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A quarterly newsletter produced by the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District.

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## Winter Newsletter

Happy New Year! The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is excited for 2015. Why all the excitement? With the start of a new year, comes anticipation for new programs and partnerships, new projects, and a new District office!

In 2011, the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District received a very generous donation of a building and over five acres of land in Eden Prairie from Ms. Barbara Kaerwer. After spending the past couple of years planning and designing for our new headquarters, we completed construction of the building in 2014 and moved in at the end of the year. With our new facility comes many opportunities. Our location features innovative storm water management techniques that we plan to use to demonstrate how thoughtful planning and the incorporation of creative storm water management approaches result in reduced runoff and improved water quality. The storm water management features include porous pavers, raingardens, and a cistern to capture roof runoff.

Our new facility also will provide new education and outreach opportunities for the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District. With over five acres of wooded land overlooking a wetland and being adjacent to City of Eden Prairie trails, the District will be developing new programs and opportunities to showcase good land management and natural resource conservation practices. We are excited about the new partnerships we will be developing through the facility.

Of course, water resource management and improvement is our main focus. The Edina Streambank Stabilization Project and the Normandale Lake Restoration Project are two projects the NMCWD will be starting in 2015 that will result in improved water quality and overall ecological health in the Nine Mile Creek watershed.

We are excited for these and many more opportunities in 2015. We look forward to working with you to improve the water and natural resources of the Nine Mile Creek Watershed!

## District Updates

### We've Moved!

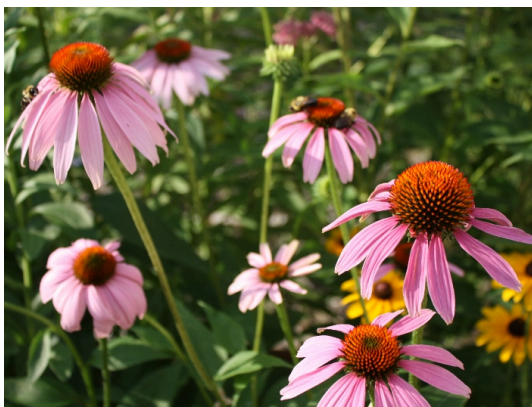


The District moved into its new office at the end of the October. Please update your address for us.

**Nine Mile Creek Watershed District**  
**12800 Gerard Drive**  
**Eden Prairie, MN 55346**

District telephone numbers remain the same. Kevin Bigalke, District Administrator, can be reached at 952-835-2078. Erica Sniegowski, Education and Outreach Coordinator, can be reached at 952-358-2276.

### Cost Share Grants Available



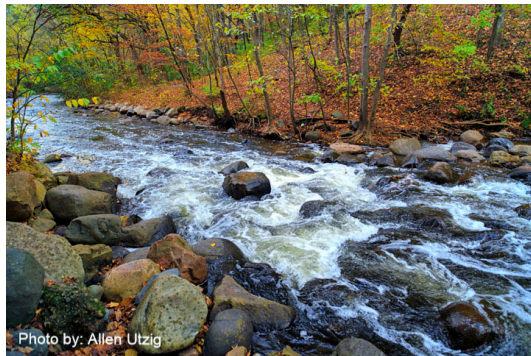
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Watershed.

Cost Share funds are awarded for up to 75% of a project's cost with maximum grant awards of \$3,000 for residential projects, \$10,000 for lake and townhome association projects and \$25,000 for commercial, nonprofit and government projects. The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District will accept applications through **March 27, 2015**. To download an application, visit the District's [website](#).

**Have questions?** Attend an information session on Wednesday, February 18 from 5:30-7:00 PM to learn more about eligible projects and how to apply. The information session will be held at the District's office in the Interpretive Room (12800 Gerard Dr, Eden Prairie, 55346).

### 2015 Photo Calendar



The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District 2015 Photo Calendar is available. We still have a few remaining copies at the District's office! The photos used in the calendar highlight the beautiful wildlife, water, and natural resources of the District.

Thank you to everyone who submitted photos to the 2014 photo contest. Thirteen photographers were selected to have their photos in the 2015 calendar. The photo contest winners were: Allen Utzig, Dick Bergstrom, Dan Enblom, Chad Flentje, Linnea Palmstrom, Ruth Hamilton, Ryan Gottsleben, Elizabeth Daughton, John Albers, Pat Laybourn, Eric Schenk, Paul Erdmann, and Reet Kang. Congratulations to our winners!

### Annual Communication

The District's 2014 Annual Communication is now available as a PDF on our [website](#), as well as being part of the District's 2015 Photo Calendar. The Annual Communication is a two page document containing articles highlighting news and accomplishments from 2014.

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## **Raingardens and Beyond: Clean Water, Healthy Habitats**

**Saturday, February 14, 2015**

8:30-11:30 AM, Oak Grove Presbyterian Church (2200 West Old Shakopee Rd, Bloomington, 55431)

Help keep our lakes and rivers clean while creating a beautiful and bee/butterfly-friendly habitat in your yard! In this workshop, [Metro Blooms](#) will first give you an overview of raingardens and native plants. Then you'll receive recommendations for your property with one-on-one assistance from Metro Blooms landscape designers and Hennepin County Master Gardeners. This workshop is sponsored by the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, Richfield-Bloomington Watershed Management Organization, Oak Grove Presbyterian Church and the City of Bloomington.

Register at [www.metroblooms.org](http://www.metroblooms.org) or call 651-699-2426. Cost is \$15.

## **Cost Share Information Session**

**Wednesday, February 18, 2015**

5:30 PM-7:00 PM, Nine Mile Creek Watershed District Office (12800 Gerard Dr, Eden Prairie, 55346) in the Interpretive Room

The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District Cost Share Program offers financial assistance for efforts that protect and improve water and natural resources within the Nine Mile Creek Watershed.

The Cost Share Information Session will provide information for residents, businesses, schools and other organizations in the District on the Cost Share Program. Come learn about eligible projects and how to complete an application. Hear success stories and lessons learned from past grant recipients and get innovative project ideas. RSVP to Erica at [esniegowski@ninemilecreek.org](mailto:esniegowski@ninemilecreek.org).

## **Project WET and Project Learning Tree Workshop**

**Thursday, March 5, 2015**

9 AM-4 PM, Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (12800 Gerard Dr, Eden Prairie, 55346)

Are you a Spanish Immersion teacher or other educator looking to meet your curriculum standards in a fun and interactive way? Are you looking for engaging environmental curriculum already in Spanish? In this one day workshop, you will participate in hands-on activities and receive Spanish resources for incorporating water education and science into your existing curriculum. The workshop will be presented in English with resources available in Spanish, including student handouts.



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- Activity kits
- Free educational resources and opportunities to network with water quality professional and other teachers
- Door prizes
- Certificate for 6 CEUs
- Teachers working in the Minnetonka, Hopkins, Edina, Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Richfield, Eastern Carver County Public School District or other schools located within District boundaries will be eligible for an additional \$50 worth of resources.

The cost of the workshop is \$30, which includes lunch. To register for the workshop visit: <http://goo.gl/forms/snSJDFc9e4> .

### **Turfgrass Maintenance Workshop**

**Thursday, March 26, 2015**

9 AM-3 PM, Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (12800 Gerard Dr, Eden Prairie, 55346)

This training offers information about best practices for managing turfgrass (mowing, seeding, fertilizer and pesticide application, and more).

#### **Who should attend?**

Property managers, private maintenance companies, schools, parks departments, churches and others who are involved in turfgrass maintenance.

Training is free. For more information and registration visit:

<http://turftraining.eventbrite.com>.

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## **Natural Resources**

### **Exploring the District: Bryant Lake Regional Park**

[Photo](#) by Rick Burtzel / [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

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Bryant Lake Regional Park in Eden Prairie is part of the Three Rivers Park District. There are several miles of trails that allow you to explore over 150 acres of woods, wetlands and grassland. Visit the park to snowshoe, take a winter walk with your dog, or watch for wildlife. Come back in the summer to enjoy the swimming beach, boat, canoe, fish, play disc golf, or many other fun activities. Nine Mile Creek's south fork flows through the lake as it continues its path to join the north fork in Bloomington before flowing to the Minnesota River. For more information about Bryant Lake Regional Park, visit the [Three Rivers Park District website](#).

Where is your favorite place in the District to explore? Send us an [email](#) and tell us where and why!

## Winter Phenology

Photos and text by Erica Sniegowski



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this sounds very scientific, it can be as simple as looking out your window. Luckily, with the move to our new District office, I have a very good view from my window. I can see traffic roaring by on 494, but I also get to look at a large wetland complex and at a beautiful wooded site.

Deer have been frequent visitors to the District's five acres of land. I have seen as many as ten deer at once grazing within 20 feet of my window. I had quite the long staring contest one day with the doe seen in the picture (it was work- clearly I was gathering information for this article!).

There are some interesting things to be seen in the picture of the buck, which was taken earlier in the year in November. You might notice some greenery in the picture. This helps identify the plant as common buckthorn, which often has green leaves through November. Buckthorn is an invasive species that out-competes native plants for light, nutrients, and moisture and degrades wildlife habitat, among causing a host of other problems. One of the goals the District has for its site is large-scale buckthorn removal and subsequent forest restoration.

You'll also notice that the buck still has its antlers, which might not be true if we saw him again in January. In Minnesota, most bucks shed their antlers mid-January. The new antlers will begin to grow in springtime. I might have to go for a walk soon and see if I can find an antler shed for the office. We have quite a few blank walls that could use some decoration!

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## Clean Water Tip

### Winter Salt Use



Nine Mile Creek is on a low-salt diet. Salt that we use on our sidewalks and roads dissolves as it melts, but doesn't disappear. Instead, the salt ends up in our lakes and creeks as the melt water runs into storm drains and then to local water bodies. Nine Mile Creek is considered "impaired" because it has too much chloride (salt) in it. There is no cost effective way to remove salt once it gets into our lakes and creeks, so preventing the pollution is the only option.

It only takes one teaspoon of salt to permanently pollute five gallons of water, so it is important to follow these tips to limit the amount of salt reaching the creek.

- **Shovel that snow.** The more snow you can shovel, the less salt you need. Get out early and keep up with the storm.
- **Free and clear?** Only apply salt to areas that must be free of snow and ice.
- **Don't over apply.** More salt does not mean more melting. Use less than four pounds of salt per 1,000 square feet. One pound of salt is about a heaping 12-ounce coffee cup.
- **Temperature matters.** Sodium chloride (NaCl), a very common deicer, stops working below 15 degrees Fahrenheit, so should not be applied. Instead, use a small amount of sand for traction.
- **Sweep up extra.** Salt and sand on dry pavement is not doing any work and will be washed into the creek. Sweep up extra and reuse it or dispose of it in the trash.

Want more information on how to choose a deicer or how to hire a snow removal contractor that has been trained in winter best management practices? Visit our [website!](#)



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## Summer Newsletter

### Things New and Exciting

With spring and summer comes the excitement of renewal and growth. Plants are growing, trees leaf out, and we get back outside after a long cold winter. This spring and summer have also brought new and exciting things to the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District.

The construction and landscaping at our new building is now complete. The new plants provide a fresh look to the property. With the new facility, we also wanted a name that reflected the opportunities the property offers. After much discussion and input from neighbors and constituents, we chose the name Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point. We feel that this name reflects the opportunities to explore, discover, and learn about the natural resources on the property as well as throughout the Nine Mile Creek Watershed. Please stop out and explore Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point.

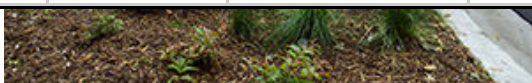
The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District also has a new logo. With the new and exciting changes, the fresh logo represents the water resources of the Nine Mile Creek watershed.

And finally, we are excited to announce the hiring of Gael Zembal as the District's new education and outreach specialist. Gael has a strong background as a naturalist and environmental educator. Gael started with the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District on June 15. Gael will be assisting with the development and implementation of the District's education and outreach programs and activities. Please read the article in this newsletter to learn more about Gael.

I hope you have a great summer. Get outside and explore and discover the Nine Mile

Creek watershed.

Kevin D. Bigalke  
District Administrator

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## District Updates

### Welcome to our New Staff Member



Gael Zembal, the new Education and Outreach Specialist, comes to the District with a background in teaching and a love of nature. She received her Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Minnesota in Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management, with minors in Spanish Studies and Forestry. She worked as a nature teacher at places like Itasca State Park, Dodge Nature Preschool, and Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center, inspiring a love of nature in visitors young and old. After a year at Lorado Taft Field Campus in northern Illinois, she taught at local nature centers, including most recently Wargo Nature Center. She is excited to join the Nine Mile Team!

## Upcoming Events

### Edina Streambank Stabilization Project Public Information Meetings

**Monday, July 27, 2015**

**Wednesday, July 29, 2015**

6:30-8 PM, Edina City Hall ([4801 West 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Edina](#))

The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, with support and cooperation from the City of Edina, has been developing plans for the Edina Streambank Stabilization project. The

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through the City. “The Edina Streambank Stabilization Project will result in improved stream health, stabilized stream banks, improved habitat, and the protection of property from erosion” said Kevin Bigalke, Nine Mile Creek Watershed District Administrator. The City of Edina petitioned the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District for the Edina Streambank Stabilization Project.

The intent of the public information meetings is to provide an opportunity for the residents that live along Nine Mile Creek in the City of Edina to learn more about the project. The public information meetings will be an open house format. At the meetings, information describing the proposed project and stabilization techniques will be displayed and Nine Mile Creek Watershed District staff will be available to provide information on the project and to answer any questions residents may have about the project.

If residents are unable to make either meeting or have questions about the project they can contact Kevin Bigalke, District Administrator at (952) 835-2078 or by e-mail at [kbigalke@ninemilecreek.org](mailto:kbigalke@ninemilecreek.org).

### Family Fishing

**Saturday, August 1, 2015**

9-11 AM, Shady Oak Beach ([5200 Shady Oak Rd, Minnetonka](#))

Fishing connects us with our local environment and encourages stewardship of natural resources. This event, led by the DNR’s MinnAqua Program, will include activities for the family, casting practice and time to fish. All fishing equipment and bait provided. Fishing licenses are not needed. In addition to fishing, this collaborative event with Giggle.Play. Connect. will





offer several other inclusive play activities. Children of all ages and abilities are welcome.

RSVP to [gzembal@ninemilecreek.org](mailto:gzembal@ninemilecreek.org) | 952-204-9691

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## Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point Grand Opening

**Thursday, September 24, 2015**

4:30 PM-7:30 PM, Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point ([12800 Gerard Dr. Eden Prairie](#))

Join the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (NMCWD) for free food, activities and fun for the entire family to celebrate the grand opening of Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point! Stop by the grand opening anytime between 4:30-7:30 PM.

Discovery Point is the five acre property and educational facility of the NMCWD that serves to educate and inspire people, young and old, about local water and natural resources.

RSVP to [gzembal@ninemilecreek.org](mailto:gzembal@ninemilecreek.org) | 952-204-9691

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## Clean Water Tip

**Clean up Grass Clippings for Clean Water**

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Here are two tips about grass clippings that will help keep our lakes and creeks clean.

**1. Keep grass clippings off of hard surfaces.** If you take care when mowing to not discharge grass clippings onto a hard surface, then your task is done—you do not need to worry about clippings washing down the storm drain. But, at the end of the mowing session, if you see clippings on the street, sidewalk, or driveway, sweep them back into the grass, or blow them there with a leaf blower.

**2. Leave grass clippings on your lawn.** All the nutrients that went into growing each blade of grass will return to the soil as they break down. This leads to a healthier lawn and reduces the need to fertilize.



So, how does this relate to clean water? All living things contain phosphorous, including those recently cut grass clippings. When grass clippings get blown into the street, the next storm will wash them directly to the nearest body of water. The phosphorous that could have helped your lawn grow is now helping unwanted algae to grow in a lake. As the algae dies, it breaks down and uses up oxygen in the water. This can suffocate fish and other creatures. It also makes recreating on any water body very unpleasant.

For cleaner, healthier lakes and creeks, always clean up grass clippings from

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## Natural Resources

### Exploring the District: Bredeesen Park, Edina



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At the intersection of Olinger Boulevard and Vernon Avenue in Edina, Bredesen Park has lots of good hiking and biking to offer. Three separate trails, each about two miles in length, wind their way through forests, over the creek, and give glimpses of beautiful lakes and meadows. You can easily move between the nature trail and the pedestrian trail at each connection point. Bikers, however, are encouraged to remain on the clearly marked bike trail. Dog walkers are also welcomed, though they are not permitted on the nature trail.

If you plan on biking or jogging at the park, take a few minutes to stop and look around. The butterfly on the aster flower in the picture only started drinking nectar after I had stopped moving myself. While I was pausing to look at one of the many maps on the trail, I happened to glance down and see a painted turtle. Its brown, algae-dotted shell blended in perfectly with the asphalt.

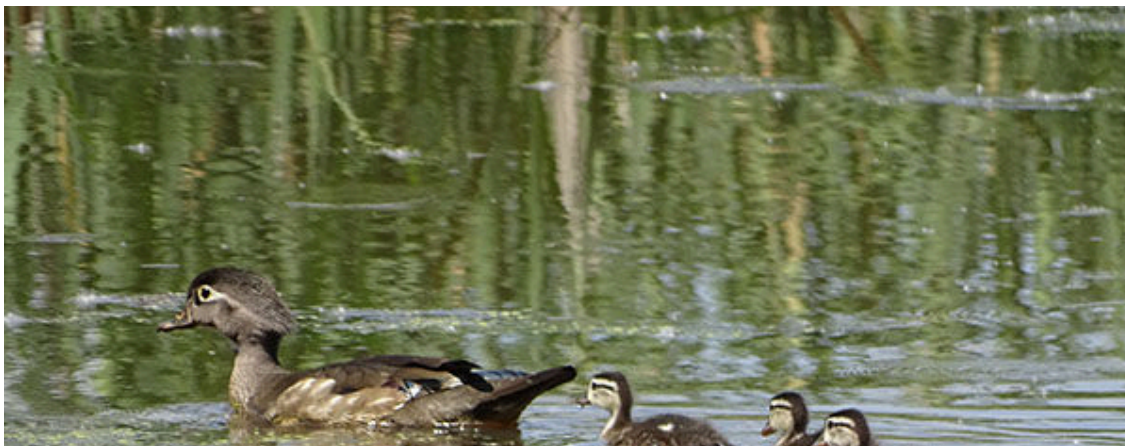
Bring your bike, your dog, or just yourself; there are many discoveries waiting for you at Bredesen Park.

Where is your favorite place in the District to explore? Send us an [email](#), and tell us where and why!

### Summer Phenology: Woodies on the Move

Photos and text by Gael Zembal



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With just a few short months of warm weather, Minnesotans spend as much time as they can on the abundant open water. Many other species make the most of the summer months too, including this family of wood ducks. Wood ducks are generally considered one of Minnesota's most beautiful ducks, though you would not know it from the drab plumage of the females. The males sport beautiful colors of green, red, and chestnut, which prompted their scientific name, *Aix sponsa*. This roughly translates to "water bird in bridal garments." After helping the female choose a nesting site, the male spends the rest of the summer foraging alone. I came across this family as they were looking for food in the weeds near shore.

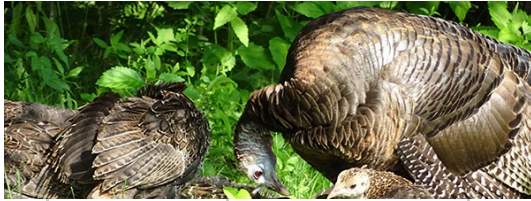
Wood ducks are part of the dabbling duck group, meaning that they mostly look for food on the surface of the water by tipping forward or skimming food off the top. Their bills have a comb-like ridge on each side, called lamellae, which strain the water out of their mouths and leave the food behind. Wood ducks generally eat insects, aquatic invertebrates, small fish, fruits, and aquatic plants. One of their preferred autumn foods gives them another of their common names: the acorn duck. They often hunt through oak forests to find these treats.

Woodies, as the duck lovers call them, are as comfortable up in a tree as they are in the water. Highly developed toes and claws allow them to perch in a tree, and they only build nests in cavities of dead trees (snags). The declining number of snags available for nest building has caused problems for the wood duck population in the past. However, many homeowners and businesses, including the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, have nest boxes set up near water, helping to bring back the

population from near extinction. Are you interested in helping the wood duck population? Build your own wood duck box with free [plans](#) from Ducks Unlimited.

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## Snapshot

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There have been many animal visitors to Discovery Point in the past week, including a flock of poults (baby turkeys) with their mother and a very playful fawn that doesn't always stick as close to its mom!



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# 9 MILE NEWS

## Fall Newsletter



The fall season is here with all of its splendid colors, drop in temperature, and of course, the urgency to prepare for the winter months. With the colors changing from green to yellow, red, orange and brown, comes fall clean up. While you are busy raking leaves, take time to notice the more subtle changes of fall. Notice the migration of waterfowl heading south for the winter. The colors of ducks and geese rival those of the leaves in the fall. Watch the squirrels that are busy preparing for winter by stockpiling acorns and walnuts. Observe the different birds including blue jays, cardinals, and nut hatches. The fall can be filled with chores as we prepare for the



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fall!

Kevin D. Bigalke  
District Administrator

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## In Memoriam



On October 8, 2015, former Nine Mile Creek Watershed District Manager Geoff Nash passed away after a battle with cancer. Geoff served on the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (NMCWD) Board of Managers for nine years. Prior to his appointment to the Board of Managers, Geoff served on the NMCWD Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) for seven years, including two years as the CAC chairman. During his tenure on the NMCWD Board of Managers, Geoff helped the NMCWD hire its first two employees and helped secure the donation of the property that is now Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point. Geoff was passionate about water and the outdoors. Geoff was also a craftsman, making handmade soap, constructing Norwegian knives, and completing a handcrafted wooden canoe.

Geoff was an intelligent, thoughtful person and will be greatly missed.

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## District Updates

**Clean Water Starts With You. Become a Master Water Steward.**





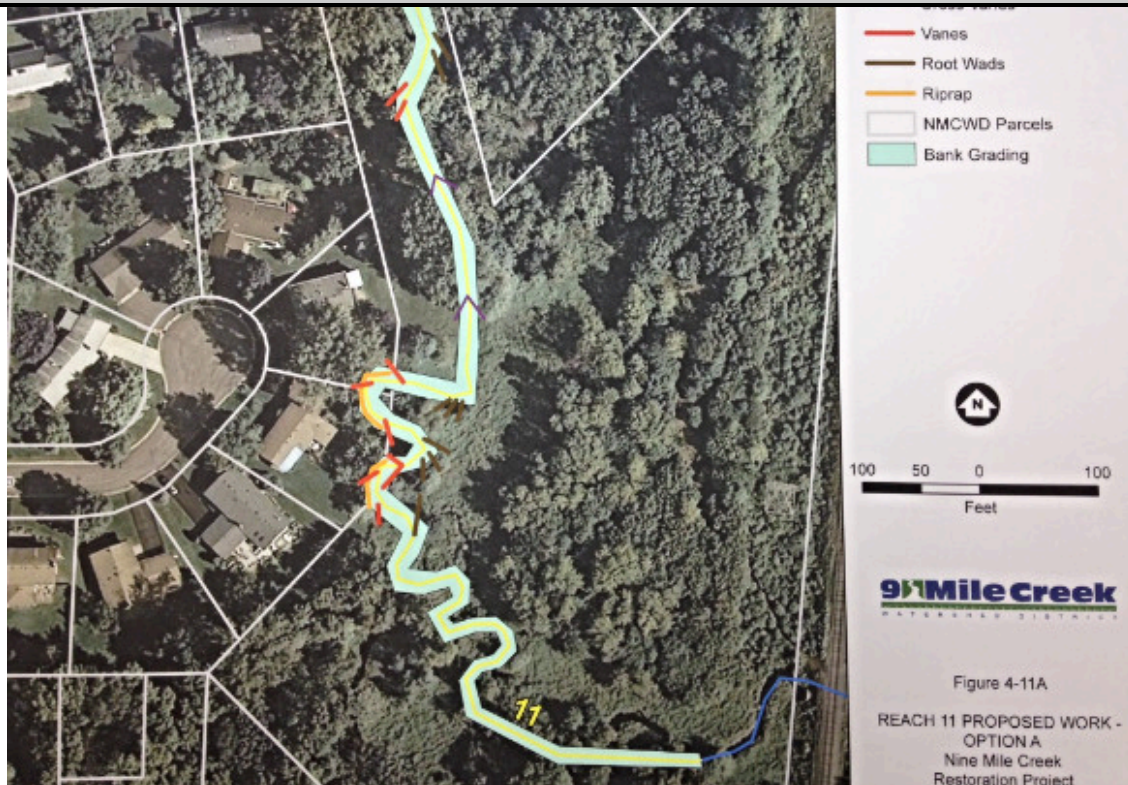
The Master Water Steward program began as a pilot in Minnehaha Creek Watershed District through a partnership with the Freshwater Society. It is expanding in 2016, and you can now participate if you live in the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District.

The program offers extensive training from top industry professionals -- engineers, educators, planners and more. Stewards are also charged with building a project in their community that protects water quality and educates their neighbors on clean water issues. Past Stewards have installed rain gardens, rain barrels, cisterns, and water-permeable walkways that catch polluted rainwater before it makes it to a nearby lake or stream.

Applications are now being accepted. You must attend an information session for your application to be considered. For more information visit:

<http://masterwaterstewards.org/>

### **Watershed District Project Updates**



### ***Edina Streambank Stabilization Project***

The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (NMCWD) is preparing the final plans for the Edina Streambank Stabilization Project. The project will stabilize eroded streambanks along 15 segments of Nine Mile Creek throughout the City of Edina. The project will include work on both public and private property. The NMCWD is in the process of working with private landowners to secure construction access and easements allowing the NMCWD to work on private property. The project will use natural stabilization techniques including rock vanes, tree root wads, and vegetated reinforced soil stabilization to protect the stream banks. Some segments of Nine Mile Creek will also be reconstructed, creating a new, more stable channel. The NMCWD plans to hold a public hearing on the project in late November or early December to approve the final plans and order the project. Once the project is ordered, the NMCWD will bid the project with the hope of starting construction in January.

### ***Lower Valley Repair Project***

The City of Bloomington in partnership with the Nine Mile Creek Watershed is undertaking a repair project of the lower valley of Nine Mile Creek in Bloomington's Central Park. The repairs are needed due to the heavy rains and flooding in the lower valley of Nine Mile Creek. The project will repair portions of the City of Bloomington's trails along Nine Mile Creek as well as stabilize streambanks that washed out due to the flooding. The project will utilize natural material stream stabilization methods including rock vanes, root wads, and "engineered log-jams" to redirect the flow of the creek into the center of the channel. The project will start this fall and construction will occur over the winter months, with full restoration expected by spring 2016.



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Manager Maressia Twele was reappointed by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners for a second three year term. On looking ahead to her second term Maressia is “excited about the education opportunities available to our watershed district. Our new facility, Discovery Point, will allow us to demonstrate important water quality and quantity concepts to district residents. It will be fun to help shape and be a part of this.”

### Like Nine Mile Creek on Facebook

Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is now on Facebook! Check often for information on District events, grants, fun wildlife sightings, and more!

Find us on 

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## Upcoming Events

### Master Water Steward Information Session

**Tuesday, December 8, 2015**

6:30-7:30 PM, Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District ([14500 Martin Drive, Suite 1500, Eden Prairie](#))



Do you want to protect clean water in a lake or stream you care about? The Master Water Stewards program can give you the knowledge, skills, and network to make it happen! If you are interested in becoming a Master Water Steward, please plan to attend this informational session. Learn more and apply at [www.masterwaterstewards.org](http://www.masterwaterstewards.org).

### A Night with the Watershed: Land of 10,000 Salty Lakes (A Seminar for Residents)

**Wednesday, December 9, 2015**

7-8 PM, Minnetonka Community Center in the Community Room ([14600 Minnetonka Blvd. Minnetonka, MN 55345](#))

Salt from our roads, parking lots, and driveways is polluting our lakes and creeks. Join the Nine Mile

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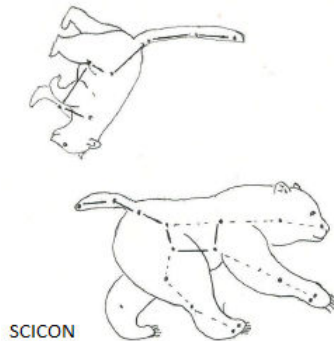
our local water bodies and what you, as a local resident, can do to help! Register for the event at <http://saltseminar.eventbrite.com>.



## A Night with the Watershed: Star Stories

**Saturday, January 9, 2016**

7:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point ([12800 Gerard Dr. Eden Prairie](#))



Come to discover the magnificence of the stars at Discovery Point! Enjoy hot apple cider, smores, and a bonfire as you listen to legends of the constellations from around the world. Don't forget a blanket! Event will be held with clear or cloudy skies. Discovery Point will be open as a warming house. RSVP to Gael at [gzembal@ninemilecreek.org](mailto:gzembal@ninemilecreek.org) or 952-204-9691.

## Clean Water Tip

### Adopt a Storm Drain



Adopting a storm drain is easier than it sounds. It means that you keep watch on a storm drain or two in your neighborhood, and clear them of debris. This time of year, storm drains are often clogged with leaves. Those leaves end up in the nearest lake and creek, adding extra nutrients and pollution. Here are three steps to a cleaner storm drain:



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- either! Debris can build up in a storm drain year round.
3. Get your neighbors involved—the more people who take action, the cleaner our waterways will be.

## Natural Resources

### Exploring the District: Lake Smetana, Eden Prairie



Smetana Lake Park is a beautiful park surrounding Lake Smetana in Eden Prairie. A 1.6 mile loop winds around the lake, and is lined by staghorn sumac and native dogwood bushes. Aspen groves with handy benches provide the perfect place for a quick rest during a lunch break stroll.

Even with all the traffic around Lake Smetana, the wildlife populations are thriving. A Garter snake sunning itself on the path scurried into the grass at my approach, and a flock of Dark-eyed Juncos looked for food during their yearly migration from Canada.

Overlooks and benches scattered throughout the park aid in the viewing of wildlife. On one edge of the park there are grills, picnic shelters, a playground, and a shuffleboard court, as well as a boat ramp farther up the road. Many of the companies surrounding the lake are invested in keeping it healthy, and have been doing work to remove invasive buckthorn, and return the woods to their natural state. With all the native plants surrounding the lake, the fall colors are spectacular, and all within a five minute drive of city center.

Where is your favorite place in the District to explore? Send us an [email](#), and tell us where and why!

### Fall Phenology: Deer Rubs

Photos and text by Gael Zembal

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As the days get shorter, many living things are busy preparing for winter. Squirrels cache nuts, trees drop their leaves, and white-tailed deer begin the annual mating season called the rut. Our new birch trees are feeling the effects—bucks rubbing their antlers on the trees have removed long strips of bark, and a few branches.

Male deer rub their antlers on trees to gain mating rights and establish dominance over a set territory. The rubbing helps strengthen their neck muscles in preparation for fighting other bucks. The bright inner bark exposed by the rubbing is a visual sign that the buck has claimed this territory—a scent deposited from the forehead gland reinforces this claim to other deer. Contrary to popular belief, very little rubbing is done to remove velvet—most of the rubs we see happen after the velvet has come off.

Velvet is a soft furry skin that covers and provides nutrients to the growing antlers. Antlers grow quickly throughout the summer, sometimes as fast as a quarter inch per day. During the fall, shorter day length triggers a rise in testosterone levels in bucks. This causes the antler bone to harden and seal off the blood vessels. The velvet then dries up and comes off, often within a day or two. Sometimes bucks will eat the discarded velvet.

There are ways to prevent damage to your small trees. Wrapping them with plastic tubing, hardware mesh, or rubber tubing are effective deterrents of buck rubs. If the tree has already been damaged, trim rough or shredded bits away from the wound, or prune off broken branches. If the bark has not been removed all the way around, the tree may still survive.

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## Snapshot



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Milkweed plant found in our back raingarden.

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# 9 MILE NEWS

## December Newsletter



It seems like people are either really enjoying the warmer December temperatures or are really upset about the lack of snow. Where do you fall? Speaking of falling, with the lack of snow and ice, there hasn't been much need for salt this winter. Whether you're happy about the warmer temperatures or not, less salt on roads, parking lots, and sidewalks, means healthier lakes and creeks.

Nine Mile Creek is, in fact, considered "impaired" because it receives too much chloride (salt) runoff. There is no cost effective way to remove salt once it gets into our

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It only takes one teaspoon of salt to permanently pollute five gallons of water. Follow these tips to limit the amount of salt reaching the creek.

- **Shovel that snow.** The more snow you can shovel, the less salt you need. Get out early and keep up with the storm.
- **Apply only where needed.** Only apply salt to areas that must be free of snow and ice.
- **Don't over apply.** More salt does not mean more melting. Use less than four pounds of salt per 1,000 square feet. One pound of salt is about a heaping 12-ounce coffee cup.
- **Temperature matters.** Sodium chloride (NaCl), a very common deicer, stops working below 15 degrees Fahrenheit pavement temperature, so should not be applied. Instead, use a small amount of sand for traction.
- **Sweep up extra.** Salt and sand on dry pavement is not doing any work and will be washed into the creek. Sweep up extra and reuse it or dispose of it in the trash.

Want more information on how to choose a deicer or how to hire a snow removal contractor that has been trained in winter best management practices? Visit our [website](#).

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## District Updates

### 2015 Annual Communication Available

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**9 MILE CREEK**  
NINETEENTH DISTRICT

**Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point**  
12800 Grand Drive  
Eden Prairie, MN 55425

**Come Discover  
Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point**

JANUARY 2016							FEBRUARY 2016							MARCH 2016							APRIL 2016						
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SEPTEMBER 2016							OCTOBER 2016							NOVEMBER 2016							DECEMBER 2016						
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[www.ninemilecreek.org](http://www.ninemilecreek.org)

The District's 2015 Annual Communication is now available. If you would like a hard copy, please contact the District at 952-358-2276. Copies will also be available at each city hall in Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Richfield. An electronic copy can be viewed on our [website](#).

**Clean Water Starts With You. Become a Master Water Steward.**





The Master Water Stewards program is accepting applications from people who want to protect clean water, and reduce pollution. This program offers:

- Training from top water resource professionals
- Skills to become an effective community leader
- A fun social network of like-minded people

Lauren Sampedro, a Certified Master Water Steward said, "The Master Water Steward Program has not only increased my knowledge of water issues and community engagement strategies, but it has also provided me with valuable connections who helped get me the job I have today."

Participants will:

- Attend 14 classes
- Install a pollution prevention project that educates about clean water
- Perform 50 hours of volunteer work the year after certification

Contact Gael at 952-204-9691 or [gzembal@ninemilecreek.org](mailto:gzembal@ninemilecreek.org) for more information if you live in the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District. Others interested in the program can email the Freshwater Society at [info@masterwaterstewards.org](mailto:info@masterwaterstewards.org). Wherever you live, you can make a real difference in the health of our waters. Applications are being accepted through January.



The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is offering financial assistance for projects that protect and improve water and natural resources within the Nine Mile Creek Watershed.

Cost Share funds are awarded for up to 75% of a project's cost with maximum grant awards of \$3,000 for residential projects, \$10,000 for lake and townhome association projects and \$25,000 for commercial, nonprofit and government projects. The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District will accept applications through **March 25, 2016**. To download an application, visit the District's [website](#).

**Have questions?** Attend an information session on Wednesday, February 17 from 5:30-7:00 PM to learn more about eligible projects and how to apply. The information session will be held at the District's office in the Interpretive Room (12800 Gerard Dr, Eden Prairie, 55346).

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### Like Nine Mile Creek on Facebook

Nine Mile Creek Watershed District is now on Facebook! Check often for information on District events, grants, fun wildlife sightings, and more!

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Find us on 

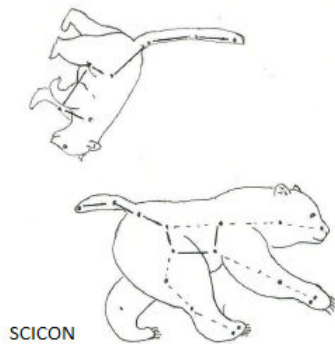


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## A Night with the Watershed: Star Stories

**Saturday, January 23, 2016\***

7:00-8:00 PM, Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point ([12800 Gerard Dr. Eden Prairie](#))



Come to discover the magnificence of the stars at Discovery Point! Enjoy hot apple cider, smores, and a bonfire as you listen to legends of the constellations from around the world. Don't forget a blanket! Event will be held with clear or cloudy skies. Discovery Point will be open as a warming house. RSVP to Gael at [gzembal@ninemilecreek.org](mailto:gzembal@ninemilecreek.org) or 952-204-9691.

\*Please note the change in date from previous newsletter

## Cost Share Information Session

**Wednesday, February 17, 2016**

5:30-7:00 PM, Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point ([12800 Gerard Dr. Eden Prairie](#))

Come learn about cost share grants! We'll talk about eligible projects (like raingardens, shoreline restoration, permeable pavers and more), and how to complete an application. Information for residents, businesses, schools and other organizations will be provided. RSVP to Erica at [esniegowski@ninemilecreek.org](mailto:esniegowski@ninemilecreek.org).



## Sledding

**Anytime**

Nine Mile Creek Discovery Point ([12800 Gerard Dr. Eden Prairie](#))



We hoped for snow, because sledding without it wasn't much fun, and we got our wish.

Bring your sleds and families to the hill at Discovery Point for sledding fun now that it has snowed!



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## Just say "No!" to pet waste

Text by Cris Petersen



Dogs are a vital part of many families. In Minnesota, about one in three households owns a dog. With more than two million households in the state, that adds up to a lot of pooches—and a lot of poop. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, one dog produces 274 pounds of waste each year (on average). Multiply that by hundreds of thousands of dogs and you begin to see why it's so important for dog owners to clean up the mess.

Pet waste left in the environment does not simply disappear. Rainfall and spring snowmelt wash dog poop off lawns, sidewalks, and other surfaces. This runoff flows untreated into the nearest body of water. What happens to pet waste left atop frozen lakes, creeks, and wetlands? Come spring, it falls right into the water. Nationwide, studies reveal that:

- In urban areas, up to 95% of fecal matter in waterways comes from pets.
- Millions of *E. coli* bacteria are found in just one gram of pet waste.
- Pet waste is a top contributor to bacterial pollution in surface waters.

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accompanying parasites and bacteria that can sicken people, pets, and wildlife. Poop also contributes phosphorus to the water. Phosphorus is a nutrient required for the growth of living things—but in high concentrations, it promotes the overgrowth of algae and aquatic plants. In response, there is an increase in bacteria that specialize in decomposing plant material. The bacteria consume oxygen in the water, leaving too little for fish and other animals living in the water.

Parks and trails are our community's shared "backyard." Next time you walk Fido in a public space, pