The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (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
MINNEHAHA CREEK PRESERVE
Construction is complete on a boardwalk and paved trail along a restored stretch of the creek P.2

CHRISTMAS LAKE
Cutting-edge work to eradicate zebra mussels from Christmas Lake P.3

MINNEHAHA CREEK CLEANUP
Record-breaking crowd collects record amount of trash! P.4

NEW ADMINISTRATOR
Lars Erdahl takes the helm P.5
PROJECTS

MINNEHAHA CREEK PRESERVE

MCWD finished building 2,200 feet of boardwalk and 4,600 feet of paved trail around a restored section of Minnehaha Creek, in partnership with the City of St. Louis Park and Clean Water Fund. The new trail system opens the creek to the public where it had previously been hidden and offers a place to experience and learn about the creek.

RESULTS

- Creates access to more than 39 acres of green space that was previously inaccessible
- Manages polluted stormwater from an 80 acre area
- Brings more than 600 housing units within walking distance of transit connections
- Creates outdoor education area for area schools and community groups

LONG LAKE CREEK CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The District restored a former wastewater treatment pond connected to Long Lake Creek into a healthy wetland with a meandering stream running through it. The project provides critical wildlife habitat and restores the previously-ditched stream to its natural function. Long Lake Creek is a known carrier of excess sediment and nutrients into Lake Minnetonka, and the project is the first of several restoration projects planned along the stream.

HIGHWAY 101 CAUSEWAY

MCWD is working with Hennepin County and others on the re-construction of Highway 101, which crosses Lake Minnetonka between Gray’s Bay and Wayzata Bay. The District is working to enhance the shoreline where the road crosses the lake to reduce erosion, infiltrate stormwater and provide habitat.

ARDEN PARK / WEST 54TH ST

The District coordinated with the City of Edina’s reconstruction of West 54th Street to install clean-water landscaping at Arden Park and is exploring options for additional restoration along Minnehaha Creek.
CHRISTMAS LAKE RESPONSE
The District continued to partner with MN DNR, City of Shorewood, MN AIS Research Center and the Christmas Lake Homeowners Association on the response to the discovery of zebra mussels near the public launch last summer. The treatments last fall appeared successful in the area treated, as no zebra mussels were found in the enclosed area this spring. However, a comprehensive search of the lake found several more zebra mussels, all located just outside of the treatment area. With the chance of additional zebra mussels still in the bay, an 11-acre area was treated in June and early July and will be closely monitored all season.

GRANT AWARDS
MCWD was awarded two major grants to pursue innovative AIS prevention and management work. Funded by a grant from Hennepin County, the District will study hybrid milfoil in District lakes in partnership with the University of Minnesota and Montana State University. A grant from the Initiative Foundation would help explore other ways to prevent the spread of AIS by watercraft.

SIX MILE CREEK CARP ASSESSMENT
The District is in the second year of an extensive assessment of the common carp population in the Six Mile Creek chain of lakes, in partnership with the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center. This assessment is the first step toward sustainably managing common carp in this area.

ECOSYSTEM EVALUATION PROGRAM (E-GRADE):
Staff is developing a new grading system that evaluates the watershed based on the health of the entire ecosystem, rather than a few water quality parameters. Staff are currently developing the metrics, meeting with a Technical Advisory Committee comprised of experts in the field, and collecting data in three test subwatersheds.

AIS EARLY DETECTION MONITORING
The District is ramping up its monitoring for the presence of invasive species in lakes at higher risk for infestation, allowing staff to respond quickly to new infestations. Forty-five water bodies are being monitored in 2015. MCWD is also looking for volunteers to help monitor their nearby lake; for more information on that program, visit www.minnehahacreek.org/detectors.
EDUCATION & OUTREACH

EDUCATION AT MINNEHAHA CREEK PRESERVE
Staff produced a robust educational experience at the Minnehaha Creek Preserve, including a series of eight large signs detailing the history of the area, how land use changes in the area have affected Minnehaha Creek, and what users can do to help protect and improve our lakes and streams. Staff built partnerships with local organizations to bring a variety of groups to the Preserve for educational purposes.

MINNEHAHA CREEK CLEANUP
A record-breaking 1,600 volunteers collected a staggering 4 tons of trash at the ninth-annual Minnehaha Creek Cleanup in July. The new “Eco-Education Zone” featured about 20 groups hosting activities and information about clean water and environmental issues.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY
MCWD conducted a District-wide survey of residents to understand attitudes around water quality, priorities and concerns of residents, and actions residents take to protect clean water. Among the many findings, the results showed widespread concern for the lakes, streams and wetlands throughout the District –98 percent of residents consider protecting clean water either “very” or “somewhat” important. The full results are available on the District website.

