System components will be finalized on MPRB's Parcel 2, and new construction will start on the performance venue (Parcels 3 and 7), and the southern portion of the Parkway (Parcels 4 and 5).

Opportunity Site Grants

SART Retrofit Implementation

At the time of this report, the feasibility study of retrofit options for this large stormwater treatment system is underway, as previously described. Some possible retrofit alternatives under consideration as part of that study include modifying the diversion weir, installing a backflow preventer, adjusting pump set points, and exploring alternative secondary treatment technologies. Based on the results of that retrofit study and the selected retrofit alternative, we expect construction to begin in 2026.

Green Zone Grants

Little Earth Conceptual Plans

A feasibility study was completed in partnership with Hennepin County, the MPRB, and the City of Minneapolis (City) to identify a suite of water resource and habitat improvement opportunities within the East Phillips Neighborhood of Minneapolis, which is within the Southside Green Zone. The impetus for this study was a series of transportation and park projects in close proximity, planned for implementation within the next five years in the East Phillips Neighborhood.

One project identified through this feasibility study is the Little Earth Stormwater and Habitat Improvements project. This project will capture stormwater from Cedar Avenue and route it to an underground tank for irrigation at the Little Earth East campus. The concept design phase will also explore extending irrigation services to the west side of the Little Earth campus.

This 30% Design/Concept phase will include stakeholder engagement sessions with Little Earth representatives, as well as an on-site walk with stakeholders to explore potential sustainable site improvements.

07

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Purpose

The MWMO's communications and outreach initiatives provide information, training, educational opportunities, financial resources and other services to promote community partnerships and good stewardship of water and natural resources.

Objectives

- Provide services and products to inform and educate the watershed community using a variety of methods and media.
- Create and support opportunities for public participation and involvement.
- Collaborate with other professionals, networks and communities to develop partnerships, leverage funding and increase the reach and effectiveness of watershed education.
- Inform and educate land use decision-makers about the relationship between land use and natural resource protection/conservation.
- Develop cultural competencies to reach the diverse communities of the MWMO directly.
- Provide training and certificate programs for the evaluation, development and use of new technologies and management practices.
- Promote and host workshops and training opportunities for MWMO staff, staff of member organizations, Minnesota Water Stewards, Citizen Advisors, community volunteers and other entities involved in water resources management.
- Support and promote local stewardship initiatives, community leadership and public engagement.
- Create demonstration sites to inform and educate the watershed community.

2025 Implementation

The MWMO carried out the following communications and outreach activities in 2025:

Community Outreach

The MWMO facilitated 48 different community events in 2025, providing opportunities for community members learn more about the MWMO, the Mississippi River, stormwater pollution and green stormwater infrastructure. Many events were connected to the "Meet the Mississippi" campaign and arts-related programming, which seek to provide access to recreational activities in the watershed while learning about water and habitat protection. More than 4189 participants engaged in these activities over the course of the year.

Additionally, the MWMO continued to build connections with communities through general neighborhood outreach and responding to inquiries around stormwater issues. It also highlighted community projects through communications channels to demonstrate the diversity of perspectives and efforts to protect water throughout the MWMO. The MWMO continues to seek outreach opportunities in underserved or underrepresented areas of the watershed and prioritizes them as they arise.

Email Communications

Email is a key part of the MWMO's communication strategy. The MWMO sends out a monthly email newsletter that serves as a digest of news and events from all MWMO program areas. It also provides periodic email bulletins on specific topics. Subscribers may select from a list of topics based on their individual areas of interest. The MWMO uses the GovDelivery email marketing platform.

TABLE 4.

SNAPSHOT OF MWMO EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

Metric	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Number of Bulletins	99	85	66	34	38
Impressions	74,300	104,000	112,000	76,500	83,900
Engagement Rate	48.8%	51.8%	48.3%	46.2%	47.5%
Total Subscribers	9,083	9,984	10,744	11,569	11,456

Minnesota Water Stewards

The Minnesota Water Stewards program increases knowledge and awareness of water quality and creates a skilled corps of volunteers who work within their communities to effect change. In 2025, Freshwater paused the training program to evaluate options for increasing flexibility and access to the program, as well as updating the curriculum to be relevant to people across the state, not just the Metro Area. The MWMO provided feedback and ideas for program revisions and looks forward to working with more Stewards in future years.

Green Workforce Development Programs

The Mississippi River Green Team is a two-year employment and conservation program for teens from Minneapolis. The Green Team was co-created by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and the MWMO as an opportunity for youth to gain mentored job experience, learn about environmental careers and acquire new skills. Typical daily activities include working to prevent water pollution, removing invasive species, building rain gardens, planting trees and prairie plants, and assisting in citizen science projects. In 2025, MPRB and MWMO employed 16 youth in the program.

Youth can participate in the Mississippi River Green Team for up to two years. After those two years, they become part of a supportive network that works with them to help secure jobs, expand their skills and prepare for the future. Many Green Team alums have gone on to pursue degrees and careers in environmental fields.

Professional Workshops and Trainings

Again, in 2025, the MWMO sponsored and hosted training sessions on turfgrass maintenance and smart salting. More than 140 winter and summer maintenance professionals, property owners, and community leaders in the public and private sectors attended a total of four trainings held in 2025. One session was delivered virtually, while three were hosted in person at the MWMO. These trainings are a part of a voluntary maintenance certification program through the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Social Media

The MWMO uses social media to engage the public on a range of topics related to its mission. It currently maintains an active social media presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Flickr, and YouTube.

Previously, MWMO maintained active accounts on Twitter and TikTok; however, due to ongoing shifts in the digital landscape, MWMO has paused active use on these platforms for the foreseeable future, pending further evaluation.

It is difficult to provide an apples-to-apples comparison of analytics data across different platforms, since each platform uses different metrics. That said, below is a snapshot of the MWMO's social media audience and overall reach in 2025. Comparable numbers for previous years are included, if available.

FIGURE 1.

