



MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT
QUALITY OF WATER, QUALITY OF LIFE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2013

WE'VE MOVED!

As of July 1, 2013, the MCWD is located at:

15320 Minnetonka Blvd
Minnetonka, MN 55345

UPCOMING EVENTS

Board meetings and workshops are held at the MCWD offices (15320 Minnetonka Blvd, Minnetonka, MN 55345) and begin at 6:45 p.m. Find more information at minnehahacreek.org/events

August 8 – Board of Managers Workshop

August 10 - Big Watershed Game test

August 15 - Citizens Advisory Committee meeting (Camp Coldwater tour)

August 18 - 2013 Low Impact Development Symposium

August 22 - Board of Managers Meeting

September 5 - Planning and Policy; Operations and Maintenance Committees

September 12 - Clean Water Summit

September 12 - Board of Managers Workshop

September 19 - Citizens Advisory Committee

September 26 - Board of Managers Meeting

October 3 - Planning and Policy; Operations and Maintenance Committees

October 10 - Board of Managers Workshop

October 16 - Citizens Advisory Committee

October 17 - Watershed Heroes Awards

October 24 - Board of Managers Meeting

A MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Our planet is very good at doing what comes naturally -- letting water seep into the ground and filter back into groundwater supplies -- but urban environments complicate matters with their hard surfaces like roofs, roads, parking lots and driveways. In these settings, which make up most of the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD), many of the natural systems which used to help reduce flooding and clean up dirty water no longer exist and so now this water flows quickly into storm drains and makes its way untreated into nearby lakes and streams. What we do with that stormwater, whether it's reducing flooding or minimizing pollution, is a very important consideration.

In August, the Twin Cities are host of the International Low Impact Development Symposium. The conference brings together experts from around the world to talk about a myriad of issues, including how to mimic rain water's natural behavior in an urban environment, how to slow down stormwater and prevent flood damage, how to adapt infrastructure to a changing climate, and how developers can cost-effectively adopt low-impact principles.

Low Impact Development (LID) is a set of design principles that aims to treat stormwater before it leaves the property. Common examples are preserving open space when developing or redeveloping land; raingardens (bowl-shaped gardens that collect and infiltrate stormwater); permeable pavement in driveways or parking lots that allows rain to pass through the surface; green roofs that use plants to soak in rainwater on a building's rooftop; native shoreline or streambank plantings that prevent erosion and intercept runoff; and vegetated swales that direct runoff to areas where it can infiltrate, rather than to nearby storm drains. The list goes on.

In July the District moved its offices into a building that was constructed in 1986, before state law required watersheds or cities to have rules to clean up polluted runoff. This fall we hope to retrofit our driveway and parking lots with practical, cost-effective ways to demonstrate how commercial developers can redevelop existing, paved-over sites to meet new regulatory requirements. We also hope to provide landscaping examples that homeowners can use to improve the quality of water runoff from their lots. This will complement our other water-saving and sustainable features used when remodeling our offices. By using modest, cost-effective features, we would like to give residents and developers ideas that they can use to protect the lakes and streams they care about without breaking the bank.

As with most problems, stormwater is best addressed at its source, before it becomes a bigger issue. Learn more about how the District can help you protect clean water at www.minnehahacreek.org/grants.

- Eric Evenson
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Administrator Eric Evenson

Water Quality:

Water Quality Specialists:

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

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

The Water Quality department released its annual monitoring report and lake grades, documenting the condition of 71 lakes and bays across the District. The MCWD bases its lake grades on water samples taken from May to September. It collects data on three parameters: water clarity, algae growth, and nutrients. This year's report was broken down by subwatershed, and then by water body, allowing residents to find detailed information about their favorite lake or stream and its surrounding area. View the information at www.minnehahacreek.org/2012-lake-grades.



Water quality staff regularly sample more than 80 sites across the watershed

Staff began following up on a 2003 study of macro-invertebrates in streams across the District. Macro-invertebrates are “critters” like insects, snails, crayfish, worms and clams, and are a good indicator of stream health. The new data will help identify any major changes in stream ecology that may need to be addressed.

