
COOK COUNTY STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Illinois General Assembly enacted Public Act 93-1049 (Act) in November of 2004. The Act allows for the creation of a comprehensive stormwater management program in Cook County. The Act places the responsibility for countywide stormwater management under the supervision of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (District). The Act requires the District to develop this Cook County Stormwater Management Plan (CCSMP). The CCSMP presents the framework of the stormwater management program, including its mission, goals, program elements and implementation phases.

Stormwater management in Cook County over the last 30 years has been a patchwork of efforts by local, regional, state and federal agencies. The adoption of the CCSMP and the implementation of the District's countywide stormwater management program afford Cook County the means to address a range of stormwater management issues through proper watershed regulations and watershed planning. Through the Watershed Planning Councils (WPCs) created in the Act, the District and Cook County communities can approach stormwater management through a single, countywide effort.

Stormwater Management Authority

The Act provides the District with broad authority to plan, manage, implement, and finance activities relating to stormwater management throughout Cook County. The authority is applicable for all of Cook County and is not limited to the District's corporate boundaries. The District's role will include preparing and adopting by ordinance a countywide stormwater management plan. Some of the other authorities afforded to the District in the statute include:

- The authority to prescribe rules and regulations by ordinance for floodplain and stormwater management, for governing the location, width, course, and release rate of stormwater runoff channels, streams, and basins in Cook County.
- The use of fees to finance stormwater management activities outside the District's corporate boundaries, but within Cook County.
- The use of resources of other organizations and agencies, and ability to enter into agreements with other counties, organizations or agencies, for management of stormwater runoff.
- The District may assume responsibility for maintaining any stream within Cook County and has the authority to enter upon any land or water within the county to inspect stormwater facilities or to remove obstructions to a watercourse.

Mission and Goals

The mission of the countywide stormwater management program is to provide Cook County with effective rules, regulations, and projects that will reduce the potential for stormwater damage to life, public health, safety, property and the environment. Nineteen stormwater management goals have been developed by the District for the CCSMP. The goals extend from protecting new and existing development from flooding to preventing the loss of water quality and habitat. The goals of the CCSMP are presented in Chapter 1.

Watershed Planning Councils

The District has established planning councils for each of the major watersheds of Cook County which are listed below:

- North Branch Chicago River
- Lower Des Plaines Tributaries
- Calumet-Sag Channel
- Little Calumet River
- Poplar Creek
- Upper Salt Creek

The WPCs serve as advisory bodies to the District for the stormwater management program. Membership of WPCs includes the chief elected official, or his or her designee for municipalities and townships, and the Cook County Board President, or his or her designee for unincorporated areas.

In addition, the Act calls for the formation of a Combined Sewer Areas Stormwater Management Planning Council. Although the District has not yet formed the Combined Sewer Areas Stormwater Management Planning Council, a public hearing for the CCSMP was held for the Combined Sewer Areas in order to accommodate communities which are not members of the established WPCs for the aforementioned watersheds. Per the Act, municipalities with a population of 1,000,000 or more are exempt from the District's countywide program though they may opt-in through the execution of an intergovernmental agreement between the qualifying municipality and the District. The City of Chicago (City) encompasses a majority of the combined sewer area and is currently developing an intergovernmental agreement for inclusion in the District's program. The content of the intergovernmental agreement will define the City's role in the program. The formation of the Combined Sewer Areas Stormwater Management Planning Council will occur once the City's role is determined.

The WPCs will communicate the needs and interests of the members of the public and local governments to the District and advise the District on CCSMP matters that relate to their respective watersheds. The advisory role of the WPCs will be important during the preparation of watershed plans and in the development of the Watershed Management Ordinance (WMO).

The municipal conferences will assist the District in coordinating with the WPCs. The municipal conferences involved in the stormwater management program are the Northwest Municipal Conference, the West Central Municipal Conference, the Southwest Conference of Mayors, and the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association.

Cook County Stormwater Management Plan

The CCSMP presents the countywide stormwater management program and the implementation strategy. To develop the program, the CCSMP assesses current authorities and activities of local, regional, state and federal agencies. The assessments are examined with consideration of the stormwater management goals of the CCSMP. Additionally, using data collected from questionnaires completed by Cook County communities, current stormwater conditions and related problems are summarized. The stormwater goals in Chapter 1 and the assessments and evaluations, presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, form the basis for the countywide stormwater management program presented in Chapter 5.

The approach for watershed planning and the development of Detailed Watershed Plans (DWPs) and regulatory concepts for the preparation of the WMO are described in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 8 outlines the implementation of the countywide stormwater management program, which will be achieved through four phases that involve the development of program elements.

Countywide Stormwater Management Program

The program will be implemented through six program elements: administration and management, regulation, maintenance, watershed planning, project implementation, and public information and education.

