



Five Year Strategic Plan 2008-2012

Adopted
May 7, 2008

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Introduction

In 2007 the Board of Managers contracted with the Minnesota Department of Administration, Management Analysis & Development (MAD), to conduct a situation assessment and facilitate strategic planning.

MAD developed the situation assessment, summarized in the “Background” section, after interviews and focus groups with all of the CRWD board managers and staff, and a broad array of stakeholders. Taking the situation assessment into account, the Capitol Region Watershed District board and staff worked together to prepare a five-year strategic plan. They confirmed their existing mission, created a vision of the future they would like to see as a result of the CRWD’s work, and developed strategies and initial action plans for achieving that vision. The mission, vision and strategies are presented below.

In the spring of 2008 the Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) Board of Managers and staff completed a new five-year strategic plan, which will guide development of the 2008 CRWD watershed management plan.

Background

Capitol Region Watershed District was created in 1998 in response to a citizen petition to the Board of Water and Soil Resources. In the five years following the 2002 CRWD Strategic Plan, CRWD staff grew from zero to eight staff, and the board established rules and a permitting process. Other major initiatives included acquiring the Trout Brook Interceptor Storm Sewer in 2006 and developing lake management plans and implementing water quality improvement projects for McCarron's and Como lakes.

Against this backdrop of growth and change, CRWD began its second round of strategic planning with an assessment of the current situation, which found:

Mission: CRWD board, staff and stakeholders understood and agreed with the organization's mission.

Our Mission is to protect, manage and improve the water resources of the Capitol Region Watershed District.

Stakeholders interviewed through a series of focus groups also raised questions about priorities within this mission, including: What is the CRWD's role in relation to its partners? How does the organization leverage past success into future accomplishments? To answer these questions our stakeholders offered these comments.

Partnership: The CRWD should strengthen relationships with citizen, civic organizations, municipalities and other partners, in order to:

- Solicit stakeholders' ideas in the early stages of developing new projects and when reviewing the rules;
- Regularly gather feedback on the effect of CRWD's projects and programs, as partners see it;
- Share stories of projects and programs that have been deemed a success as well as those that need improvement;
- Collaborate on projects where CRWD can provide a District wide service more efficiently than local municipalities; and
- Leverage each other's resources, experience and expertise.

Build on successes: Most of the feedback from stakeholders was positive, and concerns were focused on continuing to be an effective force in protecting, maintaining and improving water quality in the watershed. Specific suggestions included:

- Articulate long-range goals for large-scale changes that may be desired in the watershed, this means thinking big and dreaming beyond the typical 10 year planning cycle;
- Utilize and disseminate data from monitoring, and ensure that research efforts are focused on the identified issues;
- Prioritize CRWD and municipal capital projects, so that they work together to provide the greatest possible benefit for water resources and the public; and
- Effectively communicate information and resources about the watershed and water quality improvement opportunities to low-income neighborhoods, and to audiences with diverse cultural backgrounds and languages.

CRWD Mission and Values

Mission

Our mission is to protect, manage and improve the water resources of the Capitol Region Watershed District.

Values

In accomplishing its mission, the Capitol Region Watershed District operates with these values:

- Strive for excellence, with competent, knowledgeable, committed, and innovative Board members and staff;
- Providing research-based, informed, mission-driven decision making; and
- Being an open, approachable, facilitator of partnerships to enhance the District's capacity to protect, maintain and improve water resources.

CRWD Five-Year Vision

CRWD vision describes the future state of the watershed that the organization hopes to create through its work over the next five years.

Vision Statement

The Capitol Region Watershed District achieves cleaner waters through strategic initiatives and partnerships, using:

- *research-based, informed decision making,*
- *effective water quality rules, and*
- *Education and outreach to promote changed attitudes toward water quality stewardship.*

Five goals of equal importance emerged as critical to our vision:

Goal – Measurably cleaner waters

As a result of CRWD’s work, citizens will be able to see and enjoy water that is and looks cleaner, with less litter and improved habitat and natural functions. The CRWD will be able to measure improvements, both visible and those not visible by the naked eye, that demonstrate progress toward healthy water ecosystems. CRWD will also encourage and support programs that will ensure clean groundwater for future generations.

Goal – Education and awareness about the watershed and water quality

Education is the key to developing awareness and as a result the public will have a greater understanding of their watershed, water quality issues and sustainable practices. Including the public in this work will help them develop an appreciation of the important role of the Mississippi River and all of our water resources and how human activities affect water quality.

Education will be directed toward diverse audiences, ranging from schools throughout the district, to neighborhoods that have not traditionally been reached. As understanding of water quality issues increases, one hope is more and more people will respond and take responsibility for their impacts on the watershed.

Goal - Effective rules and standards

CRWD will continue to be an advocate for developing effective and reasonable water quality and quantity standards and work with stakeholders to evaluate District rules, and to support the development of leading edge standards for storm water. CRWD will also be a leader in water quality regulation through its work with local, regional and state organizations and promote consistent standards throughout the metropolitan area.