Water quality staff are also surveying plant life in a

handful of lakes in the Six Mile Creek Chain of Lakes -- Kelzer, Church, Turbid and Halsted Bay. The data will show the diversity and types of plants in those lakes, which are indicators of a lake's health. The surveys are taken in the spring and fall, to compare the progression of aquatic vegetation.

Staff continue to monitor 53 lake sites and 45 stream sites across the District for water clarity, nutrient levels, temperature, the presence of certain pollutants, and more. Monitoring will continue until lakes and streams freeze or dry up in the late fall.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS):

Manager: Craig Dawson

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Boat inspections have gone smoothly so far this summer. The MCWD is helping fund inspectors at Lake Minnewashta, Christmas Lake, Lake Minnetonka and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes. The District is also funding roaming inspectors who rotate between several lakes that otherwise wouldn't be staffed: Pierson, Wasserman, Parley, Virginia, Auburn, Zumbra, and Steiger.



AIS Inspector at Lake Minnewashta

Coupled with the inspections is a pilot “Proof of Inspection” program aimed at speeding up the process for boaters whose equipment has already been inspected. Inspectors examine boats as they leave a lake, when time allows. If the boat passes inspection, the owner can choose to have a seal placed between the boat and trailer. With this seal intact, the boater receives an abbreviated inspection at the next launch. If no inspector is present, the boater can remove the seal manually. More than 2,000 seals have been issued this season.

On July 25 the MCWD Board of Managers adopted a long-term AIS Management plan as part of its 10-year Comprehensive Plan. You can read the plan at www.minnehahacreek.org/about/comprehensive-plan.

MCWD is assisting the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on the Survey's Zequanox treatment study. Zequanox is a non-chemical treatment used to kill zebra mussels, which the USGS tested last year in a laboratory environment in northwest

Minnesota. It is now ready for testing in open water, which will occur within a barrier in Lake Minnetonka's Robinson's Bay this fall. The USGS hosted an informational meeting in July for interested residents.

Planning, Projects and Land Conservation:

Manager: James Wisker

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Setting specific goals is an important step in making any improvement, including cleaner water. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) sets standards for reducing pollution in water bodies across the state, and the MCWD is helping communities within the District meet those standards.

These Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirements, as they are called, define how much of a pollutant can be in the water body and still allow it to meet designated uses, like swimming, fishing, or drinking. The federal Clean Water Act requires states to list water bodies that do not meet water quality standards and set reduction goals in order to restore the waters.

MCWD staff act as a liaison between the MPCA and cities, ensuring clear communication and helping implement plans. Under a policy recently adopted by the MCWD Board of Managers, credit for



TMDLs set goals for reducing pollution in water bodies

pollution reductions achieved through the District's capital improvement projects and cost-share programs will be distributed among the cities to help them meet their required reductions. For example, the District's restoration of Minnehaha Creek through St. Louis Park, Hopkins and Edina will reduce the amount of pollution entering Minnehaha Creek each year, making significant progress toward the

reduction goal set for downstream Lake Hiawatha.

There are two TMDL studies in progress within the MCWD: One that covers all impaired water bodies west of the Minnehaha Creek headwaters, and another that addresses Minnehaha Creek and Lake Hiawatha. Draft reports for each are posted at www.minnehahacreek.org/project.

Operations and Maintenance:

Manager: Renae Clark | 952-641-4510 | rclark@minnehahacreek.org

The District's restoration of a 200-acre property in Minnetrista is proceeding. The steeply-sloped property is being restored to native prairie, wetland and oak savanna to prevent polluted rainwater, snowmelt and eroded soil from entering Six Mile Marsh and Lake Minnetonka's Halsted Bay. The area has been seeded and some vegetation is already visible. The District is exploring opportunities to provide public access to the site from the nearby Dakota Rail Trail.



Plants becoming established at the Six Mile Marsh Prairie Restoration

In partnership with the City of St. Louis Park, the program is preparing to build more than a mile of trails along a restored section of Minnehaha Creek this fall. The bicycle-and-walking trail will be part blacktop and part boardwalk and run along the creek between Louisiana Avenue and Meadowbrook Road, providing public access to a stretch of the creek that was previously hidden from view. The District restored the stretch of creek last winter, adding curves to the previously-straightened channel, reconnecting it to its historical floodplains, restoring wetlands, expanding access to open space and the future Southwest LRT transit line. In total, the project creates access to about 27 acres of previously-inaccessible green space.

