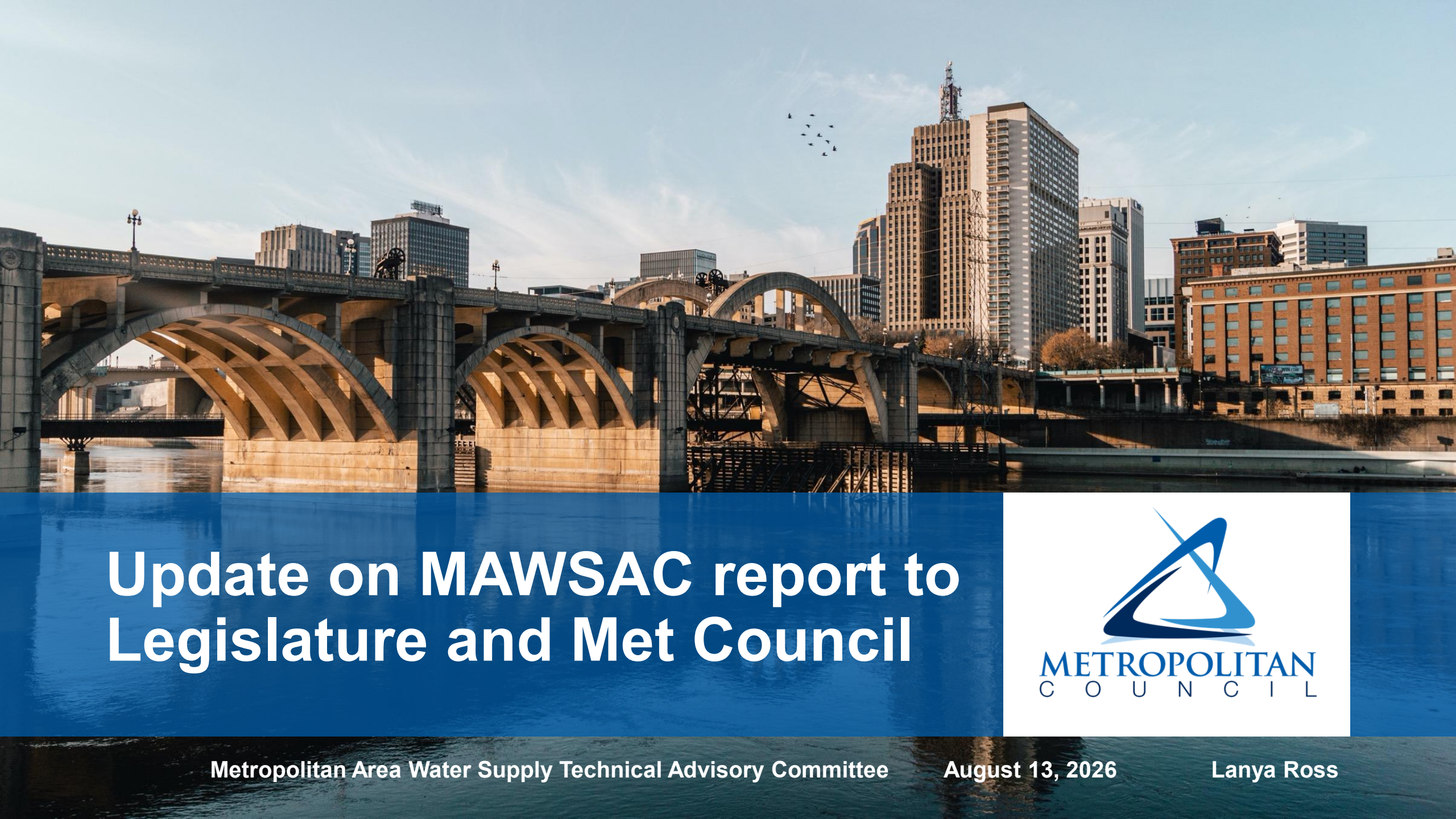




Update on MAWSAC report to Legislature and Met Council



Metropolitan Area Water Supply Technical Advisory Committee

August 13, 2026

Lanya Ross

Review and input requested

Does the report include your priority recommendations?

- Does it highlight the highest priority recommendations at the right level of detail?
- Does it highlight the most important considerations?

Does the report include your priority messages?

Is the report technically sound?

Does the report use the right tone?

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
- Staff writers are also looking 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

MAWSAC & TAC priority issues

Issue brief topics:

1. Protecting water quality and source water for public health and long-term resilience
2. Balancing water use to protect a sustainable supply
3. Water supply infrastructure: Managing aging systems and long-term investment needs
4. Understanding groundwater and surface water interactions for long-term water supply sustainability
5. The cost of water: Balancing affordability, resilience, and long-term sustainability

ISSUE: Protecting water quality and source water for public health and long-term resilience (1)

May 14, 2026 TAC input was incorporated into drafts shared with MAWSAC

- Prioritize drinking water contaminants, including chloride, emerging contaminants (such as pharmaceuticals), PFAS treatment residuals, and localized nitrate concerns.
- Support recommendations with data from MDH, USGS, MPCA, and Met Council water quality monitoring programs.
- Focus on preventing contamination at its source by identifying and reducing nonpoint source pollution.
- Consider agricultural best management practices, including stronger support for cover crops and nutrient reduction efforts.
- Increase funding for water quality research and monitoring to better understand emerging contaminants.
- Prioritize recommendations that are practical and feasible to implement.

