



Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Orientation Guide

February, 2026



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Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD)

Welcome, Overview, and Key Information

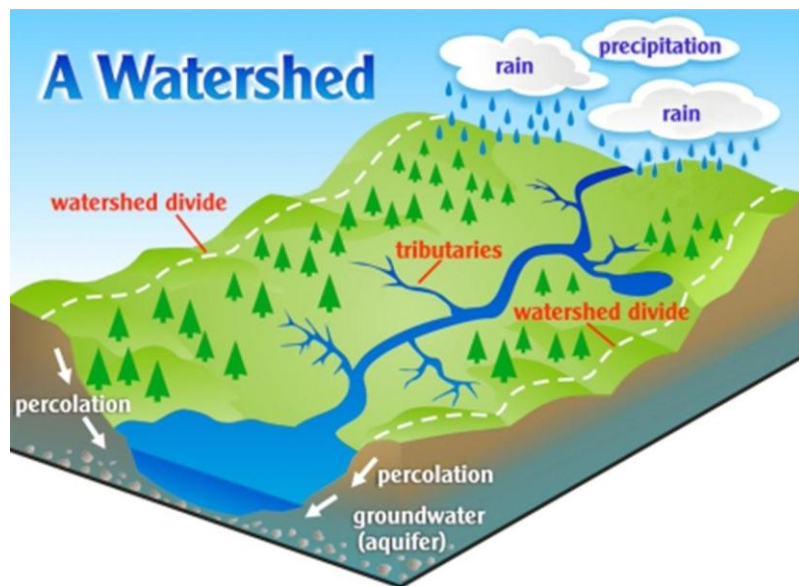
Welcome!

Congratulations and welcome to **Capitol Region Watershed District's Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**. As a CAC member, you are joining a team of committed residents and community leaders passionate about improving water quality and ensuring the health of our local environment. This guide helps you orient to CRWD, explains your role as a committee member, and discusses the impact you can have as an active CAC member. Your voice and experience are vital to ensuring the equitable sustainability of our water resources.

After reading this Orientation guide, take time to become familiar with the wealth of information on the [CRWD website](#). When you have questions or ideas, please contact one of the CAC Co-Chairs or CRWD staff. We're excited to collaborate with you!

About Watershed Districts

What is a Watershed



A watershed is an area of land where all the water that falls within it—whether from rain, snow, or other precipitation—flows downhill into a common outlet, such as a river, lake, or ocean.

Figure 1 – Image Source: Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District

What is a Watershed District, and What is CRWD?

A watershed district is a special-purpose unit of government in Minnesota formed to manage water resources within its geographical boundaries. Watersheds are land areas that drain rain and snowmelt into creeks, lakes, wetlands, and rivers. CRWD was established in 1998 to coordinate and lead local water resource protection and improvement in a way that individual cities, counties and agencies cannot do alone. CRWD was founded after concerned residents petitioned to protect Como Lake. Since then, the District has become a **national, award-winning leader** in urban water management.

