



MCWD 2018

Mid-Year Highlights

Photo credit: Anna Fitzsimmons

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

It has been an exciting year at the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) as we embark on a path set forth in our newly-adopted Watershed Management Plan. The plan, which is a road map for the next decade of our clean water work, was adopted by the MCWD Board of Managers in January following approval by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources. It puts into practice our commitment to working in partnership with others and collaborating early to ensure the natural and built environments are balanced to create value and enjoyment for all.

As MCWD's new administrator, I look forward to working with our public and private partners to integrate their goals and plans with those of the district. I am committed to continually improving how we align our work with others to protect and improve our waters, and create successful, sustainable communities. As you read this newsletter, you'll learn more about our current efforts along the most degraded stretch of Minnehaha Creek and our work to restore the headwaters of Lake Minnetonka. You'll also see more information about our management of Gray's Bay Dam and how we are partnering with the National Weather Service to more effectively manage water levels.

Our staff and our Board of Managers are excited for what lies ahead, and we are already planning our work for 2019. We look forward to collaborating with you to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations.



KEEP UP WITH US

In addition to the mid-year and annual newsletters, you can stay up to speed with us with our Splash e-newsletter, social media channels, and at www.minnehahacreek.org.

MINNEHAHA CREEK

Minnehaha Creek has gone through a lot of change over the past several decades. As the land around the creek was developed, the creek was ditched and straightened and wetlands, which are vital for storing floodwaters, were drained. As more land was paved, more stormwater ran into the creek, taking pollutants and sediment with it.

As a result, the most urbanized stretch of Minnehaha Creek in St. Louis Park and Hopkins became the most degraded section of the creek. But we are working to change that. We have focused our efforts to improve water quality for Minnehaha Creek and Lake Hiawatha downstream by creating a connected corridor of green space, restored stream, and stormwater management practices. We call this area the Minnehaha Creek Greenway.

So far, the Minnehaha Creek Greenway includes creek restorations at Methodist Hospital, Japs-Olson Company, and Minnehaha Creek Preserve in St. Louis Park, and Cottageville Park in Hopkins.

When completed, the Minnehaha Creek Greenway will have created:

- 1.4 miles of restored creek
- 440 acres of stormwater management
- 297 pounds of phosphorus reduction
- 30 acres of restored wetlands
- 4,644 cubic feet of floodplain storage
- 109 acres of accessible green space
- 2.3 miles of new trails
- New access to transit options

325 BLAKE ROAD, HOPKINS

As a cornerstone to the Minnehaha Creek Greenway, we are poised to transform a nearly 17-acre industrial site at 325 Blake Road in Hopkins. Working in partnership with the City of Hopkins and with input from Hennepin County, the cities of St. Louis Park and Edina, and the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative, we released a request for qualifications for a master developer for the site in late 2017. Six developers responded and a joint working group reviewed the candidates. The group recommended Minneapolis-based Kraus-Anderson to the MCWD Board of Managers based on how its proposed concept aligns with the community's vision for the site: to create a transit-oriented, integrated residential development that invites people to experience Minnehaha Creek.



"This project has tremendous potential to benefit our communities and the environment. I am really pleased with the inclusive spirit of partnership that has brought us this far, and I look forward to continued community engagement."

— Jan Callison, chair of the Hennepin County Board and the Southwest Light Rail Steering Committee

We will keep approximately 4 acres of the site to restore nearly 1,200 feet of Minnehaha Creek, provide public access to green space, and capture and treat over 260 acres of stormwater from Hopkins, St. Louis Park, and Edina to keep pollutants out of Minnehaha Creek and Lake Hiawatha downstream.

Construction is anticipated to begin in 2019. Meanwhile, the demolition of the cold storage warehouse currently on the site is expected to begin late this summer. The demolition is being timed to coincide with the reconstruction of Blake Road to minimize disruption for the community.

