A Message From the Administrator

It has been a busy and challenging summer at the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD).

Controlling the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) has increasingly come to the forefront of our focus, as these species (such as zebra mussels and Eurasian watermilfoil) threaten the long-term quality of the water in our district and across the state. We’ve weighed options for how to make sure boaters in infested lakes aren’t transporting AIS on their equipment, and we’ve heard compelling debate from many different angles. We launched an education campaign, Save Our Summers, instructing boaters how to effectively clean their equipment. Our Water Quality staff has kept track of the population and dispersal of zebra mussels throughout Lake Minnetonka to help the science community understand how the mussels spread and behave.

Outside of AIS, we took a positive step for cleaner water in the western part of the watershed with a landmark purchase of a 112-acre farm that drains into Six Mile Marsh and eventually Lake Minnetonka’s Halstead Bay. Our staff is working on projects to improve water quality in Tanager Lake and Dutch Lake, among other sites.

We launched a brand new website that’s easier to use, more efficient, and offers more information to the public. We’ve been active at community events and in July a record 670 people showed up to our annual Creek Clean-Up, removing more than 4,000 pounds of trash from Minnehaha Creek.
**Water Quality:**

**Water Quality Specialists:**
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The MCWD Water Quality department has been busy monitoring the spread of zebra mussels throughout Lake Minnetonka. Staff began checking for the invasive mussel last year, but this summer began a three-year study recording the population density and distribution of the mussels.

The study involves placing two monitoring samplers each at 32 locations on the lake. Each month staff examines one of the two samplers at a site and notes the quantity and size of the mussels on the sampler. Afterward, they clean and place the sampler back in the water. The second sampler at each site stays untouched in the water throughout the summer. Both samplers will be removed in September and the zebra mussels’ numbers and sizes will be recorded.

The study will give scientists baseline information to help understand and manage the spread of the zebra mussels, which threaten to litter beaches with sharp shells, damage boats and equipment, and destroy the health of local water bodies if left unmanaged. Examination of the samplers so far has shown that zebra mussels have indeed spread, particularly throughout the eastern part of Lake Minnetonka.

The department is also looking at possible solutions to control the invasive Eurasian watermilfoil in Christmas Lake. Small beetles called milfoil weevils feed on milfoil and may be able to manage the aquatic plant, which impedes boat usage and impairs water quality. Next year the department plans to test the weevils in special exclosures (portions set off from the rest of the lake) on Christmas Lake. In the mean time, staff are propagating milfoil weevils in tanks and testing the exclosure structure.

**Regulatory:**

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

The MCWD Regulatory Department ramped up its post-construction compliance work this summer, educating developers and landowners on topics like wetland buffers and sound stormwater management practices so they don’t become issues later on. Staff has been meeting with property owners on-site during projects to discuss how the development is impacting water quality in the District.

The Regulatory Department helped fund a stormwater management project for a five-lot development in St. Louis Park, which exceeded both the District’s and City’s regulations and will help reduce runoff to keep Minnehaha Creek clean. The department also shared costs with the City of Mound for a road reconstruction project that improves the city's storm sewer system. The project includes installing a swirl separator chamber and a device known as a SAFL (St. Anthony Falls Lab) Baffle. The SAFL Baffle was designed by the University of Minnesota and slows down water as it flows into a sump thereby reducing the debris that enters surface waters. Given the road’s proximity to Cook’s Bay and Priest’s Bay, it means the project will keep debris, oil, sediment, and other pollutants directly out of Lake Minnetonka.

Due to the wet summer, Regulatory staff and inspectors have also kept busy with erosion control inspections, working with contractors and developers to ensure their projects aren’t causing undue erosion. District inspectors have done about 100 inspections per month this summer.
What We’ve Been Up to:

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

Despite a rainy morning, the 5th annual Minnehaha Creek Clean-Up on July 10th broke records for both turnout and trash collected (around 670 people showed up to collect 6,070 pounds of trash, almost double last year’s total). U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar returned as grand marshal, KS95 Radio promoted and staffed the event, and everyone enjoyed a barbecue lunch afterward courtesy of Leinenkugel’s.

We revised our popular Minnehaha Creek canoe route map with updated information on parking, amenities, and rentals. We also created an online interactive map which can be accessed by computer or cell phone, and placed stickers with QR barcodes along the creek that paddlers can scan with their smartphones and pull up the online map.

It was a busy summer with appearances at several public events, including Art on the Lake in Excelsior, Steamboat Minnehaha’s Big Island Adventure Weekend, the Bakken Museum’s 10 Best Days of Summer in Minneapolis and the Tour de Tonka in Minnetonka. The District was represented at several smaller events by our educational mini-golf game, which we redesigned this year.

There was extensive media coverage about the MCWD’s zebra mussel survey on Lake Minnetonka, the Save Our Summers campaign, the Minnehaha Creek Clean-up and high water levels.

