



2025-2027 Strategic Plan

MILWAUKEE METROPOLITAN SEWERAGE DISTRICT

2025-2027 Strategic Plan

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Lincoln Creek



Kinnickinnic River



Message from the Executive Director

I am pleased to present [MMSD's 2025-2027 Strategic Plan](#). This Plan, with input from staff throughout the organization, outlines our goals and strategies to help us realize our vision of a cleaner, healthier, resilient region. Our region's development and history are built on water and MMSD is committed to protecting this crucial resource. As we reflect on an era disrupted with powerful and damaging weather events, we are reminded of the power of nature and our role in adopting resiliency for the southeastern Wisconsin area. We are also mindful of the importance of providing affordable services in an environmentally responsible way. This three-year plan recommits MMSD to investing in our region and adapting it to growing challenges while practicing

financial responsibility and transparency. The all-encompassing goal of this three-year plan is to reaffirm the core mission of the District well into the future: to protect public health and the environment through world-class, cost-effective water resource management, leadership, and partnership. This plan aims to set our priorities, focus our energy and resources, strengthen and modernize our operations, and ensure that employees and stakeholders are working toward common goals. The public counts on us to prepare for and handle any crisis that comes along, while meeting their evolving needs in a rapid-changing world. This Plan defines the next steps towards Vision 2035 yet maintains necessary flexibility so that we can pivot for uncertainty. We look forward to implementing the Plan and will continue to deliver reliable services, support our region's water resources, adapt to a changing climate, and anticipate and respond to our public's needs. As always, we welcome your feedback.



Kevin Shafer

MMSD Executive Director

Lighthouse on
Lake Michigan



Introduction



In 2010, the District's Commission adopted the 2035 Vision to improve the area's waterways, attain zero overflows and basement backups, and provide storm water management. The 2035 Vision also states that MMSD will be a model in its management of climate change impacts on wet weather and focus on energy efficiency and sustainable operations. The 2035 Vision gives guidance on how to reach the District's ultimate goal of a healthier, cleaner, more resilient region. Ten years into the twenty-five-year initiative, the District is dedicating its three-year strategic plan to mapping out specific achievable actions in support of the 2035 Vision. The 2025-2027 strategic plan sets forth over the next three years the steps along our path to build further on the District's strengths which have resulted in numerous awards and a strong national reputation. The plan also builds on the significant operational improvements achieved over the past twenty-five years and enables the District to focus its energy and resources on transformational growth to achieve our long-term 2035 Vision.

The 2035 Vision framework includes two guiding principles and two objectives. The guiding principles are the basic truths that guide the organization toward the right decisions, practices, and processes. MMSD's guiding principles are sustainable bottom line and water quality leadership and collaboration. By practicing the sustainable bottom line, future planning, design, and operational decisions balance economic, environmental, and social values. Water quality leadership and collaboration asks MMSD to continue its leadership role in developing regional approaches to protecting and improving water quality, utilizing data-based opportunities, fostering strategic alliances, and advocating for a watershed approach to managing the region's water resources.

The two objectives laid out in the 2035 Vision are integrated watershed management and climate change mitigation/adaptation with an emphasis on energy efficiency. An integrated approach to watershed management responds to inter-jurisdictional opportunities and limitations and includes green infrastructure and initiatives, water quality, and area of concern projects. Climate change mitigation and adaptation with an emphasis on energy efficiency plans for the impacts of climate change on District services and tailors our operations to be able to respond to the changing climate.

The following plan identifies the focus areas and projects that MMSD will undertake in the next three years to realize the 2035 Vision.

Lincoln Creek



Milwaukee Breakwater Lighthouse at Sunrise



Installing the College Avenue Pigging Station

Plan Elements

The three-year strategic plan is guided by the 2035 Vision. Staff also reviewed other relevant guidelines and planning processes. The District's work and priorities are also weighed against the guidelines of the Effective Utility Management initiative and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Effective Utility Management (EUM) Initiative, launched in 2007, has been used by a growing number of utilities across the U.S. to improve operational performance. EUM has been recognized by the collaborating utility organizations as the best way to

promote sustainable water and wastewater systems. EUM identifies Ten Attributes of Effectively Managed Utilities. These ten attributes help management maintain a balanced approach to all aspects of utility operations, while focusing on areas of improvement.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) suggest that development should balance social, economic, and environmental needs. The goals were developed by the United Nations to provide a global roadmap to work toward a better world for current and future generations. The UN SDGs provide

guidance for MMSD as it pursues projects and initiatives. The District's goals in the 2025-27 Strategic Plan take into consideration actions the District can take to further the UN SDGs. The SDGs and MMSD's history suggest that local government is most effective when it works in partnership with the region. We will continue to collaborate with private businesses, community organizations, and other orders of government to achieve our mission.

Planning Process

MMSD's Office of Management and Budget staff lead the 2025-2027 planning process over the course of 2024. After discussing initial approaches and methods, budget staff determined to incorporate the planning process into the 2025 budget preparation process. The intention was to support connections between the next three-year plan with future resources and programmatic decisions. Budget staff primarily met with division managers to discuss their budget requests and develop initial strategies and measures. In these discussions, analyses of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) with District staff assisted with identifying environmental factors that influenced planning decisions.

After compiling District-wide strategies and measures, budget staff consolidated the various ideas into a narrative structure to connect related initiatives. As this narrative developed, budget staff followed up with District staff to further expand on the potential strategies, as well as ensure interdivisional communication and associations. The Executive Director provided the final feedback of his priorities to include in the plan.

The pyramid visualizes the elements of the three-year strategic plan. At the bottom of the pyramid is the mission.

- The **mission** defines who we are and why we exist as an organization. It is base-building and drives everything we do.
- Above the mission are our **guiding principles** that permeate our work and do not change.
- Our **objectives** flow up from the mission and guiding principles and define the change we want to see over the next three years.
- The District's **vision** is the pinnacle of these foundations and efforts: a cleaner, healthier, more resilient region. By living our mission, staying true to our principles, and taking action to achieve our objectives, we will ultimately reach the District's vision.

We know that we need to strengthen the bottom of the pyramid or work on foundational work in order to reach the top of the pyramid. In the next three years, we are committed to working on programs, projects, and initiatives that support our guiding principles and help us achieve the 2035 Vision objectives.



Guiding Principles

Sustainable Bottom Line

The sustainable bottom line is a framework designed to help organizations think about the environmental, social, financial, and operational impacts, benefits, and trade-offs of the organization's decisions. MMSD continues to apply responsible financial practices to navigate ongoing fiscal stressors like inflation and workforce challenges, while preparing for future issues with long-term planning. In the next three years, MMSD will promote this principle by evaluating future operations and projects, developing data driven forecasts, and investing in our workforce over the following strategies:

- Internal Workforce Engagement
- Organizational Development
- Long-Range Financial Planning
- Analyzing Post-2028 Operations Options



The Pulaski Park project reduces the risk of flooding in the Kinnickinnic River watershed



Water Quality Leadership and Collaboration

We know that water does not follow municipal boundaries and that we are stronger when we partner as a region. MMSD has a history of providing strong leadership and cooperation to protect the area's water resources and foster collaboration between stakeholders and communities. We seek partnerships to provide economies of scale and operational efficiencies by implementing strategies to improve the quality, access, and quality of our data. In the next three years, we will build off of these efforts and focus on:

- Data Strategies and Transformation
- Water Workforce Ecosystem
- Research and Innovation

Clean waterways are economic drivers that benefit communities, businesses and quality of life



Public tours of the Jones Island Water Reclamation Facility help MMSD engage and educate our constituents

2035 Objectives

Integrated Watershed Management

Integrated watershed management is a continuous adaptive process of managing human activities and ecosystems at the watershed scale. It integrates multiple methods including land and water use planning and it evaluates cumulative effects from multiple environmental stressors. We apply ever-evolving research and techniques to promote water quality and management. Our water ecosystems do not stop at political boundaries, but are interconnected within a large, encompassing system. In order to work across watershed boundaries, MMSD depends on relationships and strong communication with its stakeholders. MMSD will take this timely opportunity to further its mission by:

- Green Infrastructure and Initiatives
- Continuing projects to support the Milwaukee Estuary of Area of Concern
- Evaluating and monitoring water reclamation operations
- Evaluating water quality to improve urban water cycle

Youth explore the local waterways through MMSD's Environmental Education Initiative
Photo credit: Urban Ecology Center





MMSD's summer intern program develops our workforce of the future

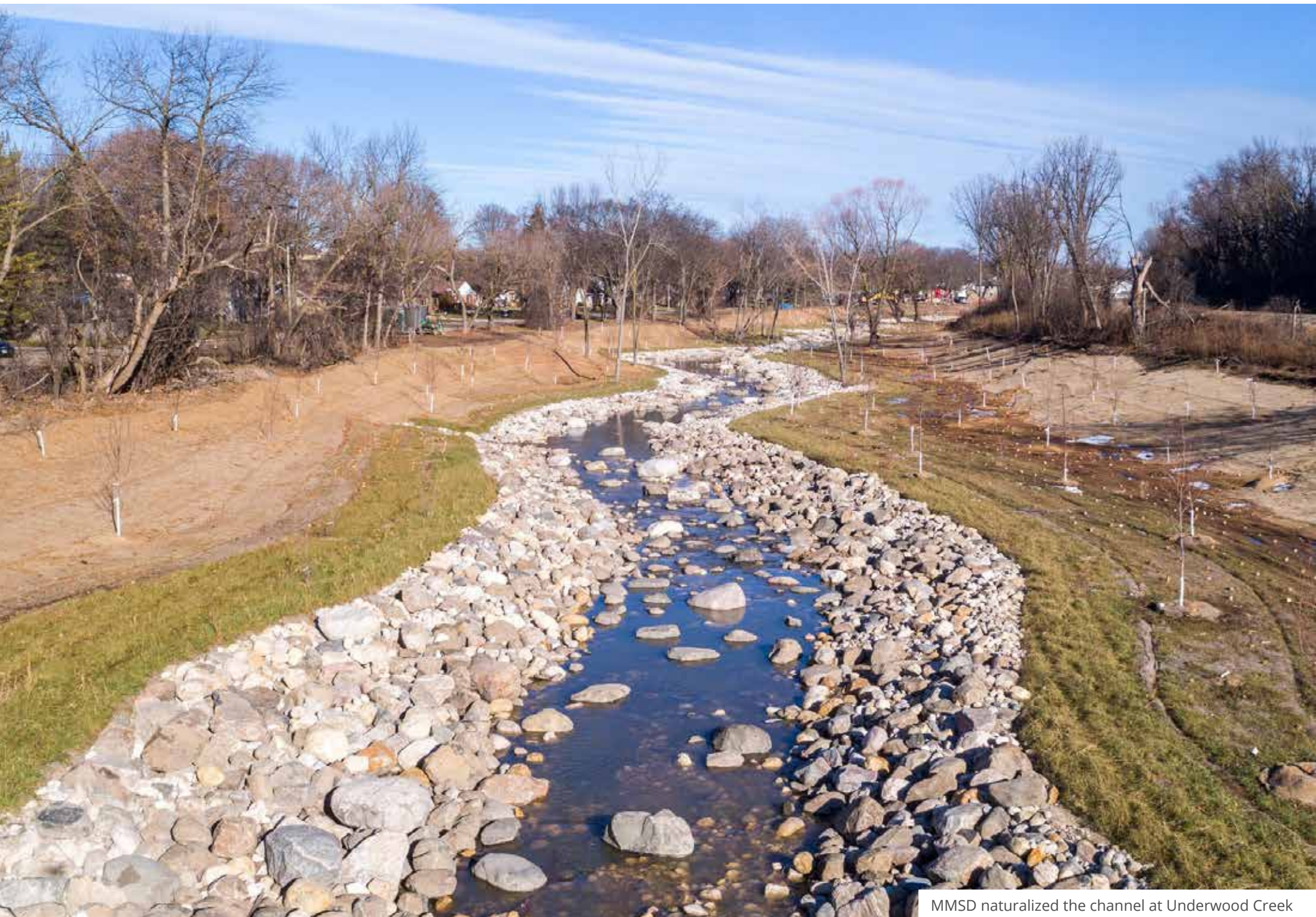
Climate change adaptation and mitigation with an emphasis on energy efficiency

Climate change impacts MMSD's operations and flood protection efforts. MMSD must plan ahead for the consequences and costs of climate change. In order to prepare for and mitigate the impacts of climate change, MMSD is pursuing specific changes to its operations, infrastructure, and finances in response to the challenges it faces with changing water levels. The District will incorporate the impact from climate change by staying current with research, implementing green energy strategies, and applying sustainable principles to our operations. In the next three years, MMSD will:

- Climate Dashboards and Metrics
- Sustainability and Research
- Renewable Energy and Efficiency

Installing green infrastructure such as a green roof provides stormwater management benefits and improves biodiversity in the city.