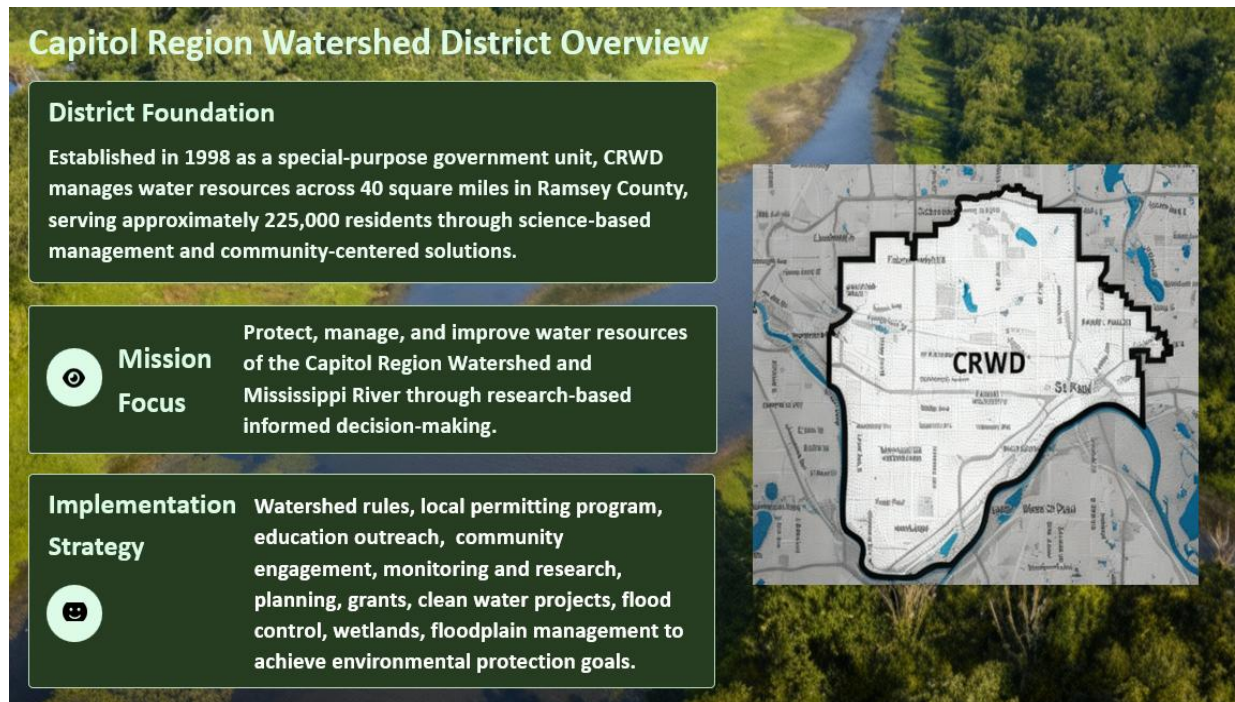


Figure 2 – Image Source: Shutterstock

CRWD covers about 40 square miles and includes parts of Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Maplewood, Roseville, and Saint Paul. It serves an urban and diverse population of approximately 225,000 residents and is located entirely within Ramsey County.

Subwatersheds in the CRWD

Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD) divides its service area into subwatersheds outlined in Figure 3. These are smaller, hydrologically coherent “neighborhoods” within the larger watershed—each defined by where rain and snowmelt naturally flow before reaching a lake, wetland, or the Mississippi River. This structure lets CRWD tailor solutions to very different landscapes, from dense downtown streets to residential lakes.