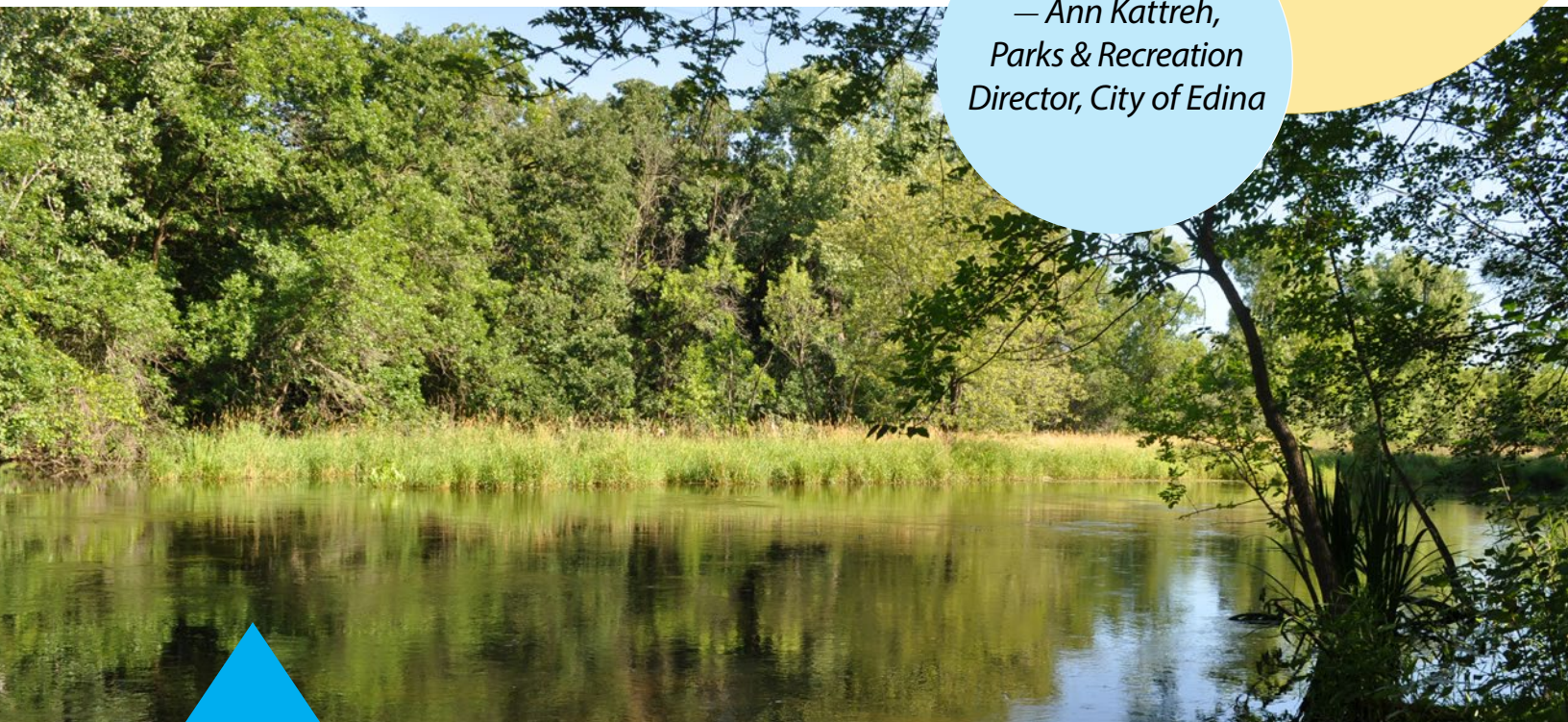
Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/325-blake-road.

As we begin to see the benefits of our focused approach in Hopkins and St. Louis Park, we are remaining responsive to opportunities that arise downstream. In Edina, the city has been a strong partner in collaborating early in the areas of land use and water resources planning. This has led to the restoration of Minnehaha Creek in Arden Park, complementing the work being done upstream in the Minnehaha Creek Greenway.

Working together to find areas where early collaboration makes sense, the city and MCWD are leveraging public funds to create a project that meets the goals of the community while improving water quality, wildlife habitat, and recreation.

“Coordinating our work with MCWD has resulted in projects that are more cost-effective and meet both community and environmental goals to make Edina a great place to live, work, and play.”

*— Ann Kattreh,
Parks & Recreation
Director, City of Edina*



ARDEN PARK, EDINA

Arden Park is the latest in a series of improvements along Minnehaha Creek that is returning the formerly ditched and ignored stream into a vibrant, healthy, and beautiful natural resource that connects and enhances the communities it flows through.

The project will re-meander and restore habitat along 2,000 feet of Minnehaha Creek, manage invasive species, capture and treat over 80 acres of stormwater runoff, and make park areas drier and more usable. The restoration will create new opportunities for public enjoyment of the creek with new trails and access for fishing. As part of the construction, the city will also be replacing the playground and park shelter to better serve their residents.

Through a 12-month public input process a concept plan was developed, and throughout 2018 staff has been working to refine the concept plan. Public review opportunities occurred earlier this year and the project will be presented for final approval in September, with construction beginning this winter.

Learn more by signing up for project updates at www.minnehahacreek.org/arden-park.

Our commitment to working with partners extends even further downstream into Minneapolis where we share responsibility to improve environmental quality with the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. In early 2017, all three agencies signed a memorandum of understanding that recognizes that integrating land use and water resource planning will help us achieve our collective natural resources goals. As a result, we are committed to working together to coordinate goals, plans, and investments in Minneapolis.

