



Update on MAWSAC report to Legislature and Met Council



Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee

September 24, 2026

Lanya Ross

Action requested: ID any needed changes

Are any changes needed before you can approve finalizing?

- Does the report include your priority messages about the region's water supply?
- Are there any errors that need correcting?
- Do you support the recommendations?

MAWSAC's purpose for the report

This report helps: legislators, regional leaders, and local decision-makers

To make informed decisions about: managing water use, planning for future demand, and funding water systems

By providing: clear data, key issues, and practical recommendations

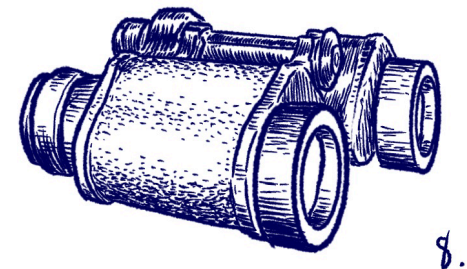
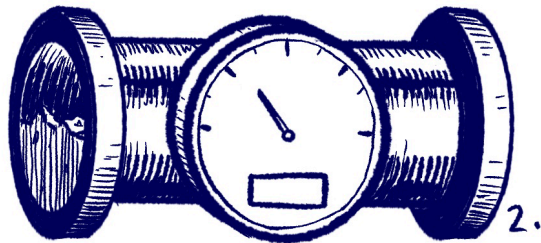
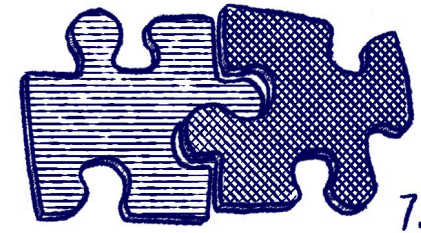
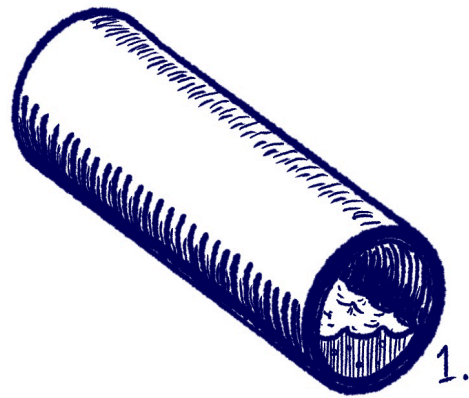
So that policies and investments support: safe, reliable, and sustainable water systems.

Summary of committee input so far

- On 2/14, TAC input informed possible topics/issues for MAWSAC consideration
- On 3/26, MAWSAC prioritized issues and endorsed format
- On 5/14, TAC provided input to priority issues
- On 6/11, MAWSAC provided input on draft issue briefs, highlighted priority content
- On 8/13, TAC reviewed complete report draft and provided input
- Staff writers also looked for alignment with MAWSAC-approved Metro Area Water Supply Plan, MAWSAC and TAC-informed 2050 regional water policies, and legislative recommendations in the subregional action plans in the Metro Area Water Supply Plan

Communications support

Editorial and design support secured



MAWSAC & TAC priority issues

Issue brief topics:

1. Protect water quality and source water to ensure public health and long-term resilience
2. Sustainably balance water use to support current communities, natural resources, and growth
3. Invest in resilient water systems to address aging infrastructure and new demands and challenges
4. Improve understanding of groundwater and surface water connections to guide decisions
5. Keep water affordable and resilient so communities can rely on their water supply over the long-term

ISSUE: Protect water quality and source water to ensure public health and long-term resilience

MAWSAC input from June 11, 2026

- Emphasize that clean, reliable drinking water is essential for everyone and recognize that different communities have different water quality concerns that require local solutions and support to prevent and address pollution.
- Support actions to reduce pollution, protect public health, update water infrastructure, strengthen water quality regulations; increase funding for water treatment, emerging contaminants, and private well testing and treatment; and support the continuation of the Clean Water Fund.
- Reference successful efforts such as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMLD) efforts and Clean Water Fund projects.
- Include perspectives from older, established communities; agriculture; private well owners, and perhaps the Plumbing Board.