MWMO SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

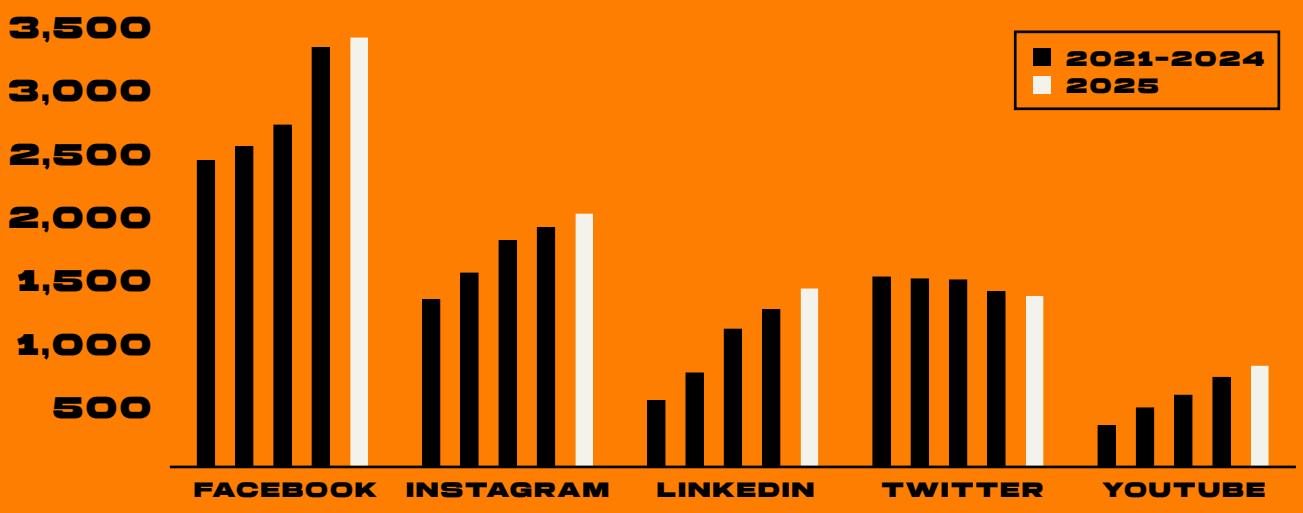
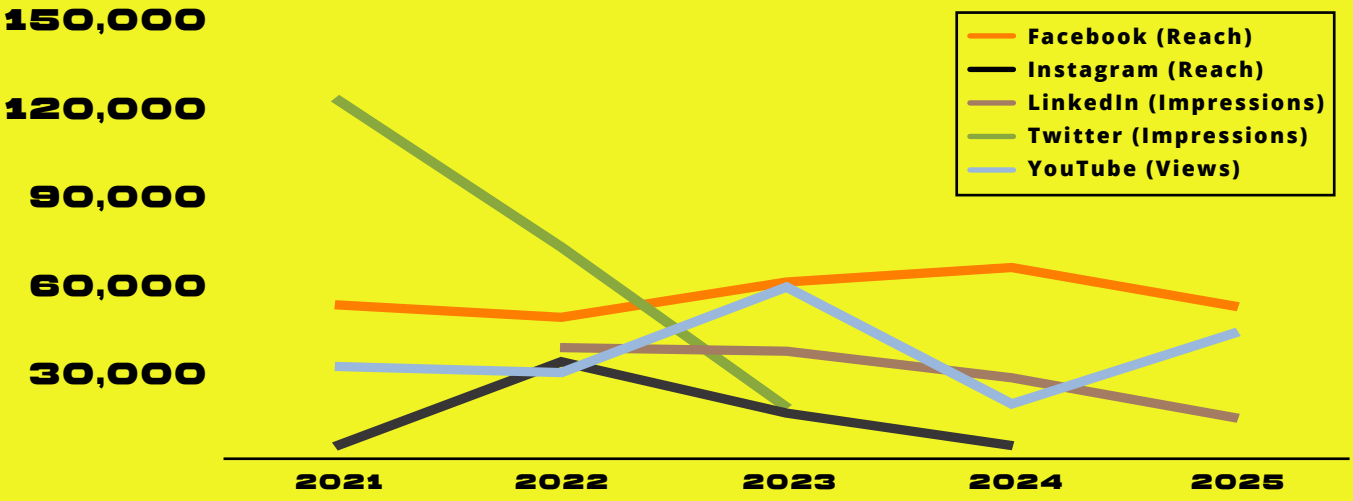


FIGURE 2.

MWMO SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



Stewardship Fund Grants

MWMO Stewardship Fund Grants provide financial assistance to community-led projects and educational efforts to improve and conserve water and natural resources in the watershed.

Financial assistance is provided through three types of Stewardship Fund Grants. In 2025, Community Grants offered up to $5,000 in funding for short-term or smaller-scale water quality projects and programs. Planning Grants offer up to $20,000 in funding to plan projects of significant scope and cost; they are used to assess the potential success of a project or to develop the details required to make a project or program actionable. Action Grants offered up to $50,000 in funds for the implementation of near fully-designed projects and programs that are significant in scope and cost.

All proposals are reviewed by MWMO staff. Planning and Action Grants are also reviewed by the MWMO Citizen Advisory Committee and approved by the MWMO Board of Commissioners.