FLOOD REPAIRS, MINNEAPOLIS

In 2014, the Twin Cities saw the wettest first half of the year since modern day record keeping began in 1871. Coupled with a long winter and late snowmelt, this extreme precipitation led to record water levels throughout the watershed.

After assessing the damage that was caused by this flooding, we applied for funding assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and we were awarded \$336,000 for repairs along Minnehaha Creek in Minneapolis. This summer, staff has been working on the design for the creek repairs, and we hope to have a contractor in place yet this summer. Repairs will be constructed throughout the fall and into 2019. Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/minnehaha-creek-fema-repairs.



COORDINATED PLANNING, MINNEAPOLIS

As part of this partnership, we are coordinating with the City of Minneapolis' Southwest Harriet Flood Study in addition to and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Southwest Service Area Master Plan and Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan. We are also working in partnership with a multi-jurisdictional group to investigate and study high water concerns in the Nokomis area. So far, the group has determined that the above average precipitation from 2013 - 2017 led to higher groundwater recharge rates. This increase in precipitation, coupled with the bedrock geology in the area, are likely causes of the high water.

Additional study is being done to evaluate infrastructure impacts, review water elevation information, and explore what changes can be made to alleviate these high water concerns. Learn more on the City of Minneapolis' website: www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/stormwater/nokomisgroundwater.

SIX MILE CREEK - HALSTED BAY

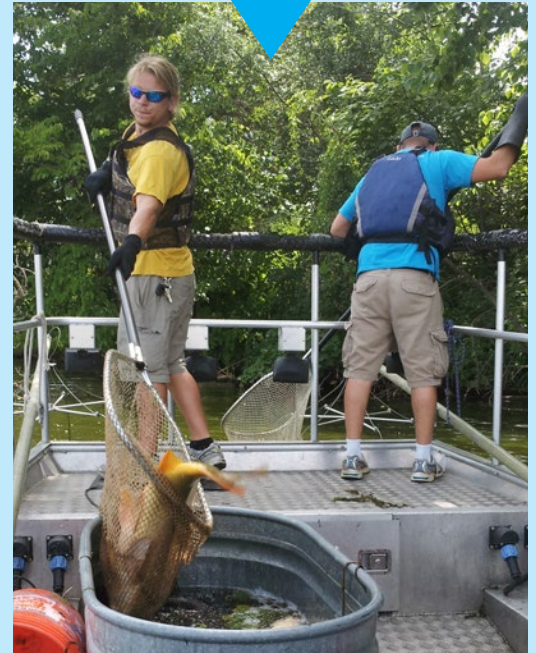
The headwaters of the MCWD, the Six Mile Creek – Halsted Bay Subwatershed, is comprised of a complex system of 14 lakes and hundreds of wetlands that drain into Lake Minnetonka’s most degraded bay. 2018 marks the first year of implementing our Watershed Management Plan which provides a 10-year strategy for the region to protect and improve water quality and natural resources through value-added partnerships. Our strategy includes managing carp to reduce in-lake damage; targeting wetland protection and restoration to address pollution being released to lakes, Six Mile Creek, and Halsted Bay; identifying stormwater management partnership opportunities; and controlling in-lake nutrients to reduce the amount of phosphorus being released.

CARP MANAGEMENT

Earlier this year, we were awarded \$567,000 from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC) to fund a carp management plan that is part of a multi-pronged, 10-year effort to improve water quality and wildlife habitat throughout the subwatershed. By managing the overabundance of invasive common carp in the system, we’ll be able to improve conditions for gamefish and waterfowl and set the stage for additional restorations.

This summer, carp removal is planned in the lakes across the subwatershed, and this fall, we will be installing aeration units in several lakes to maintain oxygen levels throughout the winter. This will improve bluegill sunfish survival so they can feed on carp eggs in the spring. Also this fall, staff will install several carp barriers that will stop carp from moving into and out of Wassermann Lake, Crown College Pond, and Mud Lake.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/SMCHB-habitat-restoration.



“We appreciate the LSOHC recognizing the value of this project, and the MCWD’s long term vision and leadership in the Six Mile Creek - Halsted Bay area. Carver County prides itself on being an effective partner, and looks forward to working collectively to restore our valuable natural resources and to enhance our residents’ enjoyment of our lakes and streams.”

— Randy Maluchnik, Carver County Commissioner

WASSERMANN WEST WATERFRONT PARK, VICTORIA

We are partnering with the City of Victoria to design the city’s first nature park that will feature trails, gathering spaces, and public access along the western shore of Wassermann Lake. The 33 acres of undeveloped land, which includes Wassermann West Pond, was identified during routine coordination with the City of Victoria and was purchased in 2017.

The park, which is being designed with input from the local community, will also incorporate natural resources improvements, including treating Wassermann West Pond with alum to reduce the release of nutrients stored in the lake bottom. In 2019, we will begin stabilizing the stream south of the planned park, start building trails and park amenities, and will be managing and restoring native vegetation across seven acres of woodland.

