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I. INTRODUCTION / EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission (Commission) has prepared this Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan in accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 8410, "Metropolitan Area Local Water Management", as administered by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. This can be adopted as the local surface water management plan, if a member community so chooses.

The Commission's arrangement allows for pooling and concentration of the local governments' limited means and resources to initiate conservation programs to meet the purposes set forth in the Surface Water Management Act. The Joint Powers Agreement that established the Commission is included in **Appendix A** of this plan.

History of the Area and Commission

Prior to Caucasian settlement, the Elm Creek basin served as hunting ground, first for aboriginal Indians who built mounds near Hayden Lake and later for the Chippewa and Winnebago tribes who had encampments on the Mississippi River north of Elm Creek. French and British fur traders operated in the area from the late 1700's to 1815. Lt. Zebulon Pike recorded a British post near Champlin in 1805.

The first immigrants arrived from the north in 1836. They were Swiss, Scottish, and French farmers who had abandoned Lord Selkirk's Winnipeg colony. They remained near Dayton, possibly at French Lake, until 1839, when they were driven out by the Indians. A large-scale agricultural settlement began in 1851.

Settlement and subsequent growth of the area was dependent on two factors – proximity to the St. Paul-Anoka route to the Red River Valley, followed by the present Highway 10; and accessibility to Minneapolis markets provided by the Minneapolis-Monticello Road, present-day Highway 152.

The western area is provided access by the Corcoran Road (County Road 10) and Highway 55. All of these routes have maintained their importance into the automobile era and significantly affect the location of suburban development. The junction of two new routes, Interstate 94 and 494, created a location of regional accessibility attracting concentrated development.

Prior to 1855, the pattern had been for settlers to enter the region by way of Anoka – crossing the river to Champlin or Dayton. The belt of the prairie land associated with the level of outwash terrace of the Mississippi was considered the choicest location for a farm. The soil was easy to break and till and immediately available for planting. The shores of French Lake were also favored and a group of French farmers arrived there as early as 1853.

The settlement pattern changed in 1855, when a bridge to the west bank of the Mississippi was opened in Minneapolis. Minneapolis boomed and the population moved northwest along the Monticello Road to the Red River Valley. Previous biases against the heavily wooded, clay soils were gradually overcome as their natural fertility was proven. Commonly called the Big Woods, this upland area was originally covered by dense stands of maple, oak, elm, ash, and other hardwoods, with an occasional cluster of white pine. These woodlands supplied cordwood markets of Osseo and Minneapolis.

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The period between 1860 and 1890 saw an increase in farm population and the harnessing of the water power of Elm Creek for flour mills at Maple Grove and Champlin, important industries for the area.

The coming of the railroads in 1890 caused a movement to towns. Farm population and the number of farms have continued to decline since that time, while farm size (exclusive of hobby farms) has increased. The greatest population growth has occurred since 1950, practically all of it non-farm rural and suburban.

When the Commission's first Watershed Plan was adopted in 1983, the basin had a rural nature, but was going through a transition characterized by residential development, local shopping centers and hobby farms, co-existing with old mainline commercial farms engaged in dairy and crop farming. Residential development was especially prevalent in the areas surrounding Fish and Rice Lakes in Maple Grove. Development in these areas was sewered.

In parts of the watershed that were unsewered, residential development consisted of scattered large lot residences. Vacant land held by speculators was often put into cash crop production until development took place and rented by local farmers who had equipment, soil management skills, and experience.

In 1983, 46 percent of the land in the Elm Creek watershed was cropland producing mainly corn, small grain, hay, some vegetable crops and sod. Of the remaining land, 16 percent was woodland; 22 percent was wetlands, lakes, and parkland; 12 percent was farmsteads and rural residences, subdivisions, commercial highways, and other uses. In its 1983 plan, the Commission anticipated that by 1990 residential use could increase by 1,015 acres while cropland would decrease by 920 acres. Based on estimates from the Metropolitan Council from 1997, 46 percent of the land is vacant or in agricultural production, 30 percent is used for public, recreational, wetlands, or lakes, 20 percent is residential, and 4 percent is commercial/industrial.

The Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission was formed on February 1, 1973, through a joint powers agreement by Champlin, Corcoran, Dayton, Maple Grove, Medina, Plymouth, and Hennepin Conservation District, under the authority conferred to the member parties through Minnesota Statutes Sections 471.59 and 103B.211. On July 18, 1980 the Town of Hassan entered the agreement with Rogers following in 1983. Greenfield was in the Commission, but left in 2001.

The Elm Creek Watershed lies wholly within the north central part of Hennepin County. The Crow and Mississippi Rivers demarcate the northern boundary. Although some areas in the north drain to the Crow and Mississippi Rivers, they are within the legal boundaries of the Elm Creek Watershed. The watershed covers approximately 130.5 square miles and is located entirely within Hennepin County (**Figure I-1**). Portions of, or all of, 8 governmental units are within the watershed and are listed below:

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Local Government Unit	Area Within Watershed (Square Miles)	Percent of Watershed
Champlin	3.1	2%
Corcoran	36.1	28%
Dayton	25.0	19%
Maple Grove	26.3	20%
Medina	9.3	7%
Plymouth	4.5	3%
Hassan	21.4	16%
Rogers	4.9	4%

Duties of the Commission

A Board of Commissioners has been established as the governing body of the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission. The Board of Commissioners is comprised of representatives appointed by the member communities. Each community appoints a representative and alternate. A list of the Board members for 2002 is included in **Appendix B**.

