2019
A LOOK FORWARD

Photo by: Dora Dias, first place recreation category, 2018 Earth Day Photo Contest
OUR VISION

VISION

A landscape of vibrant communities where the natural and built environments, in balance, create value and enjoyment.

GOALS

Water quality:
Preserve and improve the quality of water

Water quantity:
Manage the volume and flow of stormwater runoff to minimize impacts of land use change on water

Ecological integrity:
Restore, maintain, and improve the health of ecological systems

Thriving communities:
Promote and enhance the value of water resources in creating successful, sustainable communities

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Partnership
- Innovation
- Excellence
- Sound Science
- Service
FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

As we turn the page on another year, the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) is looking forward to continuing the partnerships that provide clean water and a healthy natural environment which are essential for vibrant, thriving communities.

With tremendous help from our partners, and a record amount of outside investment, we are creating built and natural systems that work in harmony to provide a sense of place, environmental benefit, economic value, and well-being.

In 2019, we will continue to pursue this vision for a Balanced Urban Ecology across the watershed.

A critical piece of the Minnehaha Creek Greenway will be restored in partnership with Hennepin County, the City of Hopkins, the Metropolitan Council, and the City of St. Louis Park. This new contiguous ribbon of public green space along the creek will treat hundreds of acres of stormwater runoff, connect housing, business and the new Southwest Light Rail transit line to over 109 acres of restored nature, and will reintroduce Minnehaha Creek into the surrounding urban fabric.

Downstream, we are partnering with the City of Edina, the City of Minneapolis, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to utilize Minnehaha Creek as a place-making asset that underpins planned park improvements.

And in the MCWD’s headwaters, we are working with the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Partnership to align public and private investments to restore local water quality, and that of downstream Lake Minnetonka, while integrating the extraordinary value of the Six Mile chain of lakes into an urbanizing landscape.

These are just a few examples of MCWD’s ethos in action, which can only succeed through genuine collaboration.

I want to thank all of our wonderful partners for their shared commitment to achieving a balanced urban ecology for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. Together, we have positioned 2019 to be a year filled with fantastic accomplishments!

- James Wisker, January 2019
RESILIENCY

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Twin Cities just experienced the wettest six-year period in more than a century. As communities adjust to increasingly extreme weather events and the stress they put on public and private facilities, there is a growing need to manage the impacts through conscious climate adaptation and resiliency planning. Resiliency is having the capacity to respond, adapt, and thrive under changing conditions.

Beyond partnering with communities to understand the watershed’s hydrology, one principal way in which MCWD is involved in resiliency is through the management of Gray’s Bay Dam, which regulates the discharge of water from Lake Minnetonka into Minnehaha Creek.

“The partnership between Minnehaha Creek Watershed District and the National Weather Service is a great example of how agencies can work together to use sound science and data to make proactive decisions. As our climate changes, the ability to make informed management choices is critical to keeping our communities safe.”

-Craig Schmidt, National Weather Service - Twin Cities

GRAY’S BAY DAM MANAGEMENT

The record flooding the Twin Cities experienced in 2014 was a tangible example of the need to adapt to our changing weather. Following that event, we partnered with the National Weather Service to further improve our management of the Gray’s Bay Dam. The weather service now provides us with customized weather forecasts for the Minnehaha Creek watershed that help us anticipate the impact of predicted rainfall. This new information has helped us proactively manage water levels on Lake Minnetonka and Minnehaha Creek - preventing flooding during the continued record-breaking wet weather.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/grays-bay-dam
MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE

The record precipitation over the last six years has been causing issues across the region, including in South Minneapolis where property owners near Lake Nokomis have noted higher levels of groundwater and standing water in previously dry areas.

In response to these concerns we joined a multi-agency team to evaluate and understand the groundwater impacts alongside the DNR, City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and Hennepin County.

As part of this work, the team recently installed new bedrock groundwater monitoring wells and has been meeting with residents and public officials to share the information learned to date.