Administration and Management

Several administration and management functions will support the countywide stormwater management program framework including staff training, technical support, and professional education. The administration and management functions will provide countywide coordination of the stormwater management program through the WPCs, identify funding mechanisms for stormwater activities, and develop and maintain a program budget.

Regulation

The foundation of the regulatory program will be the WMO. The WMO will be developed by the District with input from the WPCs, and will establish countywide minimum standards for stormwater management. Concepts to be considered for the WMO encompass floodplain management, stormwater drainage and detention, wetland protection, stream habitat and riparian protection, soil erosion and sediment control, and water quality. In support of the WMO, a Technical Guidance Manual will be developed.

The District may establish a procedure for certifying municipalities in order to enforce certain aspects of the WMO. Certified communities would be required to adopt

regulations at least as stringent as the WMO and demonstrate their qualifications. Some responsibilities may include permit review and enforcement within their jurisdiction.

Maintenance

Maintenance of stormwater infrastructure (reservoirs, detention basins, storm sewers and catch basins) and natural drainage systems (rivers, streams and channels) will be evaluated by the District. Appropriate maintenance and inspection recommendations will be developed for the protection of existing and new stormwater infrastructure. Mechanisms for implementing natural drainage system maintenance by the District, municipalities, townships, county, and drainage districts will be developed in coordination with the WPCs.

Watershed Planning

Detailed Watershed Plans (DWPs) will be developed throughout the county in coordination with the WPCs to assess the specific conditions and the needs of each watershed. The methodology for the development of DWPs is presented in Chapter 6. As DWPs are developed, the District will coordinate with the WPCs to implement the recommendations. DWP recommendations may include capital improvement projects, additional planning, and maintenance activities.

Watershed planning will be coordinated with floodplain and wetland mapping initiatives, with other planning efforts in the county, and with efforts in other counties.

Project Implementation

When DWPs are developed, the District will facilitate preventative and remedial projects to benefit both upstream and downstream interests. Projects will be identified based on watershed needs. Capital improvement projects will be prioritized on a countywide basis. Funding decisions will be made based on the minimum criteria presented in Chapter 1, the prioritization process described in Chapter 6, and the decisions of the Board of Commissioners. Implementation of the capital improvement program will be addressed annually and will depend on the budget, priorities, and the availability of federal and state funds.

Public Information and Education

A public information program will be developed to educate the public on the importance of watershed management. The public information program will communicate essential stormwater management topics to various target audiences.

Cook County Stormwater Management Plan Adoption and Implementation

A draft version of the CCSMP was distributed to municipalities, townships and various agencies for review and comment during the public review period which began on August 7, 2006 and concluded on October 13, 2006. In addition, seven public hearings were conducted during the public review period. The District received 34 letters from various municipalities, municipal conferences, agencies, organizations, private citizens, and other stakeholders in addition to comments received during the public hearings. The total number of individual comments was in excess of 450. The District provided a

written response to all of the letters received during the public comment period, and posted all questions and responses on the District's website for public review. The CCSMP has been revised to incorporate comments provided during the public review process which were germane to the CCSMP. Subsequently, the CCSMP was adopted by the District's Board of Commissioners on February 15, 2007. The implementation of the CCSMP and the countywide stormwater management program will follow the four phases that are presented in Chapter 8. The four phases are summarized as follows:

- Phase 1: Preparation of the WMO, DWPs, and a public information program and implementation of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Small Stream Maintenance Program (SSMP).
- Phase 2: Implementation of WMO, continued preparation of DWPs and administration of the CIP and SSMP, and development of maintenance program.
- Phase 3: Implementation of DWP recommendations, maintenance program and continued administration of the CIP and SSMP.
- Phase 4: Continued implementation of DWP recommendations and maintenance program, administration of CIP and SSMP, and implementation of public education programs.

The implementation phases will be done in coordination with WPCs. Efforts, such as implementation of watershed plans, will be done in coordination with the adjoining counties, and through combined efforts of state and federal agencies. The capital improvement program will be initiated after eligible projects have been evaluated and prioritized, and as funding resources become available.

Summary

The CCSMP specifies the mission and the goals of stormwater management in Cook County, and presents the framework of the countywide stormwater management program. The implementation phases allow for the effective development and growth of the countywide stormwater management program. The focus of the stormwater management program is the development of proper watershed planning and effective regulations.

The adoption of the CCSMP and the establishment of the stormwater management program allow the District to begin funding consideration for capital improvement projects that will correct existing stormwater management problems and reduce the occurrence of future problems. With the development and implementation of the DWPs, the WMO, maintenance and public information programs, the District and the communities will have the ability to accomplish comprehensive countywide stormwater management.