GRANTS

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT:
MCWD is working to help fund clean-water landscaping projects that catch polluted runoff or otherwise help improve water quality while raising awareness about water quality issues. Staff responded to at least 75 inquiries, conducted 35 site visits, and finalized a number of previously funded stormwater management projects. The program’s criteria and scoring system was updated to encourage outreach and visibility of projects. Due to 2014’s flooding, the program has handled a record number of inquiries about shoreline restoration.

CYNTHIA KRIEG WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP FUND:
The Cynthia Krieg Watershed Stewardship Fund helps pay for programs that use education to protect clean water. Ten projects are underway. A few projects that were wrapped up this spring include: Two videos that highlight rain gardens and the flow of water in the Minnehaha Creek watershed, a Lake Minnetonka Shoreline Gardening guide, and an outdoor learning center for youth in Minnetonka.

WATERCRAFT INSPECTION:
The District helped fund inspectors at public launches across the District with a variety of partners: Carver County, Lake Minnetonka Conservation District, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, City of Shorewood and Three Rivers Park District. The grants and contracts will help provide 17,500 hours of inspections in 2015.
OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION

WELCOMING ADMINISTRATOR LARS ERDAHL
After a nationwide search that attracted a pool of more than 50 applicants, the MCWD Board of Managers named Lars Erdahl as the new MCWD Administrator in January. Erdahl comes to the District with a wealth of leadership and public service experience, most recently at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum and Minnesota Zoo.

CREDIT CARDS NOW ACCEPTED
The District added an electronic credit card system to allow the District to accept credit cards as payment for permit applications.

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT
MCWD digitized and archived a variety of District documents dating back more than two decades.

PERMITTING

PERMITTING AND INSPECTIONS
The District handles permits on behalf of many of its communities for a variety of activities that can impact water resources. The District received 329 permit applications in the first half of 2015 and conducted regular inspections of construction sites across the watershed.

WETLAND BANK
Staff worked with a Minnetrista landowner to identify a large wetland restoration opportunity that could be eligible for “wetland banking” credits. It would be the first wetland bank within the MCWD.

PHOTO CONTEST
This spring saw the first annual MCWD Earth Day photo contest, showcasing the beauty and varied landscape of the watershed. There were more than 100 submissions. Check out the full list of winners at www.minnehahacreek.org/2015-contest.

1ST PLACE, LANDSCAPE CATEGORY
Sunset on Minnehaha Creek at Burwell Park in Minnetonka, by Aldo Abelleira

1ST PLACE, RECREATION CATEGORY
Late August evening on Lake Harriet, by Stan Waldhauser
A LOOK AHEAD

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:
Staff is preparing to update the MCWD’s Comprehensive Plan, due for adoption in June 2017. The plan update focuses on a “two-track” approach that will allocate District resources to their highest and best use in protecting water resources and addressing flooding throughout the watershed. The District hosted three kickoff meetings across the watershed and established three advisory committees to advise the District as the plan is developed. Learn more about the plan and how to get involved at www.minnehahacreek.org/2017.

COTTAGEVILLE PARK:
Construction is expected to wrap up in September on a major makeover of Cottageville Park in Hopkins, which will expand the park into a community amenity that will feature a restored Minnehaha Creek. The first phase will add a new playground, trails, lawn area, community garden and educational exhibits. The project is a partnership between the MCWD, City of Hopkins, the Blake Road Corridor Collaborative and the Clean Water, Land & Legacy Fund.

REALTOR WORKSHOPS
The District is creating a workshop for realtors and developers about watershed districts, the resources they provide and the benefits of working together. The course will be offered as a continuing education course in the spring of 2016.

EVENTS

CLEAN WATER SUMMIT -- SEPTEMBER 15: This annual conference at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum for stormwater professionals and others interested in clean water will focus on the relationship between surface water and groundwater in 2015.

WATERSHED HEROES -- OCTOBER 1: The awards ceremony honors individuals and organizations who work to provide and protect clean water. This year’s event is planned at the Bayview Event Center in Excelsior.

The MCWD is responsible for 181 square miles of land and water that drain into Minnehaha Creek and ultimately the Mississippi River. It includes all or part of 27 cities and two townships in Hennepin and Carver Counties.