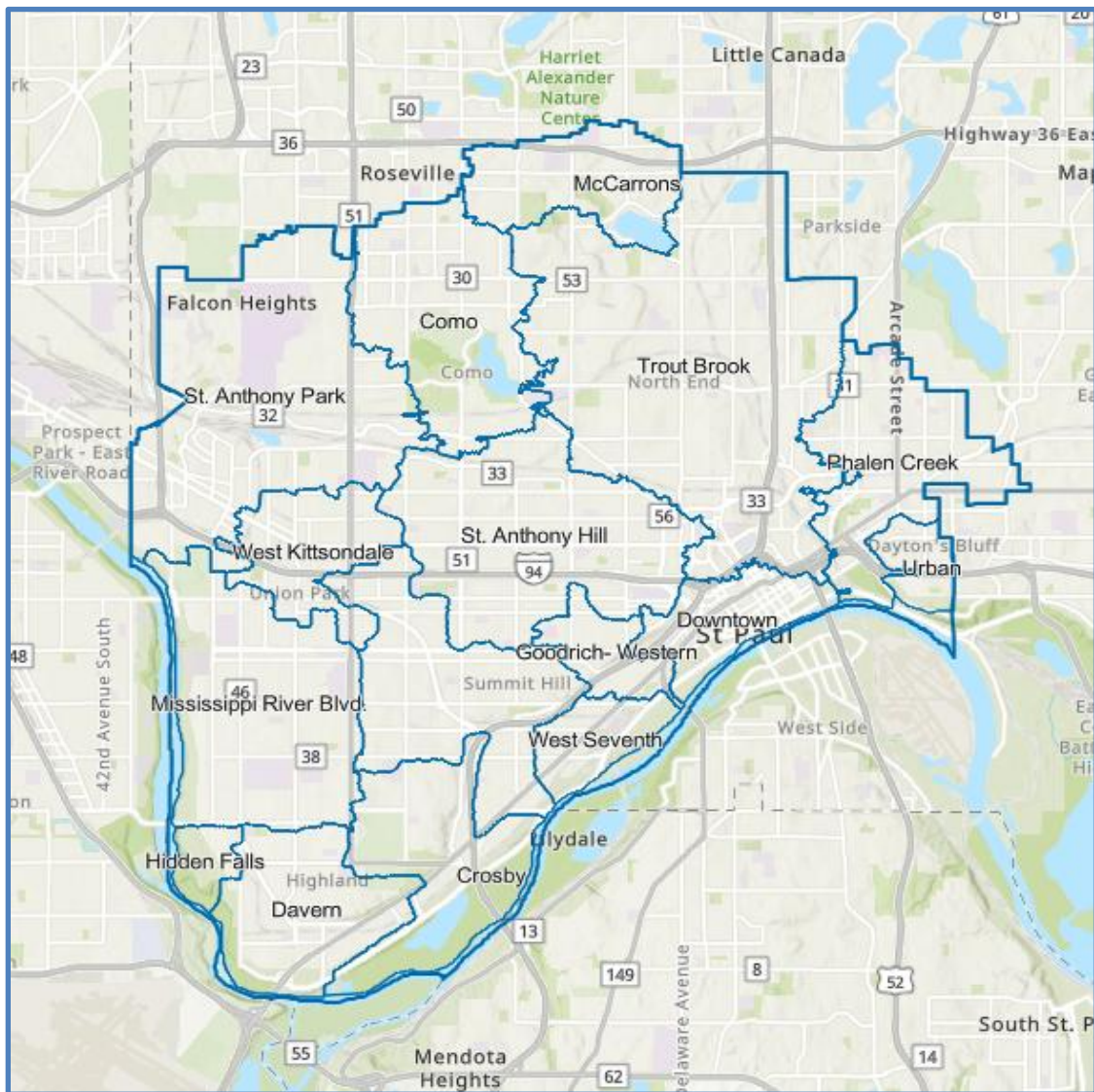


Figure 3

Drainage in CRWD

- **Como Lake:** Drains land areas that discharge to **Como Lake**, a shallow, highly nutrient-sensitive urban lake. These subwatersheds include residential neighborhoods, parkland, and major roads.
- **Lake McCarrons:** Drains to **Lake McCarrons**, which serves recreational uses and as a drinking water source. The subwatershed spans Roseville, Falcon Heights, and Saint Paul, and includes mixed residential and institutional land uses.
- **Loeb Lake:** A smaller, enclosed subwatershed draining to **Loeb Lake**, located in Saint Paul.
- **Trout Brook:** A heavily urbanized and largely **pipd stream system** draining portions of Saint Paul, Roseville and Maplewood.
- **Crosby Lake:** Drains to **Crosby Lake**, a backwater lake connected to the Mississippi River floodplain. This subwatershed includes steep bluffs, rail corridors, and transportation infrastructure.
- **Mississippi River Gorge:** (*Saint Anthony Park & Mississippi River Boulevard subwatersheds*) Drains directly to the **Mississippi River through the gorge reach**, characterized by steep slopes and rapid conveyance.
- **Mississippi River Confluence:** (*Hidden Falls, Davern, Crosby, West Kittsondale, East Kittsondale, West Seventh, Goodrich–Western*) This complex set of subwatersheds drains to the **Mississippi River near its confluence with the Minnesota River**.
- **Mississippi River Downtown:** (*Saint Anthony Hill, downtown, Phalen Creek, and urban subwatersheds*) Highly impervious, intensely developed areas draining directly to the **Mississippi River through downtown Saint Paul**.

Water Resources in the District

The Mississippi River

All water within the district ultimately drains into the Mississippi River, one of the most significant rivers in North America. CRWD works to reduce pollutants that enter the river through stormwater runoff.

District Lakes

- **Como Lake, Crosby Lake, Little Crosby Lake, and Loeb Lake** in Saint Paul
- **Lake McCarrons** in Roseville

These lakes are important community assets, providing aesthetics, wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities such as boating, fishing, and swimming. CRWD partners with local governments, community groups and residents to protect, restore, and maintain the ecological health of their communities.

Wetland Systems

Urbanization has significantly reduced natural wetlands in CRWD by draining them for development. Remaining wetland areas—such as Woodview Marsh, Willow Reserve, and Villa Park wetland—play an essential role in filtering sediment and other pollutants from stormwater runoff, preventing flooding, and supporting wildlife.

Groundwater Resources

While most Twin Cities residents rely on the upper reaches of the Mississippi River for drinking water, groundwater supports industrial uses and helps maintain base flows in lakes and streams. CRWD protects groundwater through pollution prevention and monitoring.