Learn more on the City of Minneapolis’ website: https://bit.ly/2N8Yddm

A RESILIENT MINNEHAHA CREEK

In 2019 we will continue repairing damage the 2014 flooding caused to ten sites along Minnehaha Creek in Minneapolis. Using funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the repairs are being built to withstand the effects of climate change. The work is expected to be complete by this summer.

The repairs were the catalyst for our involvement in a master planning process for the Minnehaha Creek corridor in Minneapolis. The plan, which is the first such effort in decades, puts the creek at the center of park improvements planned by the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board in collaboration with the MCWD. The partners, along with a citizen advisory committee, are developing principles and concept designs that are rooted in climate resiliency for the park corridor.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/fema-flood-repairs

MASTER PLANNING FOCUS AREAS

“The multi-jurisdictional partnership of local, regional, and state agencies has provided valuable knowledge and resources to understand water levels in the Lake Nokomis area. By working together, we are better equipped to look at all relevant data to inform what actions can be taken.”

- Katrina Kessler, Director of Surface Water & Sewers, City of Minneapolis
As part of our system-wide effort to continue improving the health of Minnehaha Creek, we are working with partners to treat regional stormwater runoff, improve the structure and function of the creek, expand and connect green space along the creek corridor, and to integrate it into the surrounding communities.

These strategies will create a more resilient and valuable system that balances the needs of the built and natural environments while benefiting residents and wildlife alike.

“When the city council started focusing on the restoration of Arden Park, we considered the benefits of cleaner water, more effective management of stormwater and floodwater, and creating more usable park space and community gathering areas that stayed dry over an entire season. Working with MCWD to remeander the creek, restore habitat, and create stormwater management features helps us meet those goals. We expect the benefits to the Arden Park neighborhood and our town, of both an improved park and a remeandered Minnehaha Creek, will be extraordinary.”

- James Hovland, Mayor, City of Edina

ARDEN PARK

An example of partnering to improve water quality is our work with the City of Edina to restore Arden Park. In 2019, we will remeander the creek through the park, create swales to manage and clean stormwater, plant trees and pollinator plants, and help the city upgrade its park facilities. This project complements the Minnehaha Creek Greenway work in St. Louis Park and Hopkins and the Minnehaha Creek master planning in Minneapolis.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/arden-park
325 BLAKE ROAD

We are steadily making progress on the Minnehaha Creek Greenway’s keystone project: the restoration and redevelopment of 325 Blake Road in Hopkins.

The project will treat 270 acres of stormwater from the surrounding area and restore 1,000 feet of Minnehaha Creek through its most degraded section. It will also create a vibrant new space that integrates housing, retail, and natural areas.

Demolition of the cold storage facility that used to be on the site was completed at the end of 2018, setting the stage for the restoration of 1,000 feet of Minnehaha Creek frontage this year. We will also begin the process of redeveloping the rest of the site, which will include opportunities for community involvement.

“This project is an exciting opportunity as we revitalize the Blake Road corridor in preparation for Southwest Light Rail Transit. The Minnehaha Creek Greenway, which encompasses 325 Blake Road and Cottageville Park, is an important amenity for giving residents easy access to green space, while also making our environment healthier and stronger for many years to come.”

- Molly Cummings, Mayor, City of Hopkins

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/325-blake-road

“...the most livable cities make space for public parks, and in return, those parks offer health and economic benefits to those communities. We commend the watershed district’s approach of balancing the built and natural environments to help their communities thrive.”

- Chloe McGuire Brigl, MN Chapter American Planning Association Conference Co-Chair, on the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, which provided the vision for Arden Park in Edina
adding value

In order to advance our goals of improving water quality and ecological integrity, we recognize that leveraging our resources to achieve not only our goals, but the goals of our communities, makes us a creative partner who adds value to projects, like our work with the City of Victoria in the Six Mile Creek - Halsted Bay Subwatershed.

