

MCWD 2016

Mid-Year Highlights

MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT (MCWD)

MCWD is a local unit of government responsible for managing and protecting the water resources in one of the largest urban watersheds in the state of Minnesota. There are eight major creeks, 129 lakes, and thousands of wetlands within the MCWD.

IN PURSUIT OF A BALANCED URBAN ECOLOGY

Recognizing the relationship between our natural and built environments, the MCWD works in partnership with the public, private and civic sectors to help protect and improve our natural systems, make wise investments in public infrastructure and improve the quality of water and quality of life in our communities. The District pursues this work under three guiding principles:

- » We will join with others in pursuing our watershed management goals
- » We will intensify and maintain our focus on high-priority projects
- » We will be flexible and creative in adapting our practices to those of our partners



KEEP UP WITH US

We think it's important to keep our partners and residents in the loop about what's going on at MCWD. In addition to the mid-year and annual newsletters, you can stay up to speed with us on our Splash e-newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and at minnehahacreek.org



KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Planning assistance

MCWD adds value to partners by lending technical expertise for projects along Painter Creek **p. 2**

Zebra mussels

Groundbreaking research projects looks at managing zebra mussels by targeting the youngest mussels **p. 4**

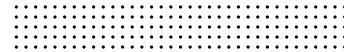
Grant spotlight

Homeowner plants water-friendly landscaping and becomes ambassador for clean water in his community **p. 6**



MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT

LENDING EXPERTISE FOR CLEAN WATER



Protecting clean water amid land use changes is one of the biggest challenges in managing an urbanized watershed. Since most land is privately owned by people with their own goals and priorities, we must work in partnership to protect our natural resources. With land use being the major driver of water quality in most of our watershed, collaborating with landowners holds the most promise for achieving our clean water goals.

One of the ways we help achieve water friendly land use is to provide technical assistance to other people's projects. We help review plans, choose the right plants, or facilitate communication among the various parties involved. Providing technical advice allows us to advocate for clean water and influence the work of others in a cost-efficient way. The people we work with also save money while making environmentally-sound decisions.

This approach is evident in our efforts to create a natural corridor around Painter Creek, which flows south from Lake Katrina to Lake Minnetonka's Jennings Bay. The result is a win-win situation. We saved more than \$1 million by obtaining voluntary easements from private landowners for our clean water work. In exchange, they received valuable technical assistance and infrastructure improvement.

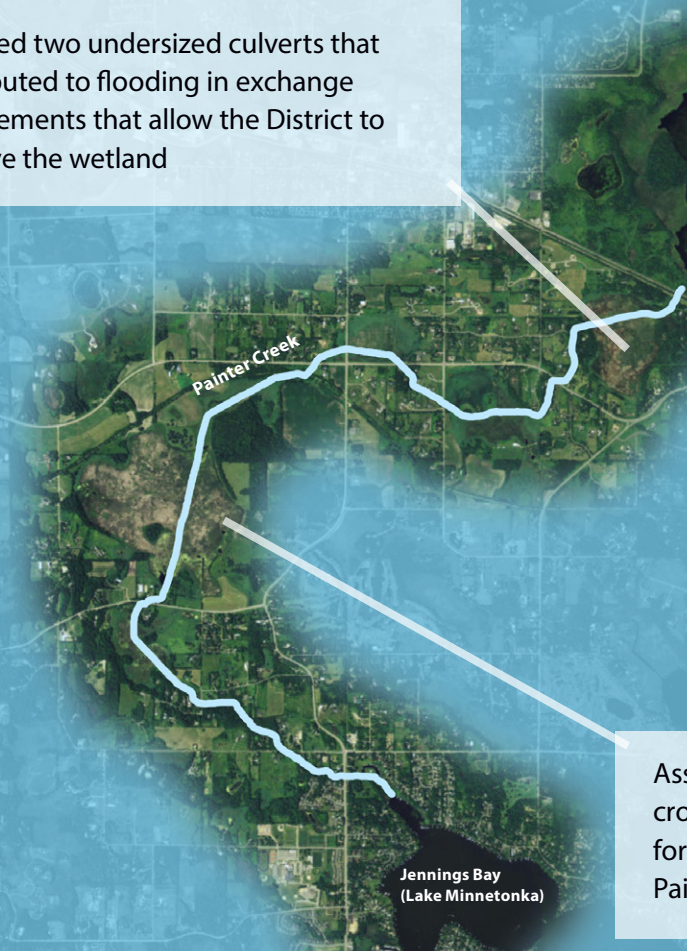
MCWD'S work in Painter Creek

Helped a Medina landowner restore a large section of former cropland into a natural landscape. The landowner is funding the restoration, and may donate an easement to the District to ensure the land is protected in the future.