Figure 4 - Image source: <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2025/what-is-water-really-worth>

CRWD Goals

The following strategic goals guide CRWD's work:

- **Cleaner Water:** Reduce pollutants and restore ecological balance.
- **Stormwater Management Mimicking Natural Hydrology:** Design systems that slow, spread, and soak rainwater where it falls.
- **Connected Communities:** Help residents and institutions understand their role in watershed protection.
- **Community Awareness and Action:** Inspire grassroots leadership and engagement.

- **Organizational Excellence:** Maintain strong internal capacity, expertise, accountability, and learning.
- **Equity in CRWD Work:** Prioritize environmental justice and reduce disparities in environmental benefits.
- **Effective Governance:** Ensure transparent, inclusive, and coordinated decision-making.
- **Resilient Watershed Management:** Adapt to climate change and build sustainability.



Figure 5

For a detailed description and discussion of CRWD goals, see the [CRWD Watershed Management Plan](#).

Structure of CRWD

CRWD is governed by a five-member Board of Managers, appointed by the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners. Board members serve three-year terms and provide strategic oversight and policy direction.

A professional staff representing diverse disciplines carries out day-to-day operations and implements the District's Watershed Management Plan, adopted in 2020. Staff work in areas ranging from engineering and monitoring to communications, education, regulatory oversight, and grantmaking.

How CRWD Works

CRWD implements its mission through a range of core functions:



Figure 6

CRWD Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

CAC Mission

The CAC observes and advises CRWD's Board of Managers in alignment with [MN Statute §103D.331](#). This includes providing feedback on CRWD's projects and plans so that CRWD decisions may reflect community values, and promoting transparency and accountability. CAC members serve as both advisors and community ambassadors.

Roles & Responsibilities

As a member of the CAC, your voice, experience, and ideas ensure that CRWD's projects and priorities reflect the values and needs of the people who live, work, and play in our watershed. Together, CAC members help make more inclusive decisions, guide meaningful community engagement, and inspire others to protect and restore our shared water resources.



- **Contribute to planning processes and project design:** Discuss and provide feedback on watershed plans and CRWD-led infrastructure projects to ensure they reflect community needs and values. Co-sponsor and attend CRWD field tours.
- **Communicate with community members about CRWD's work:** Act as an ambassador by sharing updates, events, and educational materials with your networks to increase awareness of CRWD initiatives. Promote CRWD projects through storytelling, public outreach, and education. Host guest speakers and workshops. Recruit and mentor new CAC members.
- **Identify local issues and opportunities for collaboration:** Identify important environmental and community issues and recommend partnerships with organizations, schools, and civic groups that align with CRWD's mission. Engage with neighborhood and community organizations and public agencies. Co-sponsor community events and award programs.
- **Review the annual budget and major work plans:** Evaluate budget priorities and strategic plans to ensure equitable resource allocation and alignment with CRWD goals.
- **Suggest new outreach and engagement strategies:** Propose innovative and culturally relevant methods to reach underrepresented populations and enhance community participation in CRWD programming.
- **Support public education and policy advocacy efforts:** Assist in organizing and attending outreach events, supporting CRWD legislative priorities, and raising public awareness about water protection and climate resilience. Support state and local policy advocacy to advance CRWD's mission.
- **Participate in the internal activities of the CAC:** Attend Board of Managers meetings as an observer, take a turn to record minutes for the monthly meetings, volunteer for elected offices, and contribute to the various subcommittees of the CAC.
- **Maintain and update electronic documents:** This includes the orientation guide, the CAC living dictionary, and the CAC technical resources file.

Recruitment & Appointment

Recruitment

- CRWD is committed to forming a CAC that reflects the district's diversity. Recruitment efforts aim to include representatives from each Saint Paul District Planning Council and from other watershed cities, Roseville, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale and Maplewood. CAC members are encouraged to recommend and mentor prospective candidates.

Appointment

- Interested individuals must complete an application available on the [CRWD website](#) or by request. The Board of Managers appoints new members based on their interest, availability, experience, and the need to balance representation across the watershed.

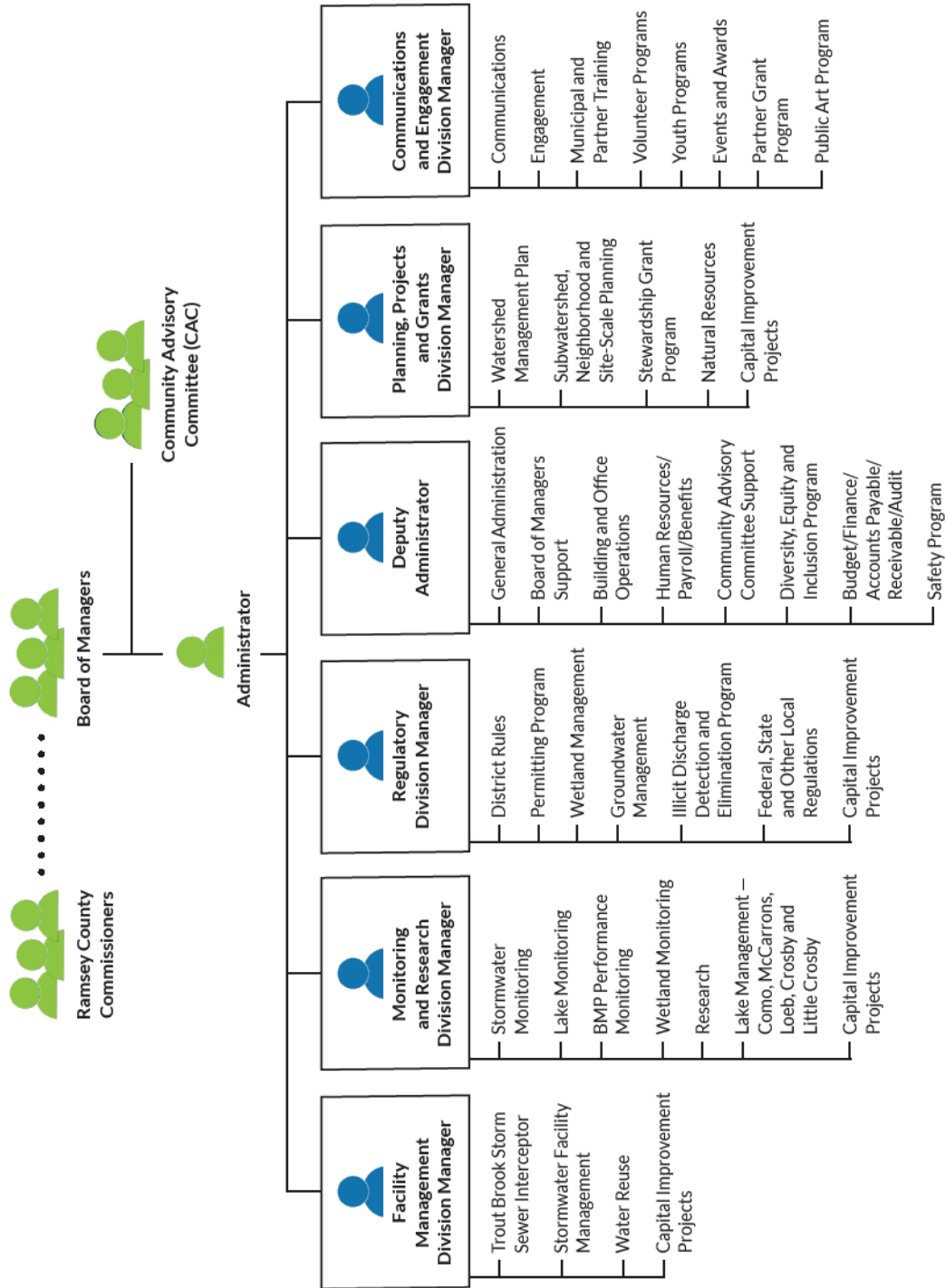
CAC Organization

- The CAC elects two co-chairs from among its members.
- The CAC follows a set of bylaws, last adopted in 2021.
- The CAC meets monthly and may form subcommittees or task forces as needed.
- Members serve a one-year term and are appointed or reappointed annually.