Goal - Be a Key Partner

CRWD's work will encourage citizens to take ownership and assume responsibility by collaborating with other entities to accomplish projects that improve water quality. Collaboration will reduce duplication, promote communication and sharing of information, make the best use of the partners' collective skills and resources and develop strong, effective messages on pollution prevention and watershed protection. CRWD will have efficient and effective

processes for working in partnerships, and will create a program to recognize stakeholders' contributions in improving water quality.

Goal –Strategic projects

CRWD projects will be strategically selected, designed and implemented to effectively improve water quality and efficiently use resources. Being *strategic* includes early involvement in the development of projects, seeking creative funding solutions, identifying and implementing innovative water quality practices, and working with partners in the watershed to promote the best use of everyone's resources. CRWD will demonstrate fiscal responsibility to succeed in its projects.

CRWD Strategies to Achieve the Vision

CRWD strategies to achieve the vision describe eight approaches to reach its vision and goals. Each strategy will be supported by implementation plans. Implementation plans will be developed as the part of the annual work plan and watershed management plan.

1) Project and program development

Water quality improvement projects are essential to the CRWD's mission and consume a significant amount of its staff time and resources. Because the need will continue to exceed our organization's capacity for these projects, the CRWD will work with partners to identify the highest priority problem areas and strategically choose projects that more effectively address those problems. Priorities will be selected by the analysis of the CRWD's monitoring data and other pertinent data. Potential priorities may include increased attention to wetland restoration and development of an easement and land acquisition program. Essential to its efforts to strategically select projects, the CRWD will also identify and pursue new funding sources.

2) Enhance communication to educate the public and raise awareness

CRWD will develop an education plan, which will include involving members of the community in education programs, tailoring outreach to different communities' areas of interest, and developing a career shadowing program. The CRWD web site will be compelling and user-friendly, and staff will increase the use of signage and interpretive materials. Development of a public art plan and policy will be a core element of the education and outreach plan.

3) Continually improve rules and guidelines

CRWD will continue to annually review its rules with the Technical Advisory Committee and stakeholders. The organization will also complete a Wetland Management Plan and develop voluntary guidelines to encourage and improve run-off control at non-regulated sites.

4) Continue to develop and maintain partnerships

CRWD will take the lead in forming partnerships throughout the watershed to enhance all the partners' mutual objectives. In some cases this will mean establishing formal structures for collaboration and communication, such as organizing a regional consortium of water quality organizations. Less structured approaches will also be used through continually seizing partnership opportunities when and where they present themselves. CRWD must always be flexible enough to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves.

5) Infrastructure management

As a result of its success in the implementation of water quality BMPs, the District now owns and operates infrastructure. One major piece of infrastructure the district owns is a 5.9 mile section of the Trout Brook Interceptor storm sewer. The CRWD will develop and implement a maintenance plan, including a tracking system, maintenance log, and plans for maintaining each type of BMP. The organization will keep infrastructure maintenance and management in mind as future projects are built. CRWD will work to find ways to utilize the Trout Brook Interceptor storm sewer as tool for education and water quality improvement.

6) Perform research and development, share our findings

As sufficient monitoring data becomes available, the organization will establish baselines and identify areas for more extensive research. CRWD will create a research and development program to identify and address gaps in knowledge, while continually seeking new ways to improve water quality. As the organization compiles results from its research and development work, it will disseminate its findings through multiple, diverse channels.

7) Internal growth and development

The CRWD will strengthen its capacity to accomplish its mission by conducting annual planning, ensuring continuing education for staff, and developing a long-term, sustainable operation plan. The sustainable operation plan would address budget, office space, equipment, vehicles, and staff to provide enough resources to do the District's work.

8) Support regional groundwater efforts and determine CRWD's role

The CRWD will support the update of the Ramsey County Groundwater Plan, and guided by that plan, will incorporate groundwater in its education efforts.

APPENDIX A

Current Implementation Plans

CRWD Strategies to Achieve the Vision

CRWD will annually review and update the Implementation Plans. The annual update will occur when the annual Work Plan is being developed.

1) Strategic project and program development

Initial implementation plans include:

- Identify creative and/or alternative funding for projects, ensure that the CRWD is eligible for future state funding of clean water projects;
- Develop a Watershed Management Plan which incorporates:
 - Strategic projects in high priority areas
 - Maximizing creative funding options
 - Future trends
 - Identifying partners for implementation
 - Broad public involvement

2) Enhance communication to educate the public and raise awareness

Initial implementation plans include:

- Develop and implement an education/outreach plan
- Accelerate current programs to enhance the web site and signage
- Develop a public art policy a core element of the education and outreach plan

3) Continually improve rules and guidelines

4) Develop and maintain partnerships

5) Infrastructure management

6) Perform research and development, share our findings

Initial implementation plans:

- Identify collaborative opportunities to collect and analyze data.
- Electronically share data and analysis.
- Use data to continually update and guide project development.

7) Internal growth and development

8) Support regional groundwater efforts and determine CRWD's role

Initial implementation plan:

- The CRWD will educate its board and staff about the county's groundwater plan, including an update from county staff and a day of training (Groundwater 101) for board members.