

MAWD Strategic Plan 2020-2022

I. History & Purpose: Minnesota Watershed Districts (WDs) were established with the Minnesota Watershed Act, M.S., Chapter 103 D in 1955. From inception it was felt that Minnesota WDs should be run by people somewhat removed from the political process, so they would be able to make tough and possibly unpopular decisions without a complete focus on political consequences. To facilitate this, it was agreed that the position of WD Manager would be appointed, rather than elected. Land use and zoning powers remained with elected city and county officials.

While the boundaries of WDs are determined by hydrologic lines of demarcation, rather than political boundaries, water does not follow political boundaries. The organizations are established by local petition to the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), a state agency. After filing of an establishment petition, the Board has the authority to establish a WD, define the boundaries, and appoint the first board of managers (Board) as defined under Minnesota Statutes 103D.101. All subsequent Board are appointed by the associated County Boards of Commissioners as defined under Minnesota Statutes 103D.311.

WDs responsibilities have changed from their original objectives of focusing solely upon water quantity. WDs have now assumed responsibility for a wide variety of water-related concerns, especially those related to water quality, including wetlands, wetland restoration, and groundwater management. The science associated with water quality and quantity issues continues to grow and as a result, awareness and application of these technologies is a significant consideration for WD Boards and staff.

Another important component of watershed work is engaging the public in its efforts through education, outreach, and cost-sharing grants.

WDs work with multiple state agencies, such as BWSR, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. They work with federal agencies, such as Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers, United States Department of Agriculture, United States Environmental Protection Agency and United States Fish and Wildlife Service. They also work with cities, counties, and such organizations as Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and regional governments, such as the Metropolitan Council. At all times a WD must be responsive to the community or communities they serve as well as citizen groups, which may from time to time seek assistance. This includes organizations, such as Lake Associations or Community Development organizations of many types.

To capitalize on watershed districts combined knowledge and to share information, the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) was incorporated August 26, 1971.

II. Core Values:

- Integrity
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Relevance
- Science-based

III. State Mandate: Per Minnesota State Statute 103D.201 subdivision 1, WDs are “to conserve the natural resources of the state by land use planning, flood control, and other conservation projects by using sound scientific principles for the protection of the public health and welfare and the provident use of the natural resources.”

IV. Mission: MAWD provides relevant educational opportunities, information, training, and advocacy for WDs and Water Management Organizations (WMOs).

V. Vision: Establish MAWD as the leading resource and advocate regarding water and watershed management.

VI. Strategic Planning Committee Membership and Intent: The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to establish goals to move MAWD to achieving its Mission and Vision.

The MAWD Board of Directors (BOD) determined that the effective membership of this committee should consist of a

- A Chair from the MAWD Board of Directors,
- Three (3) WD or WMO Managers representing the three MAWD Regions of the state
- Three (3) current WD or WMO Administrators (MAWA) also representing the three MAWD Regions of the State

The Strategic Planning Committee is charged to develop a Strategic Plan every three (3) years with annual reviews and updates in the intervening years. The first Strategic Plan covered 2016 through 2019; the second Strategic Plan covers from 2020 through 2022. Each Strategic Plan will be presented to the MAWD BOD for comment and to the membership for approval at the annual meeting.

VII. Strategic Goals

Based on input from the MAWD membership via a membership survey taken in December 2018, goals need to focus in three (3) areas:

- Education and Training
- Communication and Collaboration
- Lobbying and Advocacy

MAWD activities will be done in support of these focus areas.

Education and Training

Activities in this area address the education and training needs of Board Managers, Administrators, and staff. MAWD will partner with such agencies and organizations as BWSR, SWCDs, and the University of Minnesota to offer timely and affordable educational opportunities. This includes new incumbent training in the three target groups.

Ongoing activities include:

- Continue to partner with other agencies and organizations to offer timely and affordable educational opportunities.
- Continue to expand training to MAWD members to engage with their elected officials. This includes State and Federal Representatives and Senators as well as local officials.

New initiatives include:

- Identify and advertise online/eLearning courses and training opportunities.

Communication and Collaboration

Activities in this area focus on keeping MAWD membership informed of developments with water issues and collaboration between MAWD and other agencies and groups.

Ongoing activities include:

- Continue to expand MAWD's social media presence to increase visibility and impact.
- Continue to improve communications to MAWD members regarding MAWD's legislative efforts and general advocacy. This would be done prior to, during, and after the legislative session.
- Continue weekly video and written updates during the session and periodically off session.

New initiatives include:

- Expand MAWD’s presence in the press with the goal of educating the public about water organizations and their activities.
- Post official MAWD documents in such a way as to increase accessibility by MAWD members.
- Post the WD Handbook on line in a more searchable format that is easier to update and reference.
- Post reports from individuals representing MAWD on various state boards on the MAWD website after each meeting. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - BWSR Board
 - Clean Water Council
 - Water Roundtable
 - Drainage Work Group
- Publish quarterly financial reports to promote financial transparency between MAWD and its membership.
- Develop brochures and handouts in the following areas:
 - Annual legislative agenda
 - Benefits of watershed management
 - How to form a WD

Lobbying and Advocacy

Activities in this area focus on lobbying on issues the membership identifies in their legislative agenda and advocating for MAWD and water organizations. These activities take place year-round and not just during the legislative session.

Ongoing activities include:

- Continue work to establish MAWD as a leadership organization – the experts with regard to water management.
- Continue to improve and increase the effectiveness of the MAWD legislative agenda preparation and lobbying activities.
- Continue to actively collaborate with State Agencies and other organizations as appropriate on legislative issues.
- Continue to actively support watershed management and the formation of new watershed organizations.

New initiatives include:

- Establish regional chapters in Regions I and II to promote more local information sharing and education.
- Implement MAWD’s Sunset Policy for resolutions.
- Ensure that legislative positions are in alignment with the MAWD mission, vision, and core values.
- Develop State and Federal Policy statements that reflect MAWD’s legislative positions and post these on the MAWD website.