



**MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT**
QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FALL 2012

UPCOMING EVENTS

Board meetings and workshops are held at the MCWD offices (18202 Minnetonka Blvd, Deephaven, MN 55391) and begin at 6:45 p.m. Find more information at minnehahacreek.org/events

Nov. 27

Parking Lot and Sidewalk Salt Training

Nov. 29

Board of Managers Meeting

Dec. 6

Board of Managers Workshop

Dec. 13

Board of Managers Workshop

Dec. 20

Board of Managers Meeting

Jan. 3*

Board of Managers Workshop

Jan. 10*

Board of Managers Workshop

Jan. 24*

Board of Managers Meeting

**2013 dates subject to change*



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A MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

After a dozen moves and more than 40 years of leasing, we're getting our own home! While there hasn't been much good news lately about the commercial real estate market, the depressed market conditions made it possible for the District to purchase a vacant office building at 15320 Minnetonka Boulevard in Minnetonka for less than it would cost to lease an equivalent space.



Administrator Eric Evenson

We didn't enter into this decision lightly. Among the options the District considered was partnering with a city to build a joint facility, but recognized that the cost of constructing a new building made it unfeasible.

The District's new home brings us closer to Minnehaha Creek and is near the exact center of the watershed, with easy access from Interstate 494 and other major roads. It will provide more seating capacity for our public meetings and space for hosting educational and outreach events. The additional room will help us perform all aspects of the District's mission, including scientific research and

monitoring, administering cost-share grant programs, issuing permits and collaborating with communities and other organizations.

We also plan to use the site to demonstrate cost-effective stormwater management practices that filter and reduce stormwater runoff. The site will highlight how a property owner can manage stormwater on a site with nearly 100 percent impervious surface.

We considered several possible alternatives for more suitable office space, and we were lucky to find a building that fits our needs at the right price. The move will accomplish what we strive for everyday as an organization: a cost-effective and transparent way to help protect the precious water bodies within the Minnehaha Creek watershed.

- Eric Evenson
eevenson@minnehahacreek.org

What We've Been Up to:

Water Quality:

Water Quality Specialists:

Kelly Dooley | 952-641-4515 | kdooley@minnehahacreek.org

Yvette Christianson | 952-641-4514 | ychristianson@minnehahacreek.org

The Water Quality program has wrapped up its lake monitoring for the season. It has also finished the second year of a three-year study of zebra mussel sampling on Lake Minnetonka. Stream monitoring, however, will continue until the streams freeze. Now staff are busy compiling and analyzing the immense amount of data, which will be published in the MCWD's annual water quality report and submitted to the statewide water quality database. The department is also evaluating its models of grading and reporting the condition of the watershed.



Collecting water quality data on Lake Minnetonka

the District's initiatives to reduce invasive plants in Gleason Lake.

Staff will begin chloride sampling on the lakes in November. The District is one of multiple organizations providing assistance to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency on a three-year chloride project. The District has been collecting periodic, year-round chloride samples from Taft Lake, Lake St. Joe, Tamarack Lake, Peavey Lake and Lake Minnewashta. 2013 will be the final year of the project.



Chloride sampling

Water Quality Specialist Yvette Christianson presented to the University of Minnesota Water Resources Conference in October about

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS):

Manager: Craig Dawson

952-471-8306 | cdawson@minnehahacreek.org

The MCWD's AIS program is fine-tuning plans for its 2013 initiatives. In response to \$250,000 in contingency funding for AIS prevention measures that the MCWD Board of Managers added to the proposed 2013 tax levy, the AIS Plan Task Force -- a broad group of stakeholders assembled to guide the future of AIS efforts in the District -- has been busy developing a plan for additional AIS activities in 2013. This plan is being forwarded to the Board so that it may take action on the revised 2013 plan in early December.

The AIS Plan Task Force is also working to complete a long-term management plan for the District, which it hopes to send to the Board in the next few months.

Boat inspections are finished for the season at Christmas Lake, Lake Minnewashta and Minneapolis lakes. Data from Christmas Lake showed that compliance increased each month, with a 97 to 99 percent compliance rate in August.

In September MCWD staff and contractors removed flowering rush by hand from two sites in Smith's Bay in Lake Minnetonka, completing the second year of a study on the effectiveness of the hand removal technique. There were significantly fewer plants this season than in 2011. St. Paul-based Blue Water Science, led by local lake expert Steve McComas, conducted a survey of the entire lake to find locations where the invasive plant exists.



(Top) Sign for inspections at Lake Minnewashta. (Bottom) The Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) of a watercraft inspector at Lake Minnewashta.

Planning and Land Conservation:

Director: James Wisker

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Planning staff are finalizing designs for the first phase of restoration on Long Lake Creek, which flows from Long Lake to Lake Minnetonka's Tanager Bay. Construction is scheduled for 2013 and will include stabilization of two sections of eroding streambank and restoration



Long Lake Creek

of a ditched wetland. These are the first projects in a suite of potential improvements the District identified for Long Lake Creek in 2010. In addition to other wetland and streambank restorations, staff are working with Metropolitan Council Environmental Service to restore an adjacent wastewater treatment pond to a wetland area.

The Upper Watershed Stream Assessment study is underway. Staff are re-assessing larger streams last checked in 2003 as well as mapping out the area's smaller streams for the first time. The results of the study will improve the District's models of the watershed and find opportunities

for improving the stream. The work is expected to wrap up by the end of the year. To learn more about the project and where staff will be working, contact MCWD Planner Erik Dahl at (952) 641-4531 or edahl@minnehahacreek.org.