The Six Mile Creek - Halsted Bay Subwatershed is a complex system of 14 lakes connected by Six Mile Creek and thousands of acres of wetlands. While this area is still largely rural, it is prime for development, which provides us with an opportunity to collaborate with our communities and proactively plan how to protect and restore water resources as changes on the landscape take place.

In 2019, we will be advancing this work by managing carp, restoring a lakefront park, and planning for sustainable development.

“I was very impressed by this innovative approach to restoring fisheries and waterfowl habitat in the headwaters of Lake Minnetonka. The plan to finally control carp in the Lake Minnetonka watershed is so important. I can’t wait to see the outcome.”

- Ron Schara, Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Carp Management

We are focusing on managing invasive common carp first because they degrade habitat and feed algae by releasing nutrients from lake bottoms.

Funded by a grant from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, this work includes removing carp, installing carp barriers, and aerating shallow lakes to allow bluegill sunfish to survive the winter and feed on carp eggs in the spring.

The progress we have made so far includes removing over 13,000 pounds of carp from three lakes. Work will continue until a sustainable level of carp remain in the system.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/six-mile

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/SMCHB-habitat-restoration
WASSERMANN WEST WATERFRONT PARK

As part of our comprehensive effort within the Six Mile Creek - Halsted Bay Subwatershed, we are working with the City of Victoria to integrate clean water investments for Wassermann Lake with the city’s goals for a waterfront park.

This nature-based park will restore the water quality of Wassermann Lake by reducing phosphorus reaching the lake, restoring stream channels on site, and managing seven acres of woodland while providing people access to this unique natural site on the shores of the lake.

Wassermann West is one example of the City of Victoria’s vision for the future growth of the city, which emphasizes a system of public green space and trails connecting their chain of lakes.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/wassermann-west

“We appreciate the watershed district’s collaboration on our vision for Victoria’s Chain of Lakes and the partnership approach we took to include these plans in Victoria’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan. We are excited to start planning for sustainable growth that builds our legacy as the city of lakes, parks, and trails and preserves our most valued natural resources.”

- Tom Funk, Mayor, City of Victoria

WESTERN GROWTH AREA

We are also collaborating with the City of Victoria as they plan for the future development of the Western Growth Area, a growth corridor west of Victoria that is rich with water and natural resources.

The city’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan creates a roadmap for integrating the protection and improvement of natural resources into future development through an interconnected greenway. The city will work with MCWD and other partners to develop a shared implementation strategy where the city’s natural heritage creates community value.
INTEGRATING LAND USE & WATER PLANNING

As part of our balanced urban ecology approach, we are committed to finding ways to align goals, plans, and investments with others acting on the landscape.

PLAN COORDINATION

One way we work with our communities is through review of their local water management plans. Our focus is on developing plans that enable early coordination of land use and water management, foster water-friendly development, and identify partnership opportunities that maximize water resources and community goals.

As communities complete their plans, we look forward to new opportunities to work with cities to integrate the role of natural resources within the built environment.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

Beginning mid-2019, we will be engaging our communities in a process that will inform program improvements to support the vision set in our 2017 Watershed Management Plan. This will include identifying policy and procedural changes to improve land use and water planning integration, developing a responsive grant program, and improving our own regulatory process and rules.

“The opportunity to work collaboratively with the watershed district to create a framework for partnership is something we encourage. Putting in place a plan for early coordination and integrating land use and water planning will help us both identify opportunities to meet our goals.”

- Scott Johnson, Administrator, City of Medina

Photo by: Aldo Abelleira, third place landscape category, 2018 Earth Day Photo Contest
Our 2019 budget exemplifies fiscal responsibility and government efficiency. By securing more outside funds and through strategic financial planning, we are able to increase our budgeted expenditures and deliver more high-impact projects and programming while keeping the tax levy flat. Helping finance the work in 2019 are nearly $2.3 million in grants and partner investments – the most in our history.

2019 BUDGET

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2018 2019

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More information at www.minnehahacreek.org/budget

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