

APPENDIX F: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND INPUT

The BCWMC began development of this plan in 2022 and embarked, first, on gathering input from partners, member cities, members of the public, state agencies, and regional governments. With the recognition that members of minority communities were not involved with previous planning efforts, the Commission made a concerted effort to engage with historically underserved and minority communities to develop this plan. In April 2022, the Commission held a workshop on “equity in watershed management” to develop a shared understanding of equity principles – such as diversity, equity, inclusion, and access – and how they could be incorporated into watershed management. Staff and commissioners attended events and communicated with Minneapolis neighborhood associations and others, with the goal of gathering input from diverse voices. In February 2023, the Commission held a public open house to share information and continue gathering ideas and perspectives from audiences across the watershed. The Commission also used an online survey to collect input from partners and community members from June 2022 to January 2023.

Equity in Watershed Management Workshop

In April 2022, the BCWMC held a workshop for BCWMC commissioners and TAC members to learn how equity principles (like diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA)) can be incorporated and addressed within watershed management. The event featured speakers from multiple organizations including Hennepin County, Metro Blooms, Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, and Minnesota Renewable Now. Presentations and small group discussions centered on topics such as locations and definitions of vulnerable communities, reflecting on experiences with environmental injustice, environmental healing and building relationships, and incorporating equity principals in watershed management. The group came away with a better sense of what DEIA means and examples of how the BCWMC watershed plan might help address environmental inequities.

In an effort to gather input from underserved or marginalized communities, early in 2023 the BCWMC approved a policy to incentivize (compensate) individuals or groups for participating in input-gathering activities such as interviews or focus groups. The policy was designed to remove a potential barrier for residents wishing to provide input by offering compensation (\$50 gift cards) that could be used to offset the costs of childcare, travel expenses, or lost wages. Despite efforts to reach new voices with this offer, only one individual utilized the incentive.

Member City Input

In summer 2022, outreach materials were developed to help BCWMC Technical Advisory Committee members communicate with residents, city administration, and city officials about the plan development process and timeline and to help solicit input on watershed issues and priorities. Member cities provided feedback on the level of service and quality of programs provided by the BCWMC, activities that are working well and where improvements could be made, BCWMC programs that could be expanded or reduced, and priority concerns.

Public Input Survey

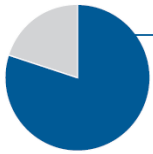
The BCWMC hosted a public survey to gather input from watershed residents and others interested in the health of the watershed. The survey was hosted online June 2022 – January 2023 and paper copies of the survey were available at events during the same timeframe. The survey gathered responses from 165 people (Figure F-1).

Press Release

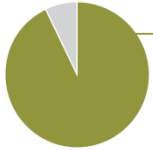
A press release about the development of the BCWMC Watershed Plan and the need for input from residents was developed and submitted to local newspapers. The Sun Sailor and Sun Post printed/posted the article on September 9 and September 15, 2022, respectively.

www.hometownsource.com/sun_sailor/free/bassett-creek-watershed-seeks-input-and-insights-on-lakes-streams-and-natural-areas/article_4ee22d54-2fbb-11ed-9ca9-f7652dde7d05.html.

165 Respondents

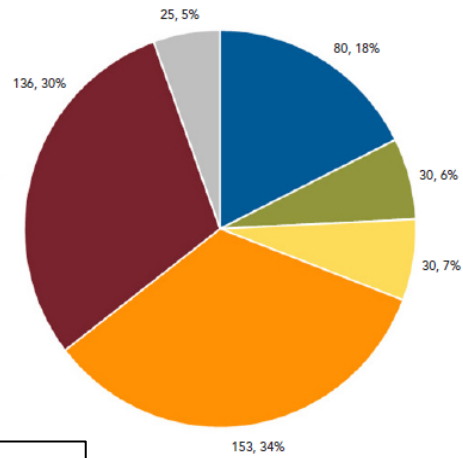


80% indicate natural resources like lakes, streams, and wetlands are very important to their quality of life