The duties of the organization, as enacted by the Commission, are as follows:

- C Prepare and adopt a watershed management plan meeting the requirements of Minnesota Rules Chapter 8410.
- C Review and approve local water management plans as defined in Minnesota Rules Chapter 8410.
- C Exercise the authority of a Watershed Management Organization under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B to regulate the use and development of land when:
 - 1. A local water management plan has not been approved and adopted, or
 - 2. A local permit requires an amendment to or variance from the local water management plan, or
 - 3. The Commission has been authorized by the local government to require permits for land use.

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- C Exercise authority when the local government is not enforcing the policies of the Commission.

As identified in the Joint Powers Agreement, the governing body of each member City shall appoint one representative and one alternate to serve on the Commission from its elected Council or another qualified person. The Commission will determine how specific costs, personnel requirements, contracting and bid responsibilities, and other expenses and requirements shall be shared by the Cities with preference given to a reasonable geographic division.

Under Minnesota Rules Chapter 8410 and Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103B, requirements are outlined for preparing watershed management plans within the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Pursuant to the requirements of the law and public input, the purpose of the plan is to:

- C Protect, preserve, and manage surface water and groundwater resources;
- C Minimize property damages and economic losses through water resource management;
- C Manage public expenditures needed to study, control, and/or correct flooding and water quality problems;
- C Educate and inform the public on pertinent water resource management issues and increase public participation in water management activities;
- C Identify and plan for means to effectively protect and improve surface and groundwater quality;
- C Establish more uniform local policies and official controls for surface and groundwater management;
- C Reduce erosion of soil into surface water systems;
- C Promote groundwater recharge;
- C Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities;
- C Reduce and control stream degradation through land protection measures, runoff restrictions, and pollutant restrictions.

To ensure that these goals are realized, the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act further specified the basic contents of the watershed management plan.

According to these rules, the watershed management plan shall:

- C Provide a land and water resource inventory.

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- C Present information on the hydrologic system and its components, including any drainage system previously constructed under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 106 (the Public Ditch Laws), and existing and potential problems related thereto.
- C State goals and policies, including management principles, alternatives and modifications, water quality, and protection of natural characteristics.
- C Set forth a management plan, including the hydrologic and water quality conditions that will be sought and the significant opportunities for improvement.
- C Describe conflicts between the watershed plan and existing plans of local government units.
- C Set forth an implementation program that is consistent with the management plan and which includes a capital improvement program, as well as standards and schedules for amending the comprehensive plans and official controls of local government units in the watershed to bring about conformance with this watershed plan.

Summary of the Watershed Management Plan

This watershed management plan is divided into the following major sections:

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Land and Water Resources Inventory
- III. Goals and Policies
- IV. Problems and Corrective Actions
- V. Implementation Program/Priorities
- VI. Impact on Local Unit of Government
- VII. Amendment Procedures

The Executive Summary (**Section I**) states the authority and composition of the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission, the purpose of the Surface Water Management Act and the components of this watershed management plan.

The Land and Water Resources Inventory (**Section II**) includes a profile of the watershed's existing environmental conditions. This profile contains descriptions of the area's physiography, topography, soils, land use, and metropolitan systems such as public utilities. Surface and ground water quality, water use and water quality guidelines are also included.

The Goals and Policies Section (**Section III**) describes the goals and policies of the Commission. The goals reflect the purposes set forth in the Surface Water Management Act. Policies developed by the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission define the goals and provide a framework in which to address water management issues. The standards that member communities and development within the watershed need to adhere to are contained within **Appendix F**.

Problems and Corrective Actions (**Section IV**) discusses water resource management issues and identifies the strategies developed for each issue and defines the course of action the Commission will follow to address each issue. Implementation procedures

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explain how the strategies will be put into effect. Potential impacts associated with each identified alternative are evaluated.

The Implementation Program/Priorities (**Section V**) identifies capital improvements (i.e. construction projects), programs (i.e. regulatory or educational), and additional studies that should be undertaken to address solutions to the problems, issues, and goals identified in Section III and Section IV.

The Impact on Local Government (**Section VI**) discusses the conformance of local governmental water resource management plans to this watershed management plan and also discusses the financial impact of the Plan.

The Amendment Procedures (**Section VII**) discusses a procedure to be followed should it be necessary to amend this plan. This procedure would be invoked only for major changes that would directly affect water resource management within the member cities.

Section VIII contains a list of references and supplemental documents. The **Appendices** include supplemental information, including a Glossary in **Appendix C**.

Funding and Implementation

Due to the funding constraints of the Commission, rather than attempting to spread its resources over many projects, the Commission has determined it will primarily focus on a few projects at a time and consider doing other projects as funding becomes available. Therefore, the Commission intends to focus on working to stabilize Elm Creek.

In order to secure funding for this project and others, the Commission intends to undertake the following activities to secure funding:

- C Encourage member communities to provide funds to the Commission for a project, study, or program listed in this Plan by agreeing to make it a high priority project if funding is available.
- C Actively work to find matching grants or low interest loans for the project, study, or program. Community money and secured grants/loans would then be used for projects, studies, or programs within the member city(ies) that provided the initial funding.
- C Commission may contribute funds towards a project if deemed appropriate and reasonable by the Commission. All funding mechanisms will be in accordance with the provisions of the Joint Powers Agreement.
- C Multiple communities can collaborate together to provide funds for a joint project that the Commission will then work towards finding available grants/loans.

If other projects, programs, or studies come up, the Commission will evaluate their priority and adjust the implementation accordingly.

The other studies and capital improvements identified in this Plan may be entirely or partially completed by the member community, the Commission, or a joint effort between

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the Commission and a member community. The Commission's schedule for implementing the studies, improvements, and programs is provided in this Plan. However, it is unlikely the Commission will be able to undertake these projects without securing grants or other outside funding within the timeline shown.