

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

THE SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN WATERSHEDS TRUST¹

Also known as

The “Sweet Water Trust”

The Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust (SWWT) is a new umbrella organization that was formed to improve our region’s water resources through trust building and collaboration. It is a non-governmental, non-taxing, voluntary organization.

The Trust was established and operates on two fundamental core concepts:

Core Concepts:

Water is a key regional asset, central to our quality of life, agriculture, and industry. The Trust recognizes that water and its sources are linked and that quantity and quality are two sides of the same coin. This being the case the Trust focuses on the concept of “integrated water resources management.” This means implementing cost effective projects, which recognize the interdependence of surface water, groundwater and water dependent natural resources.

Water knows no political boundaries. Therefore the Trust has chosen to define its place, or region where it focuses its efforts in hydrological terms, or by watersheds, nature’s boundaries. The Trust will focus its efforts in the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds that are defined as the watersheds of the Milwaukee River, the Menomonee River, the Kinnickinnic River, the Milwaukee Harbor estuary, the Lake Michigan direct drainage area, the Oak Creek and the Root River.

In the summer and fall of 2007 a Water Policy Advisory group assembled and facilitated by Dr. Nancy Frank, UWM and funded by the Brico Fund, developed a mission, primary purposes and goals for the Trust. They are:

The Trust’s Mission statement is as follows:

Mission:

The Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust (SWWT) is a collaborative effort to achieve healthy and sustainable water resources throughout the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds² and near shore Lake Michigan.

¹ Implementation Strategies from Chapter XII, SEWRPC - *Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update*, 2007.

² The Greater Milwaukee Watersheds are defined as the watersheds of the Kinnickinnic River, Menomonee River, Milwaukee River, Root River, and Oak Creek; the Milwaukee Harbor estuary, and the Lake Michigan direct drainage area.

The Trust's primary purposes are:

Primary Purposes:

- To achieve water resource goals and objectives – such as clean water, conservation, and ecological function – through innovative and sustainable practices.
- To improve water quality in the Greater Milwaukee watersheds to support a healthy regional economy and improve quality of life.
- To test and then implement innovative approaches and practices that will achieve improvements in water resources in a cost-effective way.
- To build partnerships and enhance collaborative decision-making and joint project implementation, engaging government, business, the building industry, agriculture, environmental, and other stakeholder organizations to obtain broad agreement and recommend where to invest funds to get the greatest benefit.
- Through collaborative action, to increase the region's success in attracting new funding and leverage existing funding for water quality and water resource improvements.

The Trust's goals include:

Goals:

1. Make measurable progress toward improving the water resources in the region.
2. Identify and support land use practices and designs that enhance and improve water resources and promote and restore ecological benefits.
3. Forge and strengthen relationships to leverage funding and recommend policies to assist in the implementation of projects to produce lasting water resource benefits and cost savings throughout the Greater Milwaukee watersheds and nearshore Lake Michigan.
4. Implement cost-effective projects that result in measurable improvements in water quality and water resources.

To catalyze a framework for SWWT, the Water Policy Advisory group subsequently designated an Organizing Committee, whose members confirmed the draft mission, purposes and goals above without exception.

On May 7, 2008, at the first meeting of SWWT's Executive Steering Council, the goals were approved without exception.

Implementing its mission, purposes and goals is where the work of the SWWT will be accomplished. As the Trust moves forward with its work, it will use the recommendations of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC)³ that are stated in its 2007 update to the *Regional Water Quality Management Plan (RWQMP)*. The recommendations provide a relevant and transparent foundation for moving forward. However, in order to move forward, under the collaborative direction of the Trust, second level planning must be done within each watershed. This planning is done to identify specific, targeted projects that will produce measurable improvements in water resources. The second level planning will be done in the preparation of watershed restoration plans that will provide the framework for moving forward over the next several years of work. These watershed restoration plans will be developed in accordance with the Clean Water Act Sec.319 guidelines.

The “Watershed Restoration Plans” represent the first step in the implementation of truly science-based watershed improvement efforts. The Trust is currently supporting the development of watershed restoration plans for the Kinnickinnic River and the Menomonee River. This work effort will produce adaptive, phased watershed restoration plans for the Kinnickinnic River Watershed and the Menomonee River Watershed, which will contain the following:

- An implementation plan focused on activities that should take place in the near term to meet long-term water quality goals;
- A collaborative stakeholder involvement effort that will be based upon the Southeastern Wisconsin Watershed Trust (SWWT) policy and procedures;
- Potential additional targeted efforts on green infrastructure, pollutant trading, and social science measures;
- Consideration of sustainability in the development of the Plans.

This effort builds upon the sound science, extensive data and alternatives analysis of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) 2020 Facilities Plan and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission’s (SEWRPC) Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update (RWQMUPU) – the combined effort known as the Water Quality Initiative (WQI) which ended in 2007.

To provide full opportunity for an informed public to meet their Mission, the Sweet Water Trust will operate in the following manner.

There are three roles for members in SWWT. They are: Executive Steering Council member, Advisory Committee membership and General membership, with General membership being common to all who sign the MOU creating the Trust. All members will commit to actively and publicly supporting the mission, primary purposes, and goals, of SWWT as established by its members and approved and amended by the Executive Steering Council. All members will appropriately represent the full range of their stakeholders, fairly consider stakeholder concerns and genuinely consent to decisions under the terms established herein.

³ SEWRPC implements Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act toward the goal of achieving water use objectives for surface waters within the region through a sound and workable plan for the abatement of water pollution.

Members filling any of the roles may include independent units of government, special purpose districts, agencies, organizations, companies and members at large. Members should anticipate being asked to commit institutional resources to help fulfill the mission, primary purposes and goals adopted by SWWT. In return, members should expect collaborative actions that work toward achieving healthy and sustainable water resources that benefit them and any constituents they might represent.