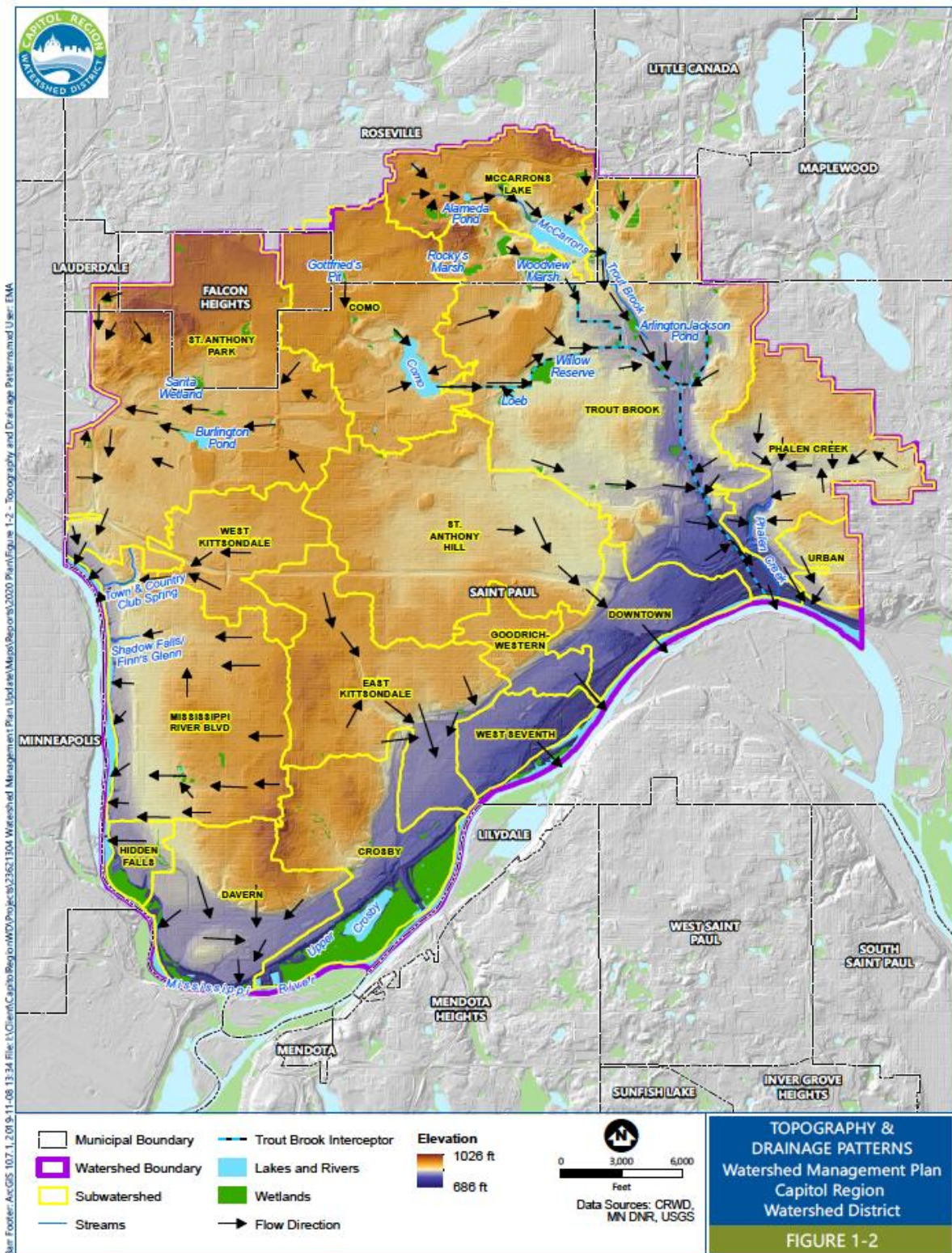
Helpful Resources

- [CRWD Website](#)
- [CRWD Water Management Plan Overview Brochure](#): 2021–2030 priorities and strategies
- [CAC Living Dictionary](#): Definitions of terms, acronyms, and technical concepts
- [Technical Resources](#): Descriptions of BMPs, tools, and modeling approaches
- [CAC Bylaws](#): Internal rules and operating structure. Also in the attachments to this guide
- [MN Statute §103D.331](#): Advisory committee responsibilities
- [CRWD Organizational Chart](#): Staff structure and functions - attached
- [CRWD Topography and Drainage Patterns](#) - attached

CRWD Organizational Chart



Last updated: 11/25/2024



Bar Footer: ArcGIS 10.7.1, 2015-11-08 13:34 File: I:\Client\Capitol Region\Watershed Management Plan Update\Map\Regions\2020 Plan\Figure 1-2 - Topography and Drainage Patterns.mxd User: EMA