

APPENDIX F
GCLWMO Management Discussion Paper

GCLWMO Watershed Management Discussion Paper

Background /History of the GCLWMO

The GCLWMO has been in existence for more than 20 years since inception of the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act in the 1980's. The GCLWMO was operated by member cities' staffs. The current basic composition of the GCLWMO Board, which includes all volunteer citizen representatives, came into being almost five years ago. We are supported by excellent technical and administrative support from Eric Macbeth and the Eagan staff. The Board of Managers functions as its own citizens' advisory board.

Over the past five years, the Board has struggled with the following three interrelated issues:

- Implementing "added value" watershed management projects given the "unique" role the GCLWMO plays in the member communities' existing comprehensive programs.
- Developing a watershed management plan that can "fit" the local conditions in the GCLWMO and is acceptable and meeting changing expectations of BWSR and the other agencies.
- The managers' desire to make a real positive difference in the management of the watershed.

Unique considerations

The GCLWMO has the following unique administrative, watershed and local management characteristics:

- Administration and Relationship with the City of Eagan.
The most obvious is the relationship of the watershed to the geographic area of the city of Eagan. The city of Eagan covers 89 % of the area of the watershed and contributes 94% of the funding from member cities.

It is difficult for the WMO to add value to the existing City of Eagan water resources program. Member cities provide the GCLWMO with a basic budget of approx. \$32,600. Not only does Eagan provide most of the funding, but it also provides excellent technical and administrative support to the GCLWMO. Eagan has an active Water Resources Program and is recognized as a leader in municipal water resource management. It is difficult for the WMO to have a positive impact on Eagan but Eagan has a positive impact on the WMO. It is likely that any duplicative administrative costs borne by the GCLWMO will impact the City Water Resources budget.

- Watershed Characteristics and Topography
A significant consideration is the topography of the watershed. The original topography was essentially a gradual slope to the MN River with numerous and in many cases isolated basins of varying sizes. There are about 30 lakes and over 600 wetlands in Eagan. These basins have historically resulted in numerous flooding problems. As Eagan developed, the city solved the flooding by incorporating the basins in a stormwater storage and conveyance network designed, in many cases, to discharge directly into lakes and wetlands. In many other cases,

the City required stormwater treatment ponds to be constructed to help reduce nutrient and sediment inputs to lakes and wetlands. Now there are few feasible options for system disconnects or alternative onsite controls. The stormwater network solved the flooding problem and addressed stormwater treatment as it was commonly done historically, but there have been negative impacts to water quality in many basins. The situation in parts of the other cities in the GCLWMO is similar.

- GCLWMO management and local performance
All three member communities have already updated their “3rd Generation” local water plans to be in compliance with current regional, state and federal requirements.
- Overall GCLMWO Management Framework
The plan development process has identified that our resources along with our recent performance history leads us to conclude that significant watershed projects, studies, reviews, etc. are beyond our financial, technical and management capabilities. Because of our limited role and capabilities, we have struggled to find a way to meet agency expectations while developing a Watershed Management Plan that is appropriate for our unique situation, is implementable, and provides the necessary road map for subsequent managers.

Our management framework moving forward will involve searching for ways to implement in a fashion that will add value in our relationship to the cities. Our roles that appear to be viable are: conduct small projects that can be implemented using available resources or that can be supported with grant funding, carry out activities by managers, partner with other entities, promulgate standards, and oversee cities’ activities. The following are activities through which the GCLWMO can be relevant and successful:

- The GCLWMO will continue to look for small projects with the following characteristics: public education, information sharing, data collection, etc. that can be managed by the WMO or a partner, and are affordable and/or require a match within the budget. An example is: School of Environmental Studies student water quality monitoring (MPCA grant).
- GCLWMO managers will be encouraged to represent the WMO by monitoring activities, attending meetings, etc. related to a specific area of interest. An example is: Lebanon Hills Regional Park Stormwater Management.
- The GCLWMO will form partnerships or other relationship with public entities to capitalize on resources, services, or other assets in furtherance of common goals, programs, or actions. An example is: Blue Thumb Project with the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- GCLWMO will develop policies that will convey widely accepted standards and will require that cities adopt the standards in the policy or more stringent standards.
- The GCLWMO will develop and document in the GCLWMO Watershed Management Plan a process to monitor and provide feedback to cities related to their progress on actions defined in the cities’ water management plans.

GCLWMO Plan Background and Approach

The Update of the third generation GCLWMO Watershed Management Plan has been a difficult process, which has consumed resources and has been in an update mode for almost five years.

Based on the management framework described above, the GCLWMO Board proposes the following actions, which will serve as the focal point for the Plan. It is our position that these actions go well beyond the minimum actions required by state law while also maintaining annual funding commitments to the GCLWMO from member communities.

The GCLWMO plan will focus on following key education actions:

1. Coordination and implementation of volunteer water quality monitoring. An example of this in the first two year of implementation will be implementing the volunteer monitoring on seven lakes in the WMO in cooperation with School of Environmental Studies consistent with terms recently acquired Clean Water Legacy Act Grant received January 2007.
2. Maintenance and expansion of the GCLWMO website for water resource management education and material aimed at fostering responsible water quality management practices
3. Hosting, coordinating and funding “hands-on” educational workshops with GCLWMO residents. An example of this during the first year of implementation will be to implement the lakescape or “Blue Thumb” workshop for lakeshore owners and other relevant residents within the GCLWMO.

The GCLWMO plan will focus on following key operational and local collaboration actions:

1. Exploration of the potential of WMO boundary expansion to reflect actual hydrologic boundary.
2. Working to facilitate resolution of Lebanon Hills Park stormwater issues.
3. Funding Conservation and Restoration Cost share grant programs with Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District. An example of this during the first year of implementation would be the Shoreland Restoration Grant Program in partnership with Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District.

The GCLWMO plan will focus on following key regulatory actions:

1. Establishing member community oversight and annual reporting to the WMO through integrating the GCLWMO into the NPDES MS4 review and approval process.
2. Reviewing any changes to local water management plans and evaluating their consistency with the Watershed Plan. All local water management plans shall be consistent with the GCLWMO Watershed Management Plan.
3. Reviewing projects and development with member communities where surface water impacts transcend municipal boundaries.
4. Exploring opportunities to work with member communities to establish buffer strips along waterbodies in park public areas.
5. Adopting water quality guidelines as defined in the approved member communities’ local water plans.

The GCLWMO Board believes the plan as described will result in a fully compliant GCLWMO Plan that efficiently implements the highest level of watershed management consistent with the GCLWMO unique management framework and background without unnecessary duplication.

Based on feedback from the March 21, 2007 meeting, it would be our intention to submit the "45-day" final draft plan by April 5, 2007. The GCLWMO looks forward to our discussion and to continuing our commitment to work with the BWSR and other state review agencies in development of the best possible watershed management plan.