Grants are awarded based on a project's ability to:

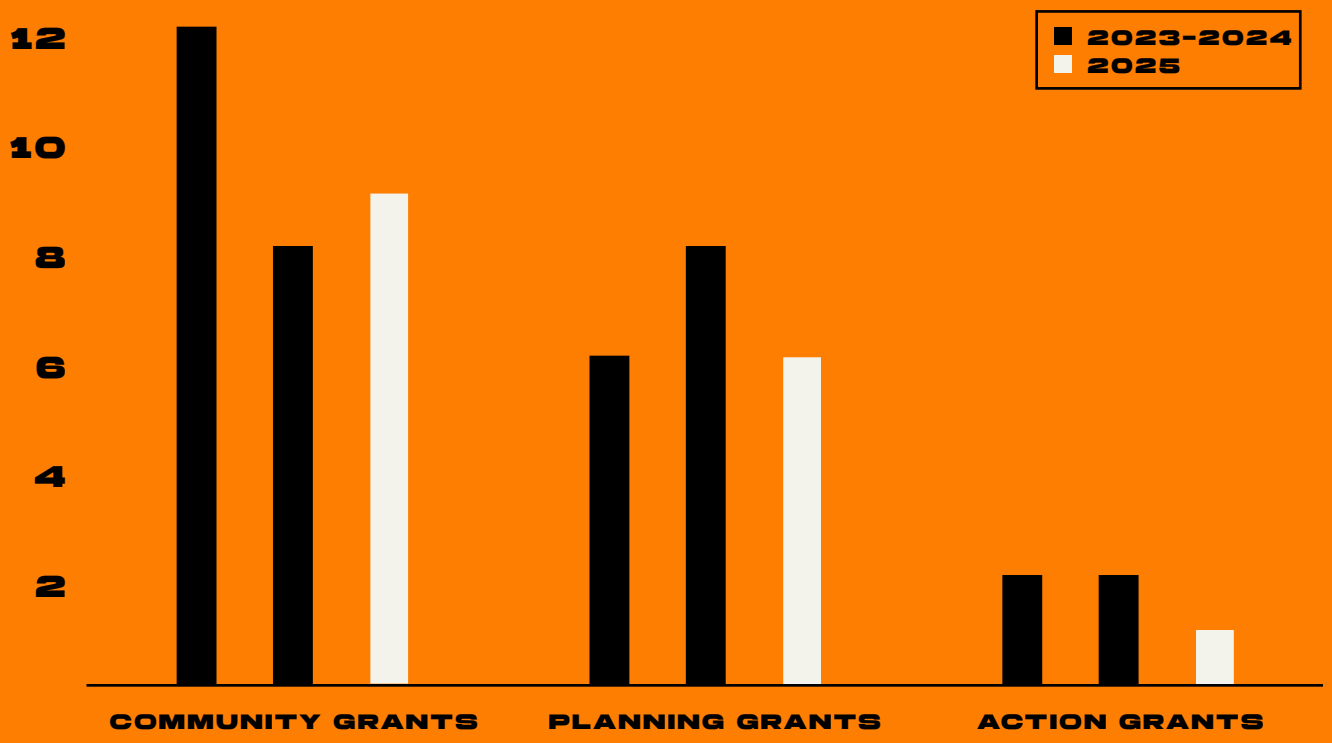
- **Develop partnerships with community organizations.** Projects create partnerships and build community understanding with organizations and people who want to proactively engage in clean water issues, demonstrate new methods, and extend the MWMO's ability to protect clean water and improve water quality, and to protect and restore habitat and natural resources by building community knowledge and stewardship.
- **Protect or improve the quality of water, habitat, and natural resources.** Projects help reduce pollution entering our streams, wetlands, lakes, river and groundwater, and projects prevent flooding, lessen the effects of drought, retain water on site and/or restore and maintain habitat. They can also support engagement for additional understanding and action beyond grant activities.
- **Build community understanding, knowledge, and initiative related to water, habitat, and natural resource issues and solutions.** Projects engage and educate community members about water quality issues. These projects raise awareness of water issues and foster behaviors that protect water. Organizations receiving grants will increase their ability to lead and promote clean water efforts.

Grant Eligibility and Limitations

Stewardship Fund Grants may be used to create, alter or expand external programs but are not intended to sustain ongoing efforts. Projects must benefit people who live, learn, and/or work in or near the MWMO watershed. Physical projects must also lie within the MWMO watershed boundaries or drain to receiving water bodies within the watershed.

FIGURE 3.

STEWARDSHIP FUND GRANTS



Stormwater Park and Learning Center Arts Programming

The Creative Watershed Plan is the MWMO's signature arts-engaged outreach plan, integrating art and artists into much of the organization's outreach programming. Arts-engaged outreach programs continue to attract large, diverse groups and provide a meaningful, approachable way to learn more about water, the environment and watershed management.

MWMO Artist in Residence, Sarah Nassif, completed her fourth year with the MWMO and focused on the full implementation of the plan which consists of the gallery program, artist-led workshops, staff professional development, and the coordination and facilitation of the Art+Water+Ecology (AWE) Professional Network which brings artists and environmental professionals together to find ways to integrate artists into environmental outreach work to help reach more audiences and convey complex topics.

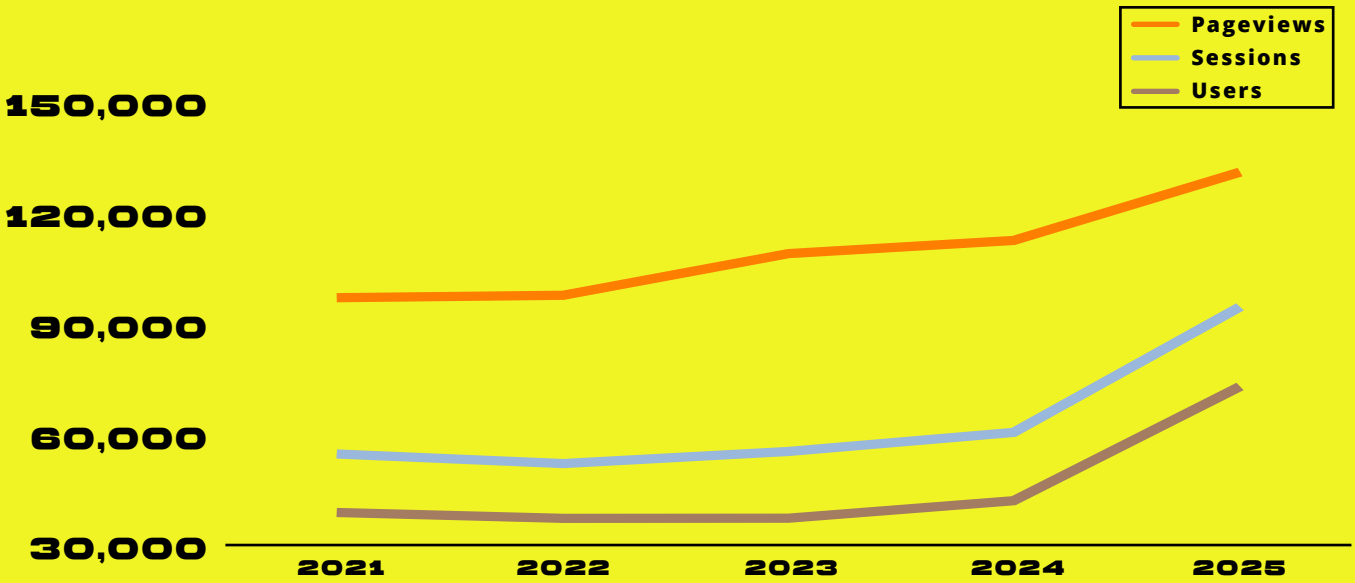
In 2025, Stormwater Park and Learning Center hosted two art exhibitions: Filter Effect by local sculptor and installation artist Brighton McCormick, a collection of sculptural works examining the invisible yet pervasive "filters" through which we understand the world, and Botanical Impressions by Winna Bernard, an exploration of the relationships between plants, water, and textiles featuring fabrics adorned with vibrant natural pigments from native plants using the time-honored technique of flower pounding.

In addition to the exhibitions, the MWMO hosted several workshops facilitated by artists to engage the public in a variety of topics related to the Mississippi River, stormwater pollution, invasive species and healthy habitats.

Nassif and the MWMO hosted four AWE meetings in 2025 and continued to build a strong and vibrant professional network. Between 40 and 90 people attended each meeting, and the membership list grew to over 250 people.

FIGURE 4.

MWMO WEBSITE TRAFFIC OVERVIEW



Website

The MWMO website serves as the main hub for information about MWMO projects and programs. MWMO staff maintain the website internally and contract with a website development firm for technical support as needed.

In 2025, MWMO staff continued implementing web accessibility improvements in partnership with WeCo, the auditors engaged in 2024. This remediation work is expected to be completed in early 2026. Further information is available in the 2026 Work Plan.

Youth Outreach

The MWMO staff facilitated "Stormwater 101" programs, the MWMO's signature outreach programming, which utilizes a watershed floor map, a stream table, a watershed model, and on-site and off-site stormwater BMPs, for 948 youth.

In addition, MWMO developed a customized youth experience in partnership with TrapRite TV and the McKinley Neighborhood Association. During this 8-week program, youth learned about and practiced documenting and sharing stories about water pollution and the Mississippi River through photography, videography and podcasting. The group celebrated a successful experience by sharing their final products with friends and family at a showcase event at Stormwater Park and Learning Center at the end of their experience.

TABLE 4.

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH IMPLEMENTATION

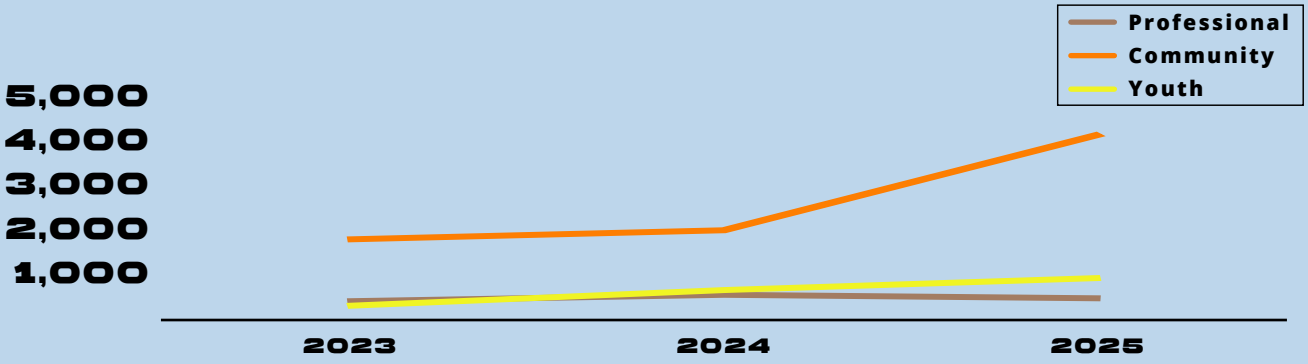
Implementation Table	2024 spending	2025 est. spending	2026 (anticipated)
Communications and Outreach Budget	$130,000	$184,000	$231,056
Outreach Events and Education	$53,174	$45,200	—*
Community Outreach Grants	$30,000	$31,000	—*
Mississippi River Green Team	$25,994	$42,750	—*
Communications technology costs	$12,782	$7,000	$12,348
Website	$26,951	$114,500	$50,348
Artist-in-Residence	$49,912	$46,575	$48,000
Maintenance grants	—	$1,500	$10,000
Community Programs	—*	—*	$66,000
Youth Programs	—*	—*	$55,000
Training Programs	—*	—*	$19,700
TOTAL	**$198,813**	**$221,875**	**$261,376**

*2024/2025 spending on Outreach Events and Education, Community Outreach Grants and Mississippi River Green Team will now be included as benefiting Community, Youth or Training programs.

Stewardship Fund Grants Budget	$350,000	$350,000	$350,000
Minnesota Water Stewards	$11,503	$2,500	$20,000
Stewardship Grants	$222,486	$235,000	$330,000
Total	**$233,989**	**$237,500**	**$350,000**

FIGURE 5.

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH-RELATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN GOALS AND MEASURES ACHIEVED



2026 Work Plan

- MWMO staff will provide campaign oversight, communications support and leadership for the Sacred Water Shared Future campaign, a multi-agency effort to commemorate 100 years of Mississippi River protection and restoration in the Twin Cities Metro Area in 2026.
- The MWMO will complete implementation of web accessibility updates to ensure full compliance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards, with a target completion date of April 2026.
- The MWMO will offer resources and support for residents to take water-friendly actions at home and in their communities.
- The MWMO will focus on connecting residents with the Mississippi River through various recreational offerings through the "Meet the Mississippi" outreach campaign.
- The MWMO will continue to fund Stewardship Fund Community Grants, Planning Grants, and Action Grants. Efforts to assist grantees from targeted populations will continue as opportunities arise.
- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members will engage with MWMO activities, mainly through upcoming Planning and Action Grant reviews and through other engagement opportunities. Strategic recruitment of CAC members from underrepresented populations will continue.
- The MWMO will support Minnesota Water Stewards by partnering with Freshwater Society to offer educational, engagement and volunteer opportunities that enable them to continue their work as community leaders on behalf of water quality and habitat.
- The MWMO will offer training opportunities for professional audiences whose work directly impacts water quality.
- The MWMO will work with partners to develop and support training opportunities that support the development of a skilled workforce for green infrastructure maintenance.
- The Mississippi River Green Team will enter its 19th year with expanded support and partnerships.
- The MWMO will continue to support youth programs by developing partnerships with K-12 schools and teachers to strengthen awareness and connection to our water resources.
- The MWMO will continue to partner with Artist-in-Residence Sarah Nassif to implement the Creative Watershed Plan, an Arts-Engaged Outreach Strategic Plan for the MWMO.
- The MWMO will continue to expand arts-engaged outreach programming to reach new audiences and consider environmental challenges from different perspectives.
- The MWMO will begin engaging with watershed residents about climate change, adaptation and resilience as it specifically pertains to our communities, water and habitat.

08

MONITORING AND RESEARCH

Purpose

The MWMO's monitoring and research efforts provide a scientific basis for identifying and tracking water quality and quantity issues and provide information to aid in project selection, and to evaluate the success of those projects.

Objectives

- Develop a record of baseline data to characterize the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater resources in the watershed.
- Collect volume and water quality data for stormwater runoff from key pipesheds to identify and quantify sources of pollution.
- Evaluate the performance and maintenance needs of green stormwater infrastructure (GSI).
- Assess land use impacts on water quality.
- Provide information to help optimize the design of new GSI.
- Investigate and test innovative monitoring and treatment technologies.
- Make data accessible to the public, other organizations, and MWMO staff.
- Develop partnerships and collaborate with other organizations and/or agencies both inside and outside the watershed boundaries to improve water quality in the Mississippi River.
- Share monitoring data with non-technical audiences to build knowledge of the watershed and stormwater pollution.
- Develop an emergency monitoring plan in case of emergencies affecting water resources.

2025 Implementation

The MWMO carried out the following monitoring and research activities in 2025:

Mississippi River Monitoring

Water quality samples were collected twice monthly between April and November and once monthly from December to March at seven sites on the Mississippi River within the MWMO's jurisdiction. Water samples were also collected biweekly from April through October from seven sites on the Mississippi River for E. coli analysis, to support continued data collection for the Upper Mississippi River Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Hourly river level data were collected in the Mississippi River at three locations using an automated continuous level logger and staff gauge, which were visited weekly for calibration.

Bathymetry data were collected in the Mississippi River upstream of the Upper St. Anthony Lock and Dam to 53rd Avenue North in Minneapolis. These data will be combined with previous data sets and future years' bathymetric data to assess how the riverbed is changing as a result of the Upper St. Anthony Falls Lock closure in 2015.

Lake and Wetland Monitoring

The MWMO continued to monitor water levels in the Kasota Ponds wetlands and maintained a web-connected monitoring system to autonomously collect and publish level, water temperature, and conductivity data from the Kasota Pond West (KPW). Water quality and biological sampling were conducted in 2021 following a five-year monitoring schedule; they will next be monitored in 2026.

The MWMO contracts with the Anoka Conservation District (ACD) to monitor lake levels and water quality of Sullivan (Sandy) Lake and Highland (Unnamed) Lake in Columbia Heights. Water quality was measured in 2025 following a three-year monitoring schedule. Highland Lake was monitored once per month from May to October, and Sullivan Lake was monitored biweekly from April to October to support the ongoing Lake Sullivan Water Quality Study (see Watershed Assessment section). Water quality monitoring included taking a surface grab sample to send to the lab for analysis, as well as a sonde lake profile at the deepest point of the lake. Water quality monitoring at Sullivan Lake also included three algae samples and one microcystin test to assess the presence and density of harmful algae in the lake.

In 2025, lake levels were recorded weekly at Sullivan Lake and continuously at Highland Lake using a water level logger. Data were submitted to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) LakeFinder database.

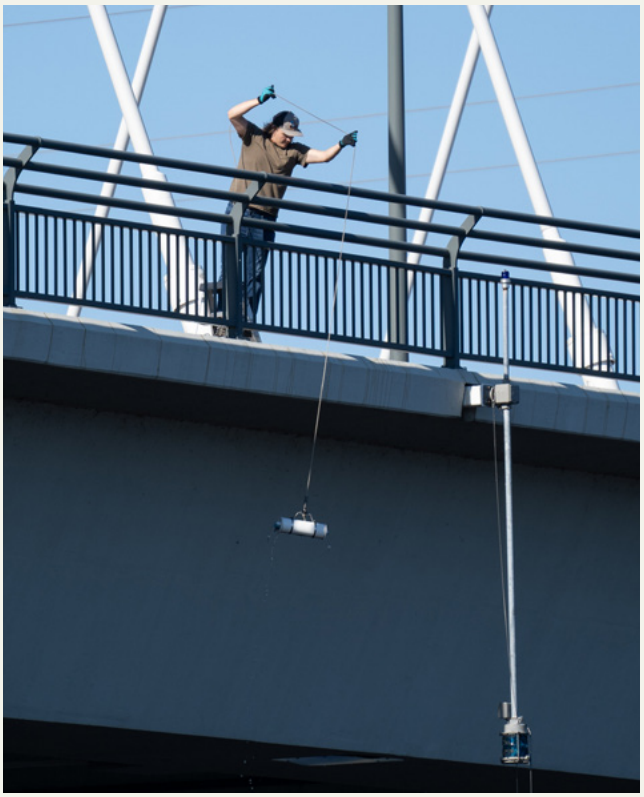
Stormwater Pipeshed (Source) and Precipitation Monitoring

In 2025, the MWMO had nine long-term stormwater pipeshed monitoring sites. Six of those sites use a combination of area/velocity sensors and automated samplers to collect water quantity and quality data throughout the year. Stormwater samples were collected once a month during baseflow and throughout the year during rain events and snowmelt. Data are used to calculate stormwater runoff volume with a goal of calculating annual pollutant loads. Summaries of stormwater runoff volume and other monitoring data are available on the MWMO website.