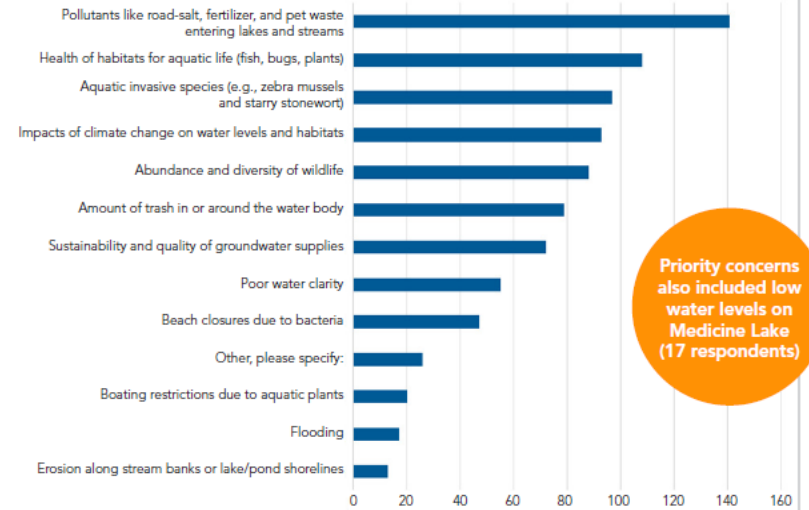
93% of respondents indicate they have adequate access to natural resources in their community; 7% DO NOT have adequate access

How do you interact with the water and natural resources (lakes, streams, wetlands, natural areas) in the BCWMC?



- Boat (power or paddle) on lakes
- Paddle streams
- Fish from pier or shore
- Bike/walk/run on trails near water
- Watch birds or wildlife / enjoy nature
- Other activity

Of the following, what concerns you about the condition of lakes, streams, and natural areas in the Bassett Creek Watershed? (select top five concerns)



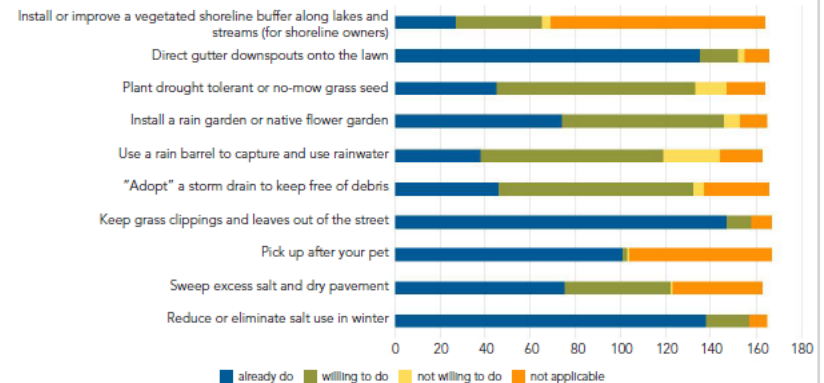
Priority concerns also included low water levels on Medicine Lake (17 respondents)

SUGGESTIONS

on what could be improved in the watershed included the following:

- Less trash in lakes and along streams
- Lower chloride levels (less salt!)
- More logs for turtles
- Less streambank and shoreline erosion
- More education of residents
- Better access to the creek for paddlers and enjoying nature
- Incentives for native plantings and other best practices

How willing are you to take the following actions around your home and yard to improve surface water and groundwater quality?



Community Outreach at Events

Beginning in June 2022 and continuing through much of 2023, BCWMC commissioners and staff participated in various events around the watershed to gather input on watershed issues and to begin building relationships with Minneapolis neighborhoods. Watershed commissioners and staff discussed various topics with residents, provided educational materials, reviewed the watershed map, discussed priority issues, and requested completion of the public input survey (through QR code link or paper copy). At some events, a shortened version of the survey was provided to enable quicker responses on the high priority questions. The table below includes the outreach events attended by the BCWMC during this timeframe.

Date	Event	Location	Notes
6/4/2022	Haha Wakapadan Community Event	Golden Valley	BCWMC tabled; marketed survey
6/16/2022	Electric Vehicle Showcase	Golden Valley	BCWMC tabled; marketed survey
8/2/2022	National Night Out	Medicine Lake	BCWMC tabled; marketed survey
8/4/2022	Plymouth Kids Fest	Plymouth	BCWMC tabled; marketed survey
9/8/2022	Jordan Area Community Council	Minneapolis	Joined a community gathering hosted by JACC and Metro Blooms to gather input on designs/ideas for pocket park
9/25/2022	Elim Church Harvest & Creation Care Celebration	Robbinsdale	BCWMC tabled outdoor event, primarily elderly guests (replied to short "dot questionnaire")
9/25/2022	Golden Valley Sustainability Fair	Golden Valley	BCWMC tabled; marketed survey
10/17/2022	NRRC Annual Meeting	Minneapolis	Attended meeting; tabled + gave brief overview of watershed and planning process to whole group
11/1/2022	New Hope City Days	New Hope	BCWMC joined Public Works booth; marketed survey
11/9/2022	BMNA Board Meeting	Minneapolis	Gave brief presentation with overview of BCWMC, planning process, and opportunities for input.
11/15/2022	JACC Annual Meeting	Minneapolis	Gave brief presentation with overview of BCWMC, planning process, and opportunities for input.
11/21/2022	NRRC Board Meeting	Minneapolis	Gave brief presentation with overview of BCWMC, planning process, and opportunities for input.
2/26/2023	Harrison Neighborhood Association	Minneapolis	Met with HNA Community Outreach Specialist to discuss priority concerns of HNA residents
4/28/2023	Loppet Foundation Sustainability Fair	Theodore Wirth Park	BCWMC tabled at event hosted by Loppet Foundation
9/28/2023	BEAM Grand Opening	Minneapolis	Joined a community gathering hosted by Jordan Area Community Council and Metro Blooms to enjoy newly installed/planted pocket park