Staff managed extremely high water levels that resulted from heavy July rains. Lake Minnetonka jumped a whopping 4.8 inches between July 12 and July 13 and Minnehaha Creek's flow reached a powerful 537 cubic feet-per-second on July 13. Water was flowing over the top of the weir at Gray's Bay dam, and for a time the headwaters of the creek were at nearly the same level as Lake Minnetonka -- a rare scenario. The District uses the Gray's Bay dam to regulate water levels on both the lake and creek, according to a DNR operating procedure available on the District's website www.minnehahacreek.org/data-center/water-levels.

Regulatory:

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

Summer is the height of construction season, and MCWD Regulatory representatives are busy processing permit applications and conducting inspections to make sure construction sites aren't harming nearby water bodies. Staff are on track to process around 600 permits this year, about 100 more than last year.

Regulatory staff are working to make the permitting process more efficient and easier for applicants. A new web tool allows residents and developers to select their city and view exactly which permits are needed. More applications are being sent electronically and the District is working on building an online application system. The MCWD is also in the process of digitally cataloging historic permit information into a searchable database, which will make retrieving information easier for staff and applicants.

MCWD Regulatory Manager Steve Christopher will present to the 2013 International Low Impact Development Conference, held in St. Paul this year, about the District's collaboration with the Woodland Cove development in Minnetrista.

Woodland Cove was the first major project permitted since the District tightened its stormwater rules to allow no new phosphorus creation on a development site, and demonstrates how large projects can still meet tighter standards and protect surrounding water resources. Using Low Impact Development techniques like bio-filtration basins, the 500-acre, 1,000-unit housing development will actually reduce the amount of polluted stormwater runoff from the site.

Education:

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

The Education department is wrapping up its participation in a federally-funded study on how to adapt stormwater infrastructure in the face of a changing climate. The technical research has been completed, and staff are communicating the results to the two focus communities, Minneapolis and Victoria. The study determined the vulnerability of the cities' infrastructure as rain storms become more intense and more frequent, options and costs for adaptation, and strategies for addressing these new challenges.

Staff hosted an open house event in Victoria in June to discuss the results, and presented the study to the City of Minneapolis Transportation and Public Works committee. Learn more about the study at www.minnehahacreek.org/wet.



Changing weather patterns put key infrastructure at risk

Stewardship Fund to create a large-scale game that teaches participants about clean water issues. Renowned game designer Ken Ecklund is heading the project, which uses interactive community events to help shape the game. The game was tested in August and deployed fully in 2014.

Staff are helping plan two major conferences -- the International Low Impact Development (LID) Symposium in St. Paul and the Clean Water Summit in Chanhausen. Education Manager Leslie Yetka is helping with outreach on the recently-set Minimal Impact Design Standards, and developing training opportunities for technical staff related to the new standards.

The Education department is collaborating with Northern Lights. mn, which received a grant from the District's Cynthia Krieg

The department hired Mollie Thompson as Education Assistant in June.

Communications:

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

A record-shattering 1,200 volunteers showed up to collect trash from around Minnehaha Creek and the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes at the seventh-annual Minnehaha Creek Cleanup on June 30. The event reached its goal of collecting two tons of trash and piling massive amounts of brush that were created in then-recent storms. The District provided informational handouts, signage and additional volunteers to make the large event run smoothly.



2013 Minnehaha Creek Cleanup volunteers eating lunch

Staff continued to make improvements to the District's website, allowing Creek Cleanup participants to register online for the first time in the history of the event. It also developed an online tool for cities to file their annual reports with the District and created a web form that helps permit applicants understand permit requirements.

The MCWD's informational banner received an Award of Excellence from the Minnesota Association of Government Communicators and was nominated for Best in Show, the organization's highest award. The 2012 Creek Cleanup and a Tonka Times article on the El Colegio Low Impact Development project received Awards of Merit.

Communications Director Telly Mamayek produced a series of radio reports on the District's work that aired this spring on WCCO Radio, where she worked as a journalist for nearly 20 years before joining the MCWD. These reports can be heard on the District's website www.minnehahacreek.org.