ISSUE: Balancing water use to protect sustainable water supply

MAWSAC input from June 11, 2026

- Emphasize that while water is plentiful, it is not a fixed resource, Climate change and urban growth put stress on water supplies, making conservation a cost-effective investment before shortages occur.
- Clarify what it means to “protect” water resources and reinforce the need for an institutionalized regional approach, including funding for infrastructure improvements and asset management.
- Support actions that promote equitable access to water for residents and businesses during droughts other periods of water stress and recognize how groundwater pumping and contamination can affect neighboring communities.
- Encourage green infrastructure and expanded tree canopy to improve groundwater recharge, reduce heat islands, and lower outdoor water demand.
- Include examples of successful and unsuccessful approaches, including laws and programs, to help inform future policy decisions.
- Emphasize modeling that represents the interconnectivity of water resources, communities.
- Include perspectives from communities and sectors that may be affected by new policies, consider costs and benefits, and emphasize water equity for communities that rely on wells or experience greater heat and water challenges.

ISSUE: Water supply infrastructure: Managing aging systems and long-term investment needs

MAWSAC input from June 11, 2026

- Emphasize that local governments face significant financial burdens from state and federal regulations, and unfunded mandates should be avoided when addressing water infrastructure needs.
- Support improved asset management and capital improvement planning and provide sustained funding for water infrastructure.
- Recognize that water infrastructure is interconnected and complex, and policies and funding should encourage a more integrated approach.
- Support comprehensive plan updates and reviews that look at the adequacy of CIPs; require or encourage water supply infrastructure partnerships; require consideration of access to other PWSs when prioritizing state investments or incentivizing planning and construction; require an asset management plan and implementation to get funding; take a connected systems approach to state and regional policy; promote circularity through guiding land use and economic development/incentives; provide a framework for public/private partnerships to support reuse; promote water system consolidation where it's feasible and makes economic sense – does it make sense for neighboring cities to have their own systems or to develop a shared system?
- Include specific examples and details in the brief, such as Blaine and Lexington who took different approaches to investing in system maintenance or to St. Michael who partners with two other towns to share a more cost effective water system; refer to districts/systems (scale, partnering); circularity, systems; integrated planning & implementation; give examples of do's/don'ts – cities/regions that do it well and are cost effective
- Include perspectives from other "silos", private sector, a non-consumptive business model

ISSUE: Understanding groundwater and surface water interactions for long-term water supply sustainability

MAWSAC input from June 11, 2026

- Emphasize that groundwater and surface water are interconnected and need to be evaluated for cumulative impacts such as source water protection and impact to ecosystems. Example: Vermillion River recharges source water.
- Support evaluation of cumulative impacts, modeling, and consideration of sensitive ecosystems; strengthen understanding of surface water benefit of quantity on supply and potential impacts of pollutants into groundwater.
- Refer to Vermillion River – a source for drinking water, cold water stream dependent on groundwater for ecosystem health.

ISSUE: The cost of water: Balancing affordability, resilience, and long-term sustainability

MAWSAC input from June 11, 2026

- Emphasize that water infrastructure costs are growing and impacting affordability.
- Acknowledge that every system is different and have different costs (customer base, infrastructure age, contaminants, etc.).
- Acknowledge that it can be difficult for communities to balance a push for tiered rates to support water conservation with affordability
- Refer to data about what percent of communities use asset management and capital planning.