Replaced two undersized culverts that contributed to flooding in exchange for easements that allow the District to improve the wetland

Helped design a wetland restoration for a housing development in Medina that will qualify for a "cluster development" under city rules, allowing for more lots. The developer will fund the project and donate a conservation easement over 90 acres of the restored land in exchange for the District's continued guidance.

Assisted on the repair of a cattle crossing over Painter Creek in exchange for easements over portions of the Painter Marsh wetland complex.





CLEAN WATER, JOBS, AND TRAILS: PARTNERING WITH JAPS-OLSON

One of St. Louis Park's larger employers, Japs-Olson Company, encountered several obstacles as it sought to expand its printing business, some of them having to do with how to handle the stormwater on site. We worked in partnership with them to help remove the barriers to expansion while using their location along the Minnehaha Creek Greenway to make additional improvements to the natural corridor.

In a complex series of agreements that also involved the Cities of Hopkins and St. Louis Park, we were able to treat the stormwater from the expansion in exchange for 3.6 acres of land donated by Japs-Olson. The land extends the restoration of the Minnehaha Creek Greenway and also provides a trailhead for visitors to access the creek's boardwalk and trails.

This innovative partnership resulted in an environmentally-friendly business expansion that was finished ahead of schedule and under budget, and paved the way for the creation of 150 jobs.

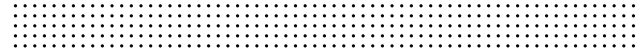
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

We are preparing to update our 10-year Comprehensive Plan, the guiding document for MCWD's work and goals. The update will build on the strong foundation of our current plan and focus primarily on improving service delivery and project implementation.

We're in the midst of an intensive effort to get input from citizens and stakeholders. We recently produced a book on the core philosophies that underpin our work, titled "Partnering for Clean Water & Thriving Communities." Find the book and more information about the update at www.minnehahacreek.org/2017.



RESEARCH AND MONITORING



GROUNDBREAKING STUDY ON CONTROLLING ZEBRA MUSSELS

This summer we began a first-of-its kind study on a new method to manage zebra mussel populations: using a copper-based product to target the youngest zebra mussels. Conducted in enclosed barriers in Lake Minnetonka's Robinson's Bay, it is the first known field test of its kind in the country.

During the study, researchers applied very low levels of a federally-approved product, EarthTec QZ, in six enclosures near the shoreline. After each application, researchers evaluated the impact of different concentrations of the product on the young zebra mussels. The product is species-specific and poses no health risks to humans or other aquatic life.

The District is partnering with the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) on the study, which is funded in part by a grant from Hennepin County.

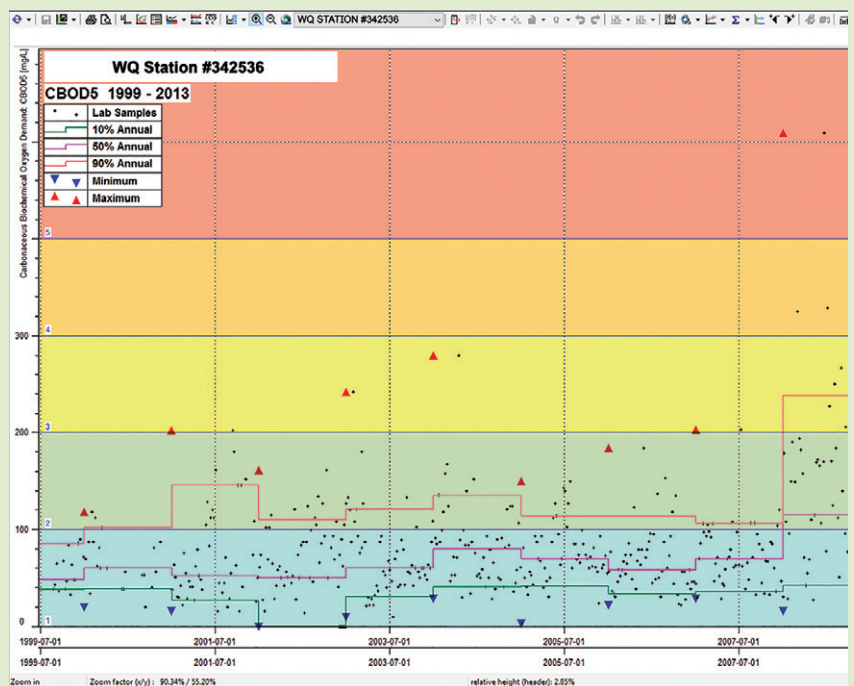


GETTING THE FULL PICTURE

Our research and monitoring staff are developing a new, holistic way to understand the overall health of the watershed. The "E-Grade" program will look beyond the standard water quality metrics of clarity, algae and phosphorus to understand the broader issues affecting our lakes and streams and how to address them.