Precipitation data were collected at one manual and 12 automatic rain gauge sites throughout the watershed.

Capital Projects and Stormwater Infrastructure Monitoring

The MWMO monitors funded stormwater infrastructure to evaluate if features are functioning as designed and to observe changes in performance over time, which may indicate the need for maintenance.



Edison High School Green Campus Stormwater Practice Monitoring

MWMO staff continued to monitor two Edison High School Green Campus stormwater practices: a parking lot tree trench and an underground stormwater reuse tank. Water levels were monitored in the tree trench to understand the amount of water infiltrated. Staff collected precipitation, stormwater volume, pumping rates, and water levels at the reuse tank to evaluate the amount of stormwater reused.

St. Anthony Regional Stormwater Treatment and Research System

MWMO staff continued to monitor, operate, and inspect the St. Anthony Regional Stormwater Treatment and Research System (SART) in 2025. The quantity and quality of water entering and exiting each facility component were monitored to assess the effectiveness of the treatment systems. The secondary treatment chambers (cartridge chamber and sand filter) remain offline as MWMO works with Barr Engineering on retrofits to improve their performance (see Watershed Assessment section for more information). It is anticipated that retrofits will be completed in 2026, and operations of the overall system can recommence in late 2026 or 2027.

Towerside District Stormwater System

MWMO staff continued monitoring precipitation and reuse tank level at the Towerside District Stormwater System. In 2025, a paired sample was taken from within the tank and at one of the outflow spigots to the garden to ensure the ultraviolet system was treating bacteria sufficiently.

Stormwater Infrastructure Water Level Monitoring

In 2025, MWMO monitored water levels at nine stormwater infrastructure projects. Water level monitoring is used for several purposes: to estimate flow into and out of a practice, infiltration rates, or stormwater reuse amounts, or to assess whether a tank is leaking. In addition to monitoring water level at the SART, Edison Tree Trench, Edison Reuse System, and Towerside District Stormwater System as mentioned above, MWMO also monitored water levels at the 8th Street Planters, MWMO Stormwater Park (filter beds and reuse cistern), Minneapolis Sculpture Garden reuse tank, Summit Square Park underground infiltration basin, and Sylvan Hills Park underground infiltration basin (see more details on this new effort below).

Data Management, Reporting and Outreach

MWMO stores and manages all collected water quality and quantity in an on-premises WISKI database. Collected data are reviewed and compiled on an annual basis. MWMO staff continued collaborating with several other metro-area organizations using the same database software.

Water quality data collected by the MWMO are submitted annually to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) EQuIS database at the end of the monitoring year, and data interpretation is provided on the monitoring pages of the MWMO website. Other data are made available upon request to staff, stakeholders, agencies, research institutions, and the public. A summary of 2025 monitoring efforts is available on the MWMO website.

Partnerships

65th Avenue Stormwater Tunnel Monitoring

MWMO provided technical service to the West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission and maintained, operated, and collected water quantity and quality data at their 65th Avenue stormwater outfall monitoring site.

Minnesota Stormwater Research Council

MWMO has been a contributor to and member of the Minnesota Stormwater Research Council (MSRC) since its founding in 2016. MWMO has a staff member serving on the MSRC Advisory Board to help select impactful research projects that support improved effectiveness in stormwater management.

Special Projects and New Work

Vegetation Monitoring Pilot

MWMO staff launched a new monitoring program to evaluate vegetation communities at MWMO project sites. In 2025, MWMO staff surveyed vegetation communities at three MWMO project sites representing a green infrastructure project, a rain garden/prairie habitat project, and a forested habitat planting. Outcomes of the pilot project were the establishment of a vegetation monitoring protocol and a digital vegetation monitoring form. A second year of the pilot project is expected in 2026.

Upper Harbor Terminal

MWMO will be monitoring multiple facets of the in-progress Upper Harbor Terminal project, including:

- The quality and quantity of stormwater entering the Southern Regional Treatment System (SRTS) from west of the site.
- The quality and quantity of stormwater bypassing the SRTS and discharging to the Mississippi River.
- The water level in the filter chambers, to observe changes in drawdown over time (which could indicate clogging).
- The sediment removed by the SRTS prior to entering the Common Reuse system.
- The quality of water in the reuse break tank prior to discharge to the ephemeral stream, to ensure water quality is sufficient to support aquatic life.
- The water level and moisture in the ephemeral stream to understand habitat.

In 2025, Monitoring staff worked with on-site contractors to install conduit for the long-term stormwater site to measure inflow stormwater from the west, as well as conduit for water level loggers in the ephemeral stream. Staff also installed moisture sensors at two different depths in two locations in the ephemeral stream. Additional monitoring equipment will be installed in the spring of 2026, and monitoring will commence by summer 2026.

Sylvan Hills Park Regional Treatment

Monitoring staff are evaluating the performance of the new Sylvan Hills underground infiltration basin. In early 2025, Braun Intertec installed a shallow groundwater well at Sylvan Hills Park to measure the water level adjacent to the planned underground infiltration system. This was to ensure the underground infiltration tank being installed would have the requisite 3 feet of separation from the seasonal high groundwater table to be effective. Once the project was complete, MWMO staff installed four water level sensors into the two underground tanks to evaluate how the systems respond to stormwater inflows. MWMO will continue monitoring water levels in the well and the tanks over the next several years to ensure the system is performing as designed and to better understand shallow groundwater interactions with the new infiltration system.