Legislative-related recommendations in subregional actions plans (1 of 4)

Water quality:

- Create policies and leverage funding to identify sources and reduce non-point source pollution
- Support the passage of limited liability legislation to reduce chloride use
- Propose changes to statute to improve cross-jurisdictional planning for wellhead protection
- Eliminate nonessential PFAS uses (done with Amara's Law?) and increase funding to address PFAS contamination
- Provide funding assistance for water treatment for public water suppliers and privately-owned wells
- Increase funding for testing and monitoring at the state level
- Empower more collaboration between regulatory agencies and researchers and build up state-level capacity to enforce water quality regulations; DON'T make changes to water quality regulations until tools and plans are made available – so that the work can be financed, laboratories are equipped to do required testing, etc.
- Increase funding for drainage water(tile) management of nitrogen and phosphorus
- Advocate for reuse and to limit barriers to implementation

Legislative-related recommendations in subregional actions plans (2 of 4)

Water quantity:

- Increase funding for testing and monitoring at the state level
- Fund studies and reports for improved groundwater data
- Support a bill to fund a regional dynamic groundwater model for shared use
- Advocate for reuse and to limit barriers to implementation
- Support strategic growth planning at the state level, so that no area faces water supply pressure beyond its limits
- Support funding requests for research and implementation of effective water conservation messaging/outreach

Legislative-related recommendations in subregional actions plans (3 of 4)

Infrastructure and funding

- Establish supplemental funding for water systems to help manage changing rates
- Encourage more mechanisms for proactive financing rather than reactive funding
- Legislative change to allow communities to charge rates to help fund reuse and conservation investments
- Support groundwater appropriation fees that cover the cost for groundwater management

Legislative-related recommendations in subregional actions plans (4 of 4)

Groundwater-surface water interaction

- Review and change infiltration requirements for better protection
- Pass legislation to allow Minnesota to have groundwater injection control and increase ability to use graywater for recharge

TAC input on August 13, 2026

- Strongly encouraged MAWSAC to use a direct and urgent tone for this report.
- The 'Current context' call outs and graphic elements of each issue brief should be revised to highlight the urgency of the issue, supporting the need and value of acting in the next 1-5 years.
- Recommended actions in each issue brief should be more direct but still high level, with examples that provide more specifics of what action could look like.
- Editorial comments that were incorporated into the draft shared today.

Recommendations: Protect water quality and source water to ensure public health and long-term resilience

Support pollution prevention and source water protection

Provide funding and policy support for practical actions that prevent pollution before it reaches drinking water sources. Examples include efforts that identify and reduce nonpoint source pollution, expanding agricultural conservation practices such as cover crops and nutrient reduction efforts, reducing chloride use on the landscape, and strengthening wellhead protection across jurisdictional boundaries.

Invest in drinking water treatment and contaminant response

Provide sustained funding to help public water suppliers and private well owners monitor and treat contaminants of concern such as nitrate, manganese, PFAS, chloride, and other known and emerging contaminants.

Increase capacity for water quality monitoring and research

Increase investment in monitoring, research, laboratory capacity, technical assistance, and collaboration among agencies, researchers, and local governments so communities have access to the tools needed to implement effective water quality programs.

Recommendations: Sustainably balance water use to support current communities, natural resources, and growth

Support regional and subregional water planning

Provide funding and incentives for regional collaboration, shared groundwater modeling, and coordinated planning so communities can address water challenges that extend beyond local boundaries.

Promote sustainable water use and conservation

Invest in programs that support for water conservation, water reuse, green infrastructure, and other proven strategies that reduce long-term demand while supporting continued economic growth. Consider establishing regional water-use targets that help accommodate future growth without increasing overall water use.

Improve information for long-term decision making

Invest in source water monitoring, regional modeling, and evaluation of changing water demands, including large-volume users and climate impacts, to improve planning and protect water supplies before problems become more costly.

Recommendations: Invest in resilient water systems to address aging infrastructure and new demands and challenges

Provide reliable funding and support for water infrastructure rate tools

Provide stable, long-term funding for proactive infrastructure renewal, including asset management and replacement of aging systems. Give communities greater flexibility to use water rates to fund conservation and reuse, as well as establish funding tools that support long term resource management, like groundwater appropriation fees that cover the cost for groundwater management.