Conducting a stream assessment

Preliminary findings from the Six Mile Creek Diagnostic Study will be presented to the

Board of Managers in December or January. Data that's collected on soils, fish and plant communities, and changes in land use will be used to identify ways to improve water quality in the Six Mile Creek subwatershed.

Projects, Operations and Maintenance:

Manager: Renae Clark

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Operations staff closed the Gray's Bay dam on August 20th due to lack of rain and low water levels. The dam is operated according to a procedure set by the state Department of Natural Resources to mimic historic water levels and balance levels in Lake Minnetonka and Minnehaha Creek. The dry fall caused low water levels in both the lake and creek.

Renovation began in September on the Lake Nokomis weir, a control structure that prevents Minnehaha Creek from flowing into the lake and allows the lake to drain during high water periods. The improvements will make the weir more reliable and less expensive to maintain. Work will be completed in November.

Staff awarded a design contract for the restoration of the Halverson-Dimler property in Minnetrista, which is comprised of more than 200 acres of rolling agricultural land that drains into Six Mile Marsh and Halsted Bay. The project will include restoration of prairie, wetland, oak savanna and oak woodland on the site. Preliminary design plans will be presented to the MCWD Board of Managers in December and at a community meeting in January. Once the plans are finalized, the restoration will begin in the spring of 2013.

Construction is set to begin on two restoration projects this winter. Work will get underway in November on the Steiger Lake Wetland Restoration project in Victoria. The restoration of Minnehaha Creek in St. Louis Park is expected to commence in December. The work spans a 3,000 foot section of the creek between Louisiana Avenue and Meadowbrook Road, which is among the most degraded sections of Minnehaha Creek.



Lake Nokomis weir before renovation



Regulatory:

Manager: Steve Christopher | 952-641-4506 | schristopher@minnehahacreek.org

The Regulatory department has been managing a number of projects funded, in part, by the District's Cost Share Grant Program. It worked with the City of Minnetrista to help fund the stabilization of a severely eroded stream channel with plantings and rock bioengineering techniques. The Minneapolis Avenue Channel was previously bringing high amounts of sediment and nutrients into Jennings Bay.



Newly-stabilized stream channel in Minnetrista

In St. Louis Park, the District is helping fund the installation of four large raingardens at the Cedar Trails Condominiums. The raingardens will reduce the amount of polluted stormwater flowing to Brownie Lake, which drains to Cedar Lake in Minneapolis. This project is the first in the Cost Share program to collaborate

with an environmentally conscious homeowners association looking to responsibly manage stormwater.

Regulatory staff is continuing efforts to educate landowners on their requirements for maintaining stormwater ponds, raingardens and other stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) within the District. Notices and maintenance guides have been made available to help landowners better understand their BMPs, and how to ensure nearby lakes and streams remain clean. The landowners have been asked to complete an annual inspection form to improve the effectiveness of BMPs on private property.

Education:

Manager: Leslie Yetka | 952-641-4524 | lyetka@minnehahacreek.org

In September the MCWD co-hosted the 2012 Clean Water Summit along with the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, where more than 230 people packed the auditorium to learn about the important role of soil in providing clean water. Each year the event focuses on a different aspect of green infrastructure, and this year's summit was even bigger than 2011 thanks to many partners involved, including University of Minnesota-Extension, Pentair, Plaisted Companies Inc., and the Capitol Region and Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed Districts.



2012 Clean Water Summit

Stormwater Adaptation Study, a project funded by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that engages communities in scenario planning to identify adaptation needs related to stormwater infrastructure, land use changes, and predicted weather trends. In September the MCWD hosted four work groups to identify strategies for addressing concerns identified at a Spring 2012 forum: education, outreach and stakeholder engagement; land use planning and policy; stormwater infrastructure and low impact development; and sustainable funding. You can learn more about the study and how to get involved at www.minnehahacreek.org/wet.

Sixteen grant applications were submitted for the Cynthia Krieg Watershed Stewardship Fund, a program that supports projects involving education and community engagement around water resource issues. Applications will be evaluated and funded projects will be announced in December, 2012.

Outreach has continued on the Minnehaha Creek Watershed

Communications:

Director: Telly Mamayek | 952-641-4508 | tmamayek@minnehahacreek.org

More than 120 people attended the MCWD's 2012 Watershed Heroes Awards on Thursday, October 18 at the Bayview Event Center in Excelsior. The awards honor those who make significant contributions to clean water. Retiring state Sen. Gen Olson emceed the event. Staff created a series of posters highlighting the history of the watershed in honor of the MCWD's 45th Anniversary.

On October 5 MCWD Manager Sherry White and a few staff members visited Blake Lower School in Wayzata to present the Youth Naturalist award to a group of fourth graders who couldn't attend the ceremony. A video of the all-school presentation, which honored the group for sweeping up more than 100 pounds of debris from storm drains near Mooney Lake, is available on the MCWD website.

The Communications department facilitated the publication of some high-profile stories about the District's work during the

quarter. The restoration of Big Island was featured on the front page of the Star Tribune's Metro section in August and the restoration of Minnehaha Creek in St. Louis Park was highlighted in another front page article in the Star Tribune in October.

District staff also participated in KARE 11's "Project H2O," a 20-minute news segment on water quality issues that aired on November 1. Staff lent expertise, provided interviews, and assisted reporter Belinda Jensen and two crew members on their scuba diving mission to see the status of the zebra mussel infestation in Lake Minnetonka.



KARE 11's Belinda Jensen interviewing MCWD AIS Specialist Eric Fieldseth