Public Open House

On Tuesday, February 28, 2023, the BCWMC hosted a public open house to engage with watershed residents and stakeholders and gather input for development of the Watershed Plan. The open house fulfilled the requirements of Minnesota Rules 8410.0045 Subp.5 to host an “initial planning meeting presided over by the organization’s governing body to receive, review, and discuss input” on the 2025 Plan.

The meeting was publicly noticed and was held at the Golden Valley Library from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. The BCWMC used an open house format to provide flexibility for visitors to come and go on their own schedules. Free childcare was offered to promote accessibility and was used by four families.

Groups directly invited to the open house included:

- Member city staff, council members, city clerks, city commission members
- Bryn Mawr Neighborhood Association
- Harrison Neighborhood Association
- Jordan Area Community Council
- Northside Residents Redevelopment Council
- Hennepin County staff
- Hennepin County Commissioners Fernando, Greene, and Lunde
- Met Council staff
- MN Board of Water and Soil Resources staff
- MN Department of Natural Resources staff
- MN Pollution Control Agency staff
- MN Department of Health staff
- MN Department of Transportation staff
- Three Rivers Park District staff and commissioners
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board staff and commissioners
- Metro Blooms staff
- Freshwater staff
- BCWMC meeting announcement recipients
- Former BCWMC commissioners
- Volunteers monitoring lakes in the watershed
- Lake association/lake group leaders
- Friends of Bassett Creek
- Members of the Native Community in Golden Valley
- Wellington Management
- Minnesota Renewable Now
- Survey respondents who listed an email for further updates (79)

Open house attendees included:

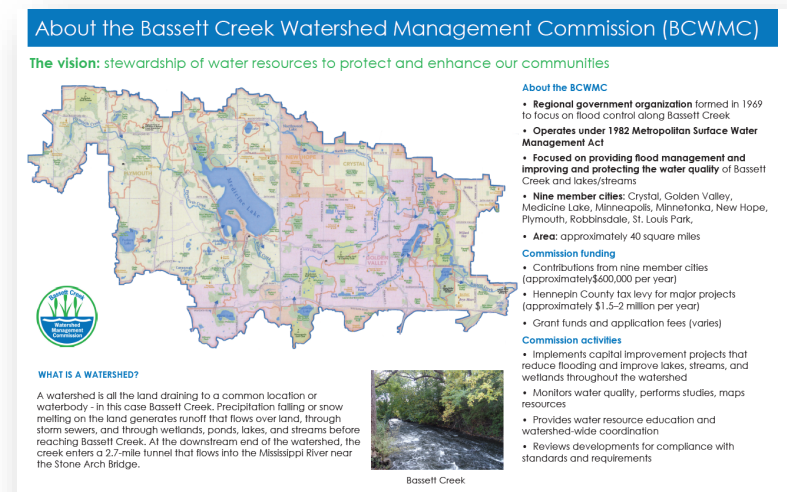
- 34 residents, partners, and stakeholders from BCWMC communities
- 3 BCWMC staff
- 11 BCWMC commissioners/alternate commissioners
- 8 BCWMC TAC members
- At least five member cities were represented by commissioners or alternates at all times, maintaining the mandatory quorum for this public meeting.

The open house included general educational displays and materials, a scrolling slide show of watershed photos (water resources, projects, people), and six “boards” on easels with information on various topics including:

- General BCWMC information and map
- Map showing subwatersheds and flow paths through the watershed
- Graphic depicting the planning process and milestones
- Map with location of BCWMC Capital Improvement Projects
- Results of public input survey
- Summary of input from member cities and agencies

The event also included 5 tables, each focused on a different topic, where visitors could engage with commissioners, staff, and/or TAC members about the topic. Relevant materials were available on each topic along with discussion prompts to help engage with visitors. “Table topics” included:

- Water Quality & Pollution (with map of impaired waters and highly impervious land uses)
- Flooding/Water Levels and Climate Resiliency (with map of 100-year flood inundation areas)
- Equity/Inclusion/Outreach
- Natural Habitats & Stream/Lake Shorelines (with map of wetlands, parks, and areas of biodiversity)
- BCWMC Roles & Responsibilities (Who, How, \$\$)



Before leaving the open house visitors were asked to:

- Rank the importance of the topics listed above according to how much effort and resources BCWMC should use in addressing or improving the issue
- List anything missing from the issues and opportunities presented
- Relay the most important thing the BCWMC could do to improve waters in their community.

Open House Feedback Gathered

It was clear that many participants learned new things about water resources, the BWCMC, and the BCWMC's work and activities at the event. There were many good discussions and engagement with residents, partners, and stakeholders. Actual comments recorded included (by topic):

Natural Habitats and Stream/Lake Shorelines

- Suggestion to create and distribute new homeowners packet of information for new lakeshore and streambank homeowners so they know how lakes and streams "work" and why restored shorelines and streambanks are important, etc.
- Need more access to the creek for nearby residents in the Bassett Creek Valley

Water Quality and Pollution:

- Too much trash including tennis balls and plastic in Parkers Lake
- Need new/stronger stormwater requirements for street projects (Plymouth resident)

Equity/Inclusion/Outreach

- Consider hosting more "drop in" events like this – especially at libraries; have open houses or workshops in diverse communities. Consider spaces for outreach like Y's, community centers, churches, Three Rivers Park District parks
- Can be difficult to address diversity issues as some populations are transient
- Might reach new audiences with text messages
- Difficult for some community members to worry about surface water issues when more pressing and immediate needs are present (like food security, housing, public safety)

General Education Ideas:

- Need to communicate how everyday contaminants damage the water
- Combine efforts and share resources, events, and information with other cities
- Adopt a Drain Program is valuable and effective – especially when neighbors have signs at the storm drain indicating that it drains to a water body
- Bassett Creek Watershed sign at Westwood Nature Center is effective
- Need residents to identify Bassett Creek as being “THEIR creek” - develop a stronger sense of identity with water
- New homeowners guides for lawn care, shoreline care
- Youth education at elementary schools

Where People Get Their News:

- U of M, BCWMC website, Department of Natural Resources, Educational Fair, Minnesota Public Radio, Clean Water Action, newspapers, talking with neighbors, Washington Post, blogs, Sun Sailor, daily paper, city hall, summer picnic held by city, 10:00 news, Minnehaha Creek Watershed website

Ideas for Updating Watershed Map (green paper/folded map):

- Areas of focus or concern
- Population density
- Biking and walking trails
- Add QR code for more information
- Name the minor watersheds (rather than enumerating)

BCWMC Roles & Responsibilities:

- BCWMC should work more with the West Metro Water Alliance (WMWA) (education activities)
- Fully fund WMWA’s educator position to full time
- More collaboration

Final Prompts:

Did we miss any issues or opportunities important to you?

- Work with school to educate kids and summer camps
- Education around dredging
- Monitor/regulate wake boating (this comment also received an “awesome” from another person)
- #1 invasive species like starry stonewort

What is the ONE most important thing BCWMC can do to improve waters in your community?

- Make Medicine Lake cleaner and the entire watershed will be better and cleaner!
- Help on salt reduction
- Use small amounts of chlorine to kill the carp
- Educate property owners on how to improve banks (shorelines/streambanks)
- Educate homeowners on best practices (mulching, composting, less fertilizers)
- Educate homeowners on the benefits of buffers and encourage planting through education and helping to source plants

Participants ranked the issues from lowest (bottom of paper) to highest (top of paper) according to the amount of effort and resources BCWMC should use in addressing or improving the issue. Flooding/water levels and climate resiliency were generally grouped as a high priority, followed by water quality and pollution; and natural habitats and lake/creek shorelines. Education, outreach and equity appear to rank lower, followed by BCWMC work (who, how, funding).

[Color coding: Red = Flooding/water levels/climate resiliency; Blue = water quality/pollution; Green = natural habitats/streambanks/shorelines; Yellow = education, outreach, equity; Pink = BCWMC work (who, how, funding)]

