

## MEMORANDUM

TO: RPBCWD Board of Managers

FROM: Terry Jeffery, Interim District Administrator

DATE: June 2, 2021

RE: Prioritization Metrics

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## BACKGROUND

At the May 5, 2021 workshop session of the RPBCWD Board of Managers, staff presented the decision making process that went into the development of the project prioritization as illustrated in Figure 4-1 of the attached section from the Ten Year Plan. At that meeting we briefly introduced the nine (9) project benefits considered prioritization methodology.

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|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. District Goals          | 2. Sustainability            |
| 3. Volume Management       | 4. Pollutant Management      |
| 5. Habitat Restoration     | 6. Shore/Stream Restoration  |
| 7. Watershed Benefit       | 8. Partnership Opportunities |
| 9. Public Access/Education |                              |

At that meeting, the managers asked us to report back as to ways in which these metrics may be evaluated and, if need be, revised. That is the purpose of this memorandum: to facilitate discussion about if and how these prioritization metrics should be modified. Staff concludes that there are four open ended questions to be evaluated.

1. Are there any project benefit metrics that should be removed from the prioritization?
2. Are there any project benefits that should be redefined?
3. Are there any project benefits that should be weighted differently?
4. Are there any project benefits that should be added to the prioritization methodology?

To advance this discussion, staff is asking that managers consider the same four open ended questions. Depending upon the outcome of this discussion, staff would then propose to hold similar discussions with the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

## DISCUSSION

Overall, staff feels that this approach is a well vetted, defensible, and innovate approach to prioritizing projects within the District. As is the case with any system, there is always opportunities for improvement.

### 1. Are there any project benefit metrics that should be removed from the prioritization?

In general staff feels that the metrics that have been incorporated into the plan have been rigorously vetted. They have gone through multiple meetings with the TAC, CAC, Board of Managers, and the citizens of District.

The one exception that staff sees as a possibility would be to remove the partnership opportunities. It is the mission of the District to protect and restore our water resources. As a watershed district, we have a unique niche. The partners, and in particular our member cities, have a myriad of considerations and responsibilities: public safety, sanitary sewer, potable water supply, pavement management, parks and recreation management and maintenance, physical plant maintenance, etc.

However, as the District neither owns, nor has the desire to have significant land holdings, some partnerships will be required. Further, the District does not have a public works or other maintenance department, again necessitating some need for a partnership. Given this, this benefit would be a better candidate for an alternate weighting system.

### 2. Are there any project benefits that should be redefined?

While designing the metrics, part of the intent was to avoid creating a system that was so cumbersome as to be a barrier to resource management. This may have had the unintended consequence of overlooking some aspect of a metric that should be considered in the prioritization.

#### Pollutant Management

The current metric looks exclusively at the overall load reduction to a water body based upon the Use Attainability Assessment and/or Total Maximum Daily Load studies and does not consider cost effectiveness relative to other Best Management Practices (BMPs) within the same watershed or elsewhere in the District. Additional consideration within Pollutant Management might be given to cost per pound of target pollutant removed.

#### Habitat Restoration

This metric is biased to stream restoration projects as it is reliant upon the Minnesota Stream Habitat Restoration Assessment (MHSA) methodology developed by the MN Pollution Control

Agency. Staff is currently developing Ecosystem Services for wetland assessment and is looking into establishing wildlife assemblages or guilds that might be expected in a given community. Then there is the matter of terrestrial habitat. Land use conversion, vegetative cover, and soil health all contribute to pollutant and volume management as well as to resilience and flood mitigation.

### Shoreline/Streambank Stabilization and Restoration

This is the most involved metric in the prioritization methodology but, as is the case with pollutant management, it does not consider relative costs of projects. This might be an opportunity to add a cost per lineal foot of restoration into the prioritization method.

#### *3. Are there any project benefits that should be weighted differently?*

During the development of the project prioritization method, there was significant discussion about weighting different metrics more or less than others. As we were unable to reach any clear consensus, all were weighted equally. It might be worthy of consideration however, that water quality and flood risk reduction be weighted more than education and outreach or partnership opportunities.

#### *4. Are there any project benefits that should be added to the prioritization methodology?*

Staff has considered a few metrics that might be worthy of addition. As we develop or Diversity and Inclusion policy, it might be valuable to incorporate some type of social vulnerability metric or to target projects in Areas with Concentrated Poverty (ACP50).

Another possible addition might be to look at sensitive or at-risk habitats. Especially as the more “easily” developed land is consumed and more marginal land is being developed.

A third option to consider would be some method of considering the logistics of a project. This might include site access, the number of landowners that would need to be involved, etc.

One last potential metric to consider is the alignment with our member cities Capital Improvement Plans.