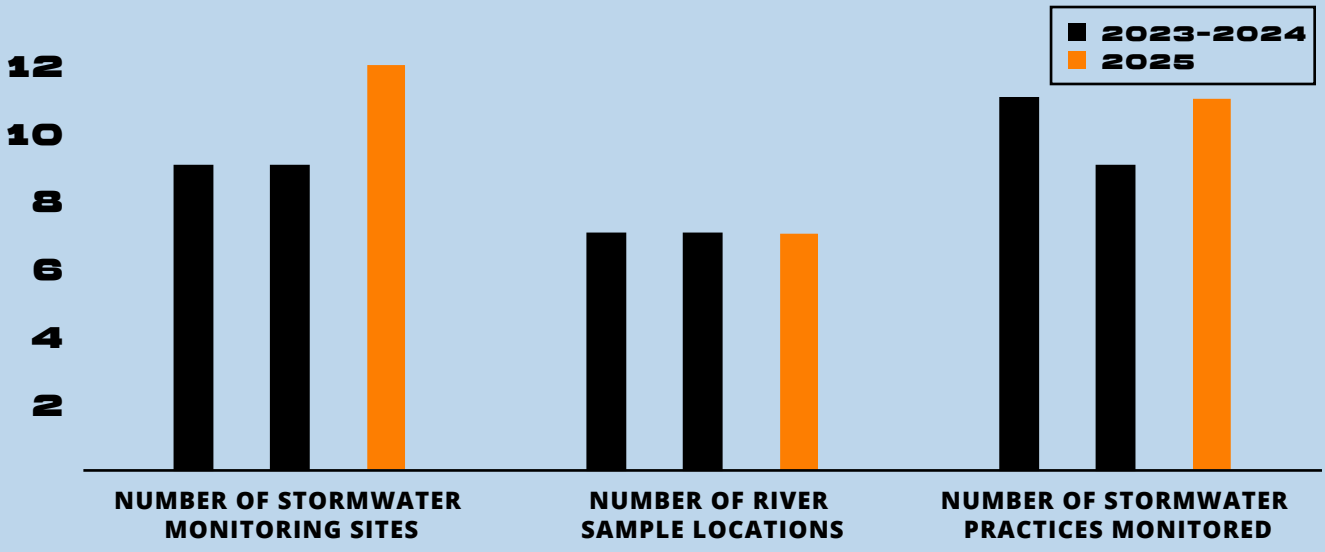
TABLE 5.

WATER QUALITY MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Table	2024 spending	2025 spending	2026 (anticipated)
Monitoring Budget	$200,000	$211,500	$224,234
Monitoring Operations Support Costs	$11,368	$15,345	$14,694
Laboratory Analysis	$115,663	$95,866	$112,742
Monitoring Contracting	—	$13,700	$14,500
Partner Support	$25,000	$20,000	$25,000
Monitoring Software	$5,843	$9,264	$9,750
Monitoring Equipment	$22,098	$12,474	$17,500
Reimbursed Costs	—	—	$4,000
Upper Harbor Terminal Monitoring	—	—	$26,048
Total	**$199,172**	**$166,649**	**$224,234**

FIGURE 6.

MONITORING-RELATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN GOALS AND MEASURES ACHIEVED



2026 Work Plan

The 2026 work plan for MWMO's monitoring and research programs includes:

New Monitoring Initiatives for 2026

- Install targeted pipeshed outlet monitoring equipment in three new locations in the watershed to evaluate current water quality and track water quality improvement after projects are installed.
- Work with MWMO Capital Projects and Maintenance staff to integrate new vegetation monitoring protocols into a larger biological systems assessment framework for MWMO.
- Gain better access to performance data from MWMO funded reuse projects and then evaluate the cumulative impact of water saved through MWMO reuse projects.
- Better support monitoring work by implementing the MS4Front system to track and report on monitoring visits and asset management.
- Redesign the MWMO Monitoring website and annual report to reflect current goals, improve sharing of information, and facilitate greater data interactivity.
- Work with Maintenance staff to develop a monitoring protocol to assess long-term infiltration performance and engineered media status at funded MWMO biofiltration facilities.
- Evaluate current monitoring work (including types of monitoring, monitoring locations, and pollutants monitored) against organizational priorities and establish a framework and decision tree for prioritizing monitoring resources.

Ongoing Monitoring and Research Efforts

Many of the monitoring and research activities conducted in 2025 and prior years will continue in 2026, including: stormwater and precipitation monitoring at long-term sites; Mississippi River monitoring for water level, water quality, and bathymetry; and monitoring of stormwater practice water levels and water quality throughout the watershed. For 2026, MWMO has decided to combine its river water quality and bacteria sampling programs to improve efficiency without compromising data quality. MWMO staff will continue to work with Anoka Conservation District to monitor water levels in Highland and Sullivan Lakes. MWMO will monitor Kasota Ponds in 2026. MWMO will continue to work with member cities to assess and assist in accomplishing their monitoring needs.

Staff will build on existing work, leveraging MWMO's monitoring data record to produce actionable information. Staff members are currently working to calculate pollutant loads at stormwater outfalls where sufficient monitoring data is available. This information will help calibrate watershed models and target project grants. Another ongoing effort involves MWMO staff working with researchers at the University of Minnesota to evaluate 12 years of bathymetric data MWMO has collected in the Mississippi River, and to evaluate sediment movement through the river for the length of the watershed and depositional patterns behind the locks and dams. Other ongoing data analysis efforts include summarizing performance information from the most recent SART sediment cleanout and an evaluation of erosion pin data for the Nicollet Island and Anoka Riverfront Regional Park areas.

MWMO monitoring staff will also continue supporting ongoing joint efforts with capital projects staff, including the SART Retrofit Feasibility Study, Lake Sullivan Water Quality Study, and the Sculpture Garden & Parade Field Reuse Repair Feasibility Study. In each case, monitoring staff is working with capital projects staff to determine additional information needed to inform analysis and recommendations and to ensure the appropriate data is collected. MWMO continues to monitor flow and water quality at the SART site while performance issues are being evaluated. Monitoring staff are currently working with Barr Engineering and Anoka Conservation District to determine additional data to collect at Sullivan Lake in 2026 that will be sufficient to aid upcoming project design efforts and to evaluate incoming water quality to the lake. Additionally, monitoring staff will continue to integrate monitoring into newly completed capital projects to ensure they are functioning as designed. In 2026, staff will install water level monitoring equipment at the 3030 Nicollet/Opportunity Crossing underground infiltration basin.