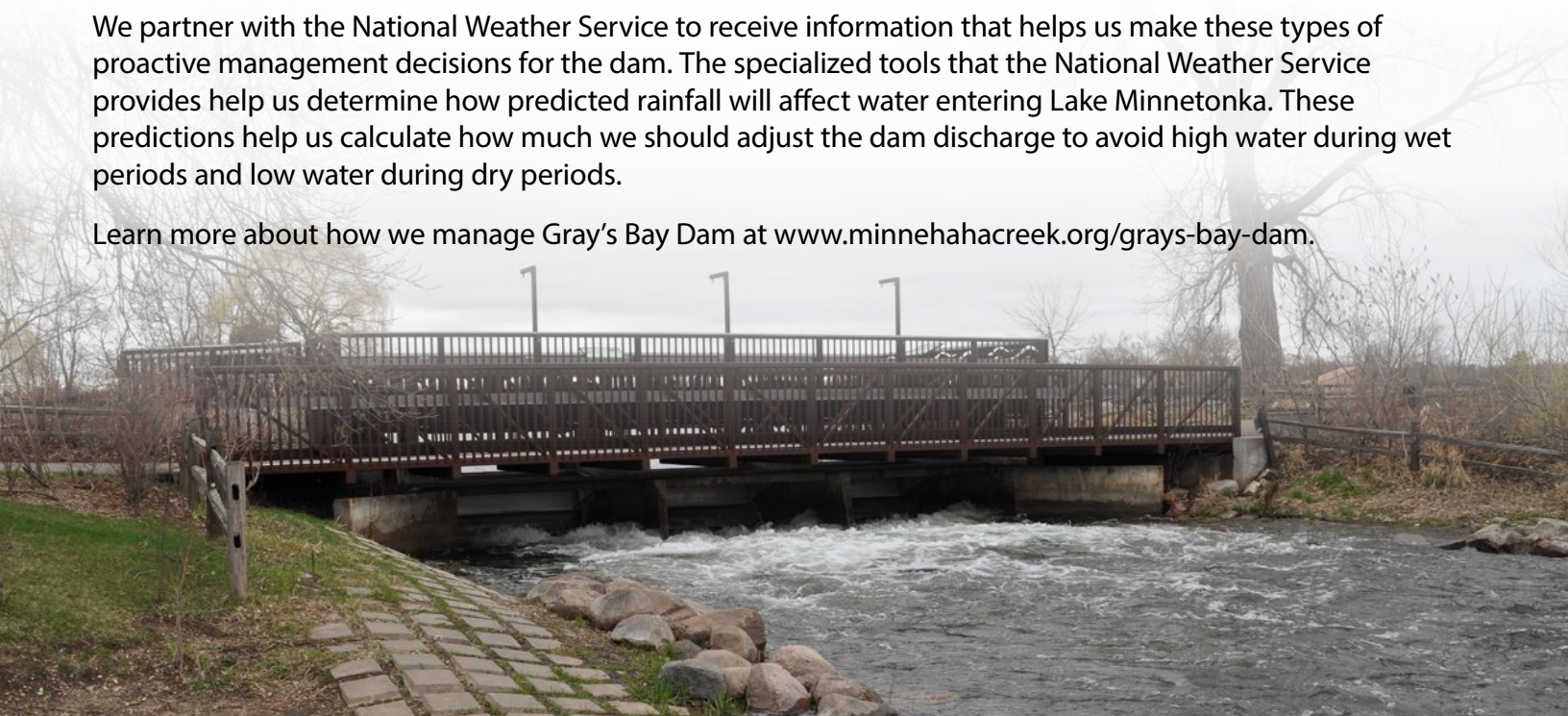
Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/wassermann-west-waterfront-park.

GRAY'S BAY DAM MANAGEMENT

The prolonged winter weather this year created some concerns about water levels for Lake Minnetonka and Minnehaha Creek this spring. To drop the lake's water level and to gain room in the lake for spring snowmelt, staff worked with Tonka Bay Marina and the City of Minnetonka to place aerators near the dam to break up ice. This proactive measure allowed us to open Gray's Bay Dam on April 19 (16 days before ice-out) and avoid high water along Minnehaha Creek during the spring thaw.

We partner with the National Weather Service to receive information that helps us make these types of proactive management decisions for the dam. The specialized tools that the National Weather Service provides help us determine how predicted rainfall will affect water entering Lake Minnetonka. These predictions help us calculate how much we should adjust the dam discharge to avoid high water during wet periods and low water during dry periods.

Learn more about how we manage Gray's Bay Dam at www.minnehahacreek.org/grays-bay-dam.



MINNEHAHA CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

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