

Hiawatha CARE Project: Fact Sheet

Issue: Water Quality



Why is Clean Water Important?

Clean water is essential for agriculture, drinking, recreation, and protecting aquatic plants and animals. The Clean Water Act sets standards for pollutants to help protect and restore surface waters as well as standards for contaminants in drinking water.

Water quality can be impacted by wastewater discharges, fertilizers and chemicals, erosion and the build-up of sediment in waterways, and increased levels of nutrients and pollutants. In urban areas, stormwater runoff, resulting from increases in impervious surfaces (parking lots, streets, rooftops), collects and carries pollutants into lakes and rivers.

How Does Water Quality Affect Us Locally?

Minnesota's water quality standards meet or exceed federal requirements. However, increasing development and pollution threaten the quality of Minnesota's lakes, streams, and wetlands.

Polluted stormwater runoff is the number one water quality problem in Minnesota. In many urban environments, storm sewer systems quickly move stormwater away to prevent localized flooding. When it rains, stormwater that runs off driveways, lawns, buildings, and parking lots can carry pollutants like oil, paint, salts, and lawn and other chemicals down storm sewers and into nearby water bodies.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency have requirements for new developments, such as stormwater ponds to filter or treat stormwater runoff, to keep lakes and rivers healthy.

Health Impacts

- Stormwater runoff with grass clippings, leaves, and pet waste contains nutrients that can cause algae blooms in lakes and rivers. Algae blooms make swimming and fishing unpleasant or impossible.
- Pet waste contains bacteria that can cause human illness.

Environmental Impacts

- Stormwater with clippings and leaves contains phosphorus and other nutrients that feed algae and other aquatic plants.
- Algae blooms, in lakes, streams, and rivers can stress other plants and wildlife.
- Deicing salt used on streets and sidewalks in winter ends up in lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands.
- Pet waste contains bacteria that can cause illness in animals, fish kills, and beach closures.
- The threat of excess nutrients and sediment into waterways is one of the main causes of disruption to the wildlife and ecosystem of waterways.

Financial Impacts

- Stormwater can cause flooding and drainage problems in houses, buildings, and roads which can result in property damage, increased water-treatment costs, erosion control, pavement repair, pollutant clean-up, decreased aesthetic value of waterfront property, decreased tourism, loss of fish and wildlife, and lost recreational opportunities.

Hiawatha CARE Project Partners

Alexander's Import Auto Repair	Hennepin County	Minnesota Department of Health
American Lung Association of Minnesota	Hennepin - University Partnership	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Blue Construction	Little Earth of United Tribes	Mississippi Watershed Management Org.
City of Minneapolis	Longfellow Business Association	Preventing Harm Minnesota
East Phillips Improvement Coalition	Longfellow Community Council	St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church
Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota	Minnehaha Communion Lutheran Church & Longfellow Lutheran parishes	US Environmental Protection Agency
Gardening Matters	Minnehaha Creek Watershed District	Women's Environmental Institute

Hiawatha CARE Project - A project of Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works

What Can Individuals Do?

- Use rainwater to water lawns and gardens by redirecting downspouts or installing a rain barrel.
- Compost or leave grass clippings on the lawn.
- Pick up after pets.
- Use phosphorus-free fertilizer and sweep up fertilizer spills, or use lawn clippings to return phosphorus to yard.
- Minimize chemical use and follow label directions; consider natural remedies to control weeds and pests.
- Keep a healthy lawn by aerating periodically to loosen soil and seeding bare patches; mow at a higher setting to encourage deeper roots which then require less watering.
- Plant a rain garden.
- Replace turf with native plants.
- Replace some pavement – such as a walk, patio or driveway – with pavers or pervious pavement to allow water to seep through instead of running into the storm sewer.
- Do not pour oil, antifreeze, cleaners, and other household chemicals on the ground or in the street – local stormwater is not connected to treatment plants; instead, it flows directly to local water bodies or stormwater ponds.
- Wash dirty vehicles at a commercial car wash or on your lawn.
- Plant trees to slow down falling stormwater and allow for infiltration and evapotranspiration, reducing runoff.

What Can the Community Do?

- Keep neighborhood storm drains free of leaves, seeds, tree branches, and grass clippings.
- Adopt a local rain garden.
- Organize healthy yard workshops and a community rain garden / native planting tour.

What Can the City, County, and State Do?

- Showcase effective, attractive rain gardens and other stormwater management best practices and low impact design practices.
- Continue to publicize stormwater quality and quantity credit options.

For More Information

City of Minneapolis,
www.minneapolismn.gov/stormwater/

Hennepin County Environmental Services,
www.co.hennepin.mn.us/water

Minnehaha Creek Watershed District,
www.minnehahacreek.org

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency,
www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/water/water-monitoring-and-reporting/water-quality-and-pollutants/water-quality-standards.html

Mississippi Watershed Management Organization,
www.mwmo.org/docs.html

Rice Creek Watershed District, Blue Thumb Planting for Clean Water Program, including garden design and native plant selector,
www.bluthumb.org/

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,
www.water.epa.gov/

US Geological Service. www.usgs.gov

You Tube: type in
“Improved Winter Maintenance Good Choices for Clean Water”

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What is the CARE Project?

The Hiawatha CARE Project is a new effort to address environmental toxins in western Longfellow and East Phillips. The project brings together two dozen business, community, government, and non-profit agencies in a community-

driven effort to identify, prioritize, and address environmental risks in the area.

The project was initiated in December 2010 when Hennepin County received a \$100,000 Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) award from the

US Environmental Protection Agency. The CARE program supports local collaborations to reduce toxins in the local community.

More Information:
www.minnehaha-hiawatha.com/care
612.348.9344.