The MWMO will continue to work with the MPCA and other federal, state, and local agencies on projects as they arise, including current total maximum daily load (TMDL) studies. Monitoring data will be submitted to the MPCA's EQuIS database, published on the MWMO website, and will be available upon request.

09

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Policy

The MWMO's monitoring and research efforts provide a During the plan development in 1997–2000, the MWMO board acknowledged the limits of its member communities' abilities to incur additional financial expenses and therefore developed strategies for new funding mechanisms. The MWMO sought inclusion on the list of Special Taxing Districts (Minnesota Statutes 275.066) and, in 2001, became the first joint powers WMO in Minnesota to receive levy authority. This funding is necessary to implement plan goals and objectives of the watershed management plan. Taxes are levied in accordance with procedures specified in the Joint and Cooperative Agreement (JCA) and Minnesota Statutes 103B.201–103B.255, also referred to as the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act (Act), and are subject to limitations set forth in Minnesota Tax Statutes, the Act, the JCA, and the Watershed Management Plan.

It is the policy of the Board of Commissioners to use funds raised as effectively and efficiently as possible. The MWMO updated its comprehensive plan in 2011, changing the way projects are selected for inclusion in the capital improvement plan (CIP). The plan was amended in May 2015, with a minor CIP schedule update occurring in September 2016. In 2021, the MWMO completed a 10-year watershed management plan update, producing the MWMO's 2021–2031 Fourth Generation Plan. The updated plan was approved by the Board of Water and Soil Resources in 2021 and by the MWMO Board of Commissioners on January 11, 2022. In 2025, staff completed the first amendment to this plan, extending the MWMO Capital Improvement Schedule by five years, from 2026 to 2031, at a planned cost of $28,700,000.

MWMO will continue to coordinate its capital improvement program (CIP) with those of its member jurisdictions. In addition, the MWMO has expanded its approach by pursuing high-impact projects through the identification of "target-rich" areas within the watershed. Once these areas are identified, the MWMO works with affected landowners and local government partners to develop plans to improve stormwater systems within the targeted area. To support this work, the MWMO conducts feasibility studies that estimate potential water quality and quantity benefits, as well as habitat protection and resource improvements. Based on the findings of these studies, the MWMO determines whether it is appropriate to commit funding toward project construction.

Anyone wishing to partner with the MWMO should involve the organization early in project design and assessment. Early coordination improves the project selection process and helps support more effective design and cost efficiency.

Budget

In general, the MWMO follows the following process to set its annual budget and select capital projects to which grant funding is allocated:

- Finance staff collect data to forecast the expected cost of staffing, insurance, contracted services, professional fees, facilities and other general administrative expenses.
- MWMO staff review recurring program expenditures for updated costs and determine any additions or changes to the upcoming year's activities, events or partnerships.
- Finance and MWMO staff forecast expected project expenditures for the upcoming year. Project spending typically occurs over two to three budget cycles, and larger or more complex projects may span longer timelines.
- Based on the results of this process, a draft preliminary levy and budget are submitted at the July board meeting.
- After incorporating any commissioners' requests, the preliminary levy and budget for the upcoming year are approved at the September board meeting.
- A preliminary levy is submitted to the counties by Sept. 30 for Truth in Taxation statements.
- Any updates to the levy and budget are presented, and the final levy is approved at the November board meeting.
- If necessary, a plan amendment is submitted to the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.
- Final levy documents are submitted to Anoka, Hennepin and Ramsey counties by December 15.

TABLE 6.

MWMO BUDGET

2025 Budget	
Projects Grants and Program Operations	$7,214,918
Capital Asset Replacement Fund	$100,000
Administration	$2,362,599
Use of Fund Balance	($1,958,067)
Subtotal Budget	$7,719,450
Contingency (Uncollected Levy)	$110,500
Total Budget	**$7,830,000**

Table 6 continued on next page

Projects Grants and Program Operations	**$7,214,918**
Projects Grants	$5,569,418
Riverfront Grants	$2,298,433
Green-Zone Grants	$517,555
Opportunity Sites Grants	$2,753,430

Program Operations	$1,645,500
Communications and Outreach	$184,000
Planning and Watershed Assessments	$900,000
Monitoring and Research	$211,500
Stewardship Grant Fund	$350,000

Capital Asset Replacement Fund	$100,000

Administration	$2,362,599
Salaries, PERA and Payroll Taxes	$1,711,786
Health Insurance	182,948
Other Insurance	$14,869
Contracted-IT / Phone Services	$106,226
Contracted – Financial and HR Services	$121,455
Audit, Legal and Other Professional Services	$58,434
Facilities Costs	$107,568
Staff Training and Reimbursements	$12,850
Supplies and Miscellaneous	$5,225

TABLE 7.

CERTIFICATION OF APPORTIONED LEVIES

District 072 - Middle Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization
Certification of Apportioned Levies
Payable 2025

(1) Payable 2025 Property Tax Levy $7,830,000

County	(2) **Payable 2024 Taxable Net Tax Capacity**	(3) **Net Tax Capacity Percent Distribution**	(4) **Apportioned Payable 2025 Levy (1x3)**
Anoka County	$30,267,009	6.1964%	$485,178.12
Hennepin County	$455,489,804	93.2493%	$7,301,420.19
Ramsey County	$2,707,359	0.5542%	$43,401.69
Watershed Total	**$488,464,172**	**100.0000%**	**$7,830,000**

Certification of Apportioned Levies

Each year, the MWMO receives a Certification of Apportioned Levies from the Minnesota Department of Revenue. This chart is then used by the three counties in the MWMO to apportion the levy. The above table represents the estimated breakout of levies for each county within the MWMO for 2025.

Contact Us

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