

# Memorandum

North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization's 4<sup>th</sup> Generation Watershed Plan Update



To: North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization's Board Members  
From: ISG  
Date: January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
Subject: Initial Planning Meeting

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## INTRODUCTION

The North Cannon River Watershed Management Organization has gathered input on priority issues, priority resources, and concerns from watershed residents, local partners, and state and regional agencies. This included an opportunity to attend an Open House in the fall, either virtually or in person. Following the Open House the planning team has held meetings with both a Technical Committee and Advisory Committee to review and discuss input and identify initial planning priorities. There will be a presentation and discussion on the planning process, issues identified during the initial comment period, potential goals and priorities, and future public input opportunities. This meeting is an opportunity for the public to receive, review, and discuss the committee recommendations.

The following memo outlines the planning process, partners, and outcomes that will be presented to the board for approval.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process is laid out into 5 major tasks which consists of Gaps Analysis, Stakeholder Engagement, Prioritization, Goals/Strategies, and Policies and Plan Preparation/Review. These tasks outline critical steps in the planning process that ensure the updated watershed plan addresses priority issues that reflect the most current data and public concerns. So far, the planning team has completed the gap analysis, stakeholder engagement, and prioritization tasks from this process.

### Gaps Analysis

The gap analysis reviewed all current management plans to develop a list of the issues and priorities that have been targeted in previous plans. The plans that were reviewed during this task were:

- Cannon River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) - 2020
- North Cannon River Watershed Management Plan (NCRWMP) - 2013
- Dakota County Ground Water Plan – 2020
- Land Conservation Plan for Dakota County – 2020

In addition to the existing plans listed above, the gaps analysis reviewed the 60-day comment letters from state and regional agencies. The outcomes of the gaps analysis was used to develop the content for the stakeholder engagement open house and following committee meetings.

Key topics that were identified in the gaps analysis that are not addressed in the existing plan include:

- Specifics for strategies
  - Measurable Outcomes
  - Costs and potential funding sources
  - Targeted locations
- Impacts from potential future development

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- Terrestrial habitat
- Emerging concerns (chlorides, climate change, “forever chemicals” such as PFAS)

## Stakeholder Engagement

The planning team developed and held 2 styles of public engagement opportunities, a virtual as well as in-person Open House. Both styles received equal attraction to the public open house that was held. The in-person open house attracted 12 attendees with 6 members of the public completing the survey while the virtual open house provided 5 responses to the survey questions. There was a total of 90 unique devices that accessed to the virtual open house, but it is difficult to track exactly how many members of the public engaged since one person could visit the site on multiple devices or a visitor could be unaffiliated with the area. Overall, the planning team thought the stakeholder engagement was well attended and provided the necessary feedback required to develop the priorities issues and resources within the watershed.

## Prioritization

After the stakeholder open houses were held, the planning team synthesized the results of the survey that was developed for the public to provide input on. This data synthesis developed the initial priorities used for the Technical Committee to provide comments to. The planning team developed a tier-based priority ranking system that reflected the clear divide between top priority issues and lower ranking issues. Tier 1 priorities are listed as issues that will be the primary focus to receive funding to accomplish measurable goals. Tier 2 priorities/issues will be incorporated as secondary benefits to Tier 1 priorities/issues where applicable and will be addressed as opportunities arise or when funding becomes available.

## PLANNING COMMITTEES

The planning process established two committees to review stakeholder input and drive the planning process. First was the Technical Committee (TC), which is comprised of members from the following organizations:

- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Health
- Department of Agricultural
- Met Council
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Department of Transportation
- Board of Water and Soil Resources.
- Dakota County
- Dakota SWCD

The TC is responsible to drive planning content decisions based on the best available science and data as well as provide input on funding and policy and programs that will help the plan achieve the goals that are developed. The second committee established was the Advisory Committee (AC) which consists of members of the public that are apart of the following organizations:

- University of Minnesota Extension
- Clean River Partners
- Lake Byllesby Improvement Association
- Southern DC Sportsman's Club
- Trout Unlimited
- Minnesota Rural Water
- Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization
- Southeast Irrigators
- Freshwater
- Minnesota Corn and Soybean Growers
- USDA-FSA
- Mining

These members provide comments on the TC recommendations based on their review of the content. The content is then shared back to the TC members for additional input/adjustment based on the AC's comments. The TC then advises the planning team on the content that should be presented to the board for approval.

## PRIORITY ISSUES AND RESOURCES

Based on the stakeholder engagement open house responses and committee input, priority issues and resources were developed. The issues reflect different resource categories that will be addressed through specific strategies. The issues were set up in a way that allows the planning team to understand the key concerns of the stakeholders. Ultimately these issues are very interconnected but categorizing them in this way establishes what the outcomes of specific strategies should address. This process resulted in the following issue ranking with 1 is the top priority.

1. Surface Water (Tier 1)
2. Groundwater (Tier 1)
3. Policy and Regulation (Tier 1)
4. Outreach and Education (Tier 1)
5. Habitat (Tier 2)
6. Data, Studies, Monitoring (Tier 2)
7. Emerging Issues (Tier 2)

In addition to identifying priority issues, input from the stakeholder engagement and committee meetings was used to identify priority resources within the watershed. These resources reflect lakes or streams that are the highest priority to achieve measurable results through implementation actions in this plan. During committee meetings it was identified that implementation opportunity and potential for achieving measurable outcomes did not necessarily align with the priority of a given waterbody. Therefore, a second ranking was developed that reflects the priority for targeting implementation activities. This second ranking, shown in parentheses following the name of the resource, is a generalization and will be refined in the next steps of the planning process. The top two priority resources highlight the difference between identifying a resource that is a priority and a resource that can be addressed through this plan. Lake Byllesby is a top priority resource but most of the drainage area is outside of the North Cannon River WMO's boundary which limits the overall potential to make measurable change. Trout Brook was also identified as a top priority resource, but concern was expressed that there may be less opportunity to achieve results due to the amount of work that has already been completed in the drainage area. Ultimately, these targeting rankings will be refined in the next steps of the planning process when specific strategies are developed to address known stressors impacting the resources. The following list presents the resources ranked by priority with 1 as the top priority.

1. Lake Byllesby/Cannon River (6)
2. Trout Brook (5)
3. Chub Creek (1)
4. Chub Lake (2)
5. Mud Creek (3)
6. Pine Creek (4)