MMSD naturalized the channel at Underwood Creek

Conclusion

The plan is intended as a living document. The overarching goal of the Plan is to assure the core mission of the District, to protect public health and the environment through world-class, cost-effective water resource management, leadership, and partnership, is well supported into the future. This plan aims to set MMSD's priorities, focus the organization's energy and resources, strengthen MMSD operations, and ensure that employees and stakeholders are working toward common goals. The public counts on MMSD to handle any crisis that comes along, while meeting their evolving needs. This Plan defines MMSD's destination yet maintains needed flexibility so that MMSD can deal with the uncertainty. We will track progress through regular reporting. The annual budget will serve as a reporting and implementing policy document.

MMSD captures methane gas from the digesters and uses it to generate electricity at the South Shore Water Reclamation Facility



Strategic FRAMEWORK

2025-2027

VISION

MMSD envisions a healthier,
cleaner, resilient region

MISSION

MMSD protects public health and the
environment through world-class,
cost-effective water resource management,
leadership, and partnership

VALUES

MMSD is committed to the following values:

- Stewardship
- Integrity
- Quality
- Collaboration
- Diversity
- Innovation

GOALS



SUSTAINABLE BOTTOM LINE

Balancing environmental, social, financial,
and operational impacts, benefits, and
trade-offs in our decisions



WATER QUALITY LEADERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Providing strong leadership and
cooperation to protect the area's
water resources



INTEGRATED WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

Managing human activities and
ecosystems at the watershed scale
and integrating land and water
use planning



CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION / MITIGATION WITH A FOCUS ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Preparing for and mitigating the impacts
of climate change by evaluating options to
improve the resilience of our operations,
infrastructure, and finances

STRATEGIES

MEASURES

1. Long-Range Financial Planning
2. Internal Workforce Engagement
3. Post-February 2028 Water Reclamation Facility Operations
4. Organizational Development

1. Continue advancement of project scoring system for prioritizing capital improvement projects
2. Develop data driven long-term capital forecasts utilizing asset data
3. Managerial training for new managers
4. Succession training to prevent service disruption
5. Update standard operating procedures for ongoing processes

6. Work with stakeholders to determine options for operations at the expiration of the ten-year operations agreement
7. Continuous diversity training for employees
8. Develop a career growth program to offer training to staff to improve retention

1. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAs) and Emerging Contaminants
2. Water Workforce Ecosystem
3. Data Strategies and Transformation

1. Develop knowledge and communication strategy to educate stakeholders around PFAS and emerging contaminants
2. Build a water workforce and promote MMSD as an anchor institution with targeted efforts and initiatives
3. Expand household hazardous waste services and outreach
4. Assess and implement additional equitable funding approaches

5. Implement Survey Group Strategic plan initiatives
6. Participate in Data Strategy Team to develop and implement organizational data strategy
7. Improve data collection by further developing computerized maintenance management system (CMMS)
8. Update records with emphasis on retention and digitization

1. Green Infrastructure and Initiatives
2. Water Quality
3. Water Reclamation Facility Operations
4. Area of Concern Projects

1. Develop a monitoring conductive Green Highway Design
2. Continue improvements with the Green Lab efforts
3. Acquire an additional 1,000 acres of river per year buffers through Greenseams and other regional programs
4. Install 15 million gallons of green infrastructure

5. Quantify nuisance process emissions and develop a monitoring and optimization strategy
6. Focus on South Shore water reclamation process improvement
7. Continue advancement of WRF BIM implementation (3D modeling-Asset Management Improvement plan)
8. Continue progress on area of concern projects

1. Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation
2. Sustainability and Research
3. Renewable Energy and Efficiency

1. Develop a fund from the Climate Resilient Watershed Metrics
2. Climate dashboards to tie 2035 vision to projects
3. Promote cleaner production techniques and the use of safer alternatives in industries that are sources of contaminants
4. Move the needle for carbon reduction from baseline up to 35%

5. Look for beneficial reuse of scum, grit, class B Milorganite, and chaff to divert from landfill
6. Incorporate sustainability into Milorganite production
7. Develop and launch an Energy Program
8. Update equipment to energy efficient equipment



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