ISSUE: Protecting water quality and source water for public health and long-term resilience (2)

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 (1)

May 14, 2026 TAC input was incorporated into drafts shared with MAWSAC

- Recognize that water supplies cross community boundaries and require regional and subregional planning and investment.
- Balance growing water demand with sustainable water availability, changing climate, and the needs of different water users.
- Support regional solutions such as water reuse, aquifer storage and recovery (ASR), water efficiency, and coordinated water management.
- Use regional groundwater models, monitoring data, and water use information to guide decisions and identify emerging challenges.
- Prioritize funding for regional initiatives and long-term solutions, including White Bear Lake and other shared water resource challenges.
- Improve policies for large-volume water users while recognizing that water is a finite resource.
- Evaluate recommendations based on regional benefits, sustainability, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness.

ISSUE: Balancing water use to protect sustainable water supply (2)

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 (1)

May 14, 2026 TAC input was incorporated into drafts shared with MAWSAC

- Emphasize that water infrastructure is a critical economic asset—reliable water service supports economic growth, business development, community revenue, and the tax base.
- Highlight that sustainable water treatment and delivery have direct economic impacts, with infrastructure costs ultimately reflected in water rates and affordability.
- Acknowledge that emerging contaminants, including PFAS, are increasing the need for source protection, monitoring, and potential treatment investments.
- Support predictable and reliable funding sources for communities to address current and future water infrastructure needs.
- Support data, research, and examples from other communities (such as infrastructure condition studies and examples of system failures) to better understand risks and consequences of underinvestment.
- Legislators need to reach out to local leaders to understand water infrastructure needs and prioritize investments based on economic impact, service reliability, and short-, medium-, and long-term needs.
- Support continued data collection and testing to better understand infrastructure conditions and future investment needs.

ISSUE: Water supply infrastructure: Managing aging systems and long-term investment needs (2)

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 (1)

May 14, 2026 TAC input was incorporated into drafts shared with MAWSAC

- Emphasize that by the time we can 'see' surface water impacts from groundwater pumping, the impacts have been happening for a long time.
- Discussed the importance of having good models to help predict risks before they appear and help find solutions.
- Highlighted the need to build trust in modeling output to encourage action.
- Include references that support the use of groundwater modeling. For example: Supreme Court ruling on Kansas vs. Nebraska.
- Provide increased funding for modeling, convening and collaboration, and water appropriation permit evaluation and management.
- Recognizes perspectives of people with a distrust of models and the challenge of working across municipal boundaries to solve cumulative problems.

ISSUE: Understanding groundwater and surface water interactions for long-term water supply sustainability (2)

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 (1)

May 14, 2026 TAC input was incorporated into drafts shared with MAWSAC

- Address costs and rate affordability related to renewal of aging infrastructure.
- Support development of a regional dataset on water, sewer, and stormwater rates and structures.
- Support the review of the usability of different metrics for assessing the cost burden of water.
- Support utility practices: treatment levels and customer assistance program availability.
- Refer to past studies and include visuals highlighting impacts on households and communities.

ISSUE: The cost of water: Balancing affordability, resilience, and long-term sustainability (2)

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)

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)

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)

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)

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

DISCUSSION 1:

Issue Briefs

~4 minutes: Quietly read the draft. As you do, circle or star what you like, and cross out what you want to delete or change.

~4 minutes: Review the list of recommended actions/legislative requests identified so far – did the right actions/requests make into the draft report?

~4 minutes: Review the list of key messages identified so far – did the right things make into the draft report?

~20 minutes: Discuss the following as a group:

- What 3-5 actions should the legislature and/or Met Council take? How specific should they be?
- What 3 key messages and examples should be included?
- What graphics would be compelling?

DISCUSSION 2:

Report Overall

15 minutes:

Discuss:

- Should the report feel neutral, lightly persuasive, or strongly action oriented?
- What statistics, infographics, quotes, or references would be compelling and important for legislators and Met Council members to know about the region's water supply?
- Are there any phrases to use consistently? Any to avoid?

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 *MAWSAC input on draft report*
- Aug. 13, 2026 TAC reviews draft report for technical accuracy
- Sept. 24, 2026 MAWSAC approves report and recommends finalizing design*
- Dec. 10, 2026 Opportunity for MAWSAC & TAC to address any final issues*
- Jan. 13, 2027 MAWSAC & TAC receive final report to promote with stakeholders
- Feb. 15, 2027 Report submitted to Minnesota Legislature



Thank you

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