Plan and invest in connected, resilient water systems that meet increasing future water demand

Plan water supply, wastewater, groundwater, conservation, and reuse as connected systems. Support regional projects such as emergency interconnections, shared treatment facilities, and water reuse (including public/private partnerships, where feasible) that can improve reliability and reduce infrastructure costs. Encourage development planning that accounts for projected population growth, changing industrial water demands, water efficiency, and water reuse so infrastructure investments are appropriately sized, cost-effective, and sustainable over time.

Build the capacity to manage lasting water systems

Strengthen our local capacity through technical assistance, workforce development, and support for long-term capital and infrastructure planning. Expand access to asset management, condition assessments, and cost-of-service tools that help communities make informed investments and maintain financially sustainable water systems.

Provide cybersecurity assistance

Public water systems in the region need additional support and expertise to verify and ensure that their systems are safe and not vulnerable to cyber attacks. This could be accomplished by funding a regional cybersecurity expert(s) who can consult with and advise all public water systems in the region.

Recommendations: Improve understanding of groundwater and surface water connections to guide decisions

Consider long-term and cumulative impacts

Evaluate the DNR's water permit allocation process^{GWSW-2} and identify improvements to better consider long-term and cumulative impacts on groundwater, surface water, and groundwater-dependent ecosystems when reviewing development and water-use decisions.

Improve monitoring and scientific information

Prioritize monitoring, modeling, and field studies in locations where groundwater-surface water interactions may have significant implications for water supply sustainability, ecosystem health, or future infrastructure decisions.

Strengthen coordinated planning

Encourage collaborative planning efforts among utilities, agencies, communities, watershed organizations, and researchers. Reinstate the Legislative Subcommittee on Minnesota Water Policy.

Recommendations: Keep water affordable and resilient so communities can rely on their water supply over the long-term

Support communities facing disproportionate costs

Develop and support programs to replace the now-defunct federal Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), to continue helping eligible low-income households pay for critical water service.

Strengthen and sustain the State's lead pipe replacement program

Minnesota has a goal of removing all lead pipes by 2033, beating the federal mandate deadline of 2037. Replacement is free to residents currently due to state and federal funding, but those funds are set to expire by 2027. Money from utility fees cannot be used for private infrastructure improvements and the cost of replacing pipes could fall on residents if the funding expires.

Improve long-term financial sustainability

Incentivize coordination among utilities, agencies, and funding programs to support efficient long-term investment.

Ensure affordability and revenue stability and improve affordability planning and transparency

Provide funding for Twin Cities metro region public water suppliers to conduct cost-of-service studies that strengthen asset management and support long-term capital planning, helping communities anticipate infrastructure replacement needs and reduce future costs.

Review & Discussion

~15 minutes: Time for independent review. Identify anything that **MUST** be changed before you are comfortable approving the report for final design and publishing.

~20 minutes: Discuss any concerns with a partner or your table. Identify specific changes that would make you comfortable approving the report.

~30 minutes: Large group discussion and report revision.

If issues can't be resolved in this meeting, work will continue through this fall and the revised draft brought to the December meeting for approval.

Next steps:

Proposed committee milestones

✓ Dec. 10, 2025	Kickoff conversation at joint MAWSAC-TAC meeting
✓ Feb, 12, 2026	TAC input on technical aspects of key messaging, draft outline
✓ Mar. 26, 2026	MAWSAC drafts report outline and key messaging
✓ May 14, 2026	TAC input on draft report, focusing on technical content
✓ June 11, 2026	<i>MAWSAC input on draft report</i>
✓ Aug. 13, 2026	TAC reviews draft report for technical accuracy
Sept. 24, 2026	<i>MAWSAC identifies any changes needed to finalize report</i>
Fall 2026	MAWSAC & TAC review final draft and
Dec. 10, 2026	<i>MAWSAC approves report for submittal to Met Council and Legislature</i>
Early 2027	MAWSAC & TAC receive final report to promote with stakeholders
Feb. 15, 2027	Report submitted to Minnesota Legislature



Thank you

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