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

The MCWD Education department has implemented a new campaign to stop the spread of zebra mussels, titled “Save Our Summers.” Using posters, brochures, a web page, buoys on Lake Nokomis and signs along Minnehaha Creek, we’re encouraging boaters and paddlers to clean, drain and dry their equipment after leaving infested waters. Through education, the District increases awareness and understanding of how lake users can do their part to stop the spread of zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species.

The MCWD also hosted a “Stormwater U” workshop in August to provide training in site assessment, design, maintenance and inspection of soil infiltration practices. Thirty-eight city and county staff attended, and most said they left the workshop with a better understanding of how to incorporate infiltration practices into stormwater management systems.

Education staff continues to collaborate with local partners in providing the most current information on water quality and clean water practices. Activities include attending local events and speaking engagements, participating in the upcoming Children’s Water Festival, and promoting the district’s Cynthia Krieg Watershed Stewardship Fund, which is a grant program designed to encourage citizen engagement in water quality activities. Funds through this program are available beginning this fall. Visit the MCWD website for more information.

Land Conservation and Restoration:
Manager: Mark Ten Eyck | 952-641-4502 | mteneyck@minnehahacreek.org

The MCWD Land Conservation department made a landmark acquisition this summer, purchasing a 112-acre farm that overlooks Six Mile Marsh in Minnetrista.

The property has steep slopes in places and drains to Six Mile Marsh and then to Six Mile Creek, which leads to Lake Minnetonka’s Halstead Bay. Halstead Bay is considered one of the most nutrient-polluted bodies of water in the west metro. Although Bob and Jan Halverson, the owners since 1975, were conscious of good stormwater practices, farm fields naturally create water quality issues when they are near bodies of water. The Halverson’s sold the property for less than its appraised value as a gift to the community.

By acquiring and restoring the property to perennial vegetation, the District hopes to improve water resources on and downstream of the property by reducing soil erosion and agricultural drainage. A full plan for the property is still in development, but anticipated activities on the property include restoration of wetlands and installation of prairie, oak savanna, and oak woodland on the former farm fields. Other management ideas include the possibility of adding a spur from the Dakota Trail bicycle path, educational programming, and more.
Planning:
Manager: James Wisker
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The MCWD Planning Department has been investigating opportunities for improving water quality in Long Lake Creek and downstream Tanager Lake, which is on the state’s list of impaired waters. After conducting a feasibility study, the MCWD selected four project elements to design in 2012. These include rerouting a straightened section of the creek to a more natural alignment, restoring a drained wetland, and stabilizing two sections of eroded streambank. The locations of these projects are shown in the map to the right.

In addition, the MCWD is exploring the possibility of partnering with the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services to clean up and restore the former Long Lake Sewage Lagoon back to its historic wetland condition. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2013.

More information on this and other projects can be found at minnehahacreek.org/projects.

Operations & Maintenance:
Manager: Renae Clark
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We have been working to improve the water quality of Dutch Lake in Minnetrista, which is considered an impaired water due to its nutrient concentration. In order to reduce the amount of soluble phosphorus in the water – the phosphorus that has already dissolved, as opposed to just the particles of phosphorus suspended in the water – we are designing a project that would use a sand/iron filter in a stream that connects the lake with nearby wetlands. The filter would react with the soluble phosphorus and remove it, improving the quality of both Dutch Lake and the downstream wetlands. The project will also include a managed buffer area to protect the stream channel and banks, including native wetland plants and noxious and invasive species control.

Administration:
Manager: Dave Mandt
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After more than a year’s worth of work, we launched a brand new website (www.minnehahacreek.org) in August, making it easier for citizens, developers, planners, shoreline owners, media members and others to find the information they need and engage with us.

The new site features a user-friendly organization of pages that are interlinked and searchable. Visitors can indicate how they relate to the District (such as “I am a paddler,” or “I am a developer”) and see a list of pages relevant to them. Each page generates its own RSS feed, allowing readers to receive updates on sections they like using any RSS reading software.

For the first time, our database of water quality information on lakes and streams in the District is online. It also features a new interactive canoe map paddlers can access on their computers or smart phones and an interactive timeline that highlights the rich history of the District. More features are in the works, so check back regularly.

We closed the Gray’s Bay dam on Sept. 6. After a very rainy first half of summer, a drier second half has left the lake at a typical water level for this time of year. The Minnehaha Creek remained canoeable much later than usual due to the high precipitation early in the year.

The Operations and Management department is also working with the city of Plymouth to restore a stream and storm pond in the Chelsea Woods neighborhood. We are restoring the channel’s eroded banks and using bioengineering techniques to retain the natural character of the stream. We’ve also been busy actively maintaining natural buffers and storm ponds at Lake Nokomis, Lake Calhoun, Twin Lakes, and other sites in the district.

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