As a major step in the transition, District researchers have begun using a new, innovative database that allows us to collect and analyze all kinds of additional data that will help us evaluate other aspects of our waters: flood control, habitat, vegetation, recreation, and more.

Learn more at minnehahacreek.org/e-grade





10TH ANNUAL MINNEHAHA CREEK CLEANUP

It was a record-breaking day at the 10th annual Minnehaha Creek Cleanup on July 26. More than 2,000 volunteers showed up to collect 5 tons of trash from around Minnehaha Creek and area lakes in Minneapolis, St. Louis Park, Hopkins and Minnetonka.

Notable items included a flat-screen TV, bracelet with coordinates to a village in Guatemala, a human tooth down to the root, and a wallet from 1983 that carried a Dayton's department store credit card!



2016 URBAN WATERS FORUM

We are committed to helping passionate citizens protect the lakes they care about. We support the formation and continued success of citizen-led lake and stream groups across the watershed. As part of that work, two new groups have formed in the District: Long Lake Creek Waters Association and the Friends of Lake Hiawatha.

We also helped present the 2016 Urban Waters Forum at the MN Landscape Arboretum this spring. The forum explored the ways individuals can play a critical role in protecting the lakes or streams they care about and give participants the tools and knowledge to make a meaningful difference.

Learn more about joining or forming a lake or stream group at www.minnehahacreek.org/WAI

MCWD WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBER

The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners appointed Bill Becker to the MCWD Board in March. The Minnetonka resident recently retired after 32 years with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and six years with the non-partisan branch of the Minnesota Legislature.

Becker developed the State of Minnesota’s first comprehensive natural resources management plan and was executive director of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council from its inception in 2008 until his retirement.

GRANT SPOTLIGHT: ARUN HEJMADI

Our cost share grant program provides financial incentives for people and organizations to keep their stormwater on site and protect nearby lakes and streams. The program encourages people to not only build projects like raingardens and shoreline plantings, but also to use these features to educate their communities on the importance of keeping polluted stormwater on your property.

Recent grant recipient Arun Hejmadi embodies this spirit. Imbued with a respect for the importance of water from an early age growing up in India, he is attempting to generate interest for a neighborhood-scale project and is installing a raingarden in his south Minneapolis yard to help sell the idea. He started an initiative called “Restore Our Watersheds” that hosts presentations and meetings on clean water issues. He has worked with local media outlets and community groups to spread the word about how residents can pitch in to protect the health of nearby lakes and streams.



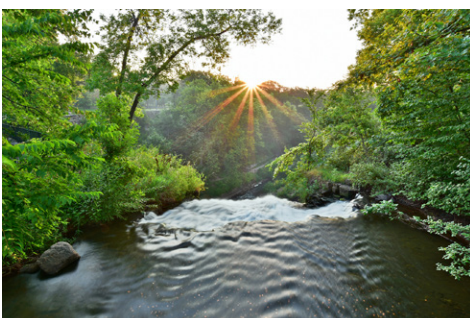
EARTH DAY PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS



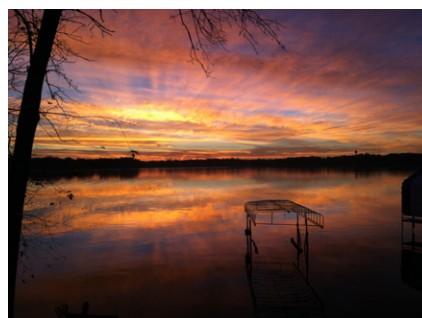
Minnehaha Creek below Minnehaha Falls, Ernesto Ruiz



Lake Harriet sunset, Bert J. Soyka



Sunrise over Minnehaha Falls, Justin Pruden



Lake Minnetonka sunset, Kristine Houtman



Icy March sunset over Gray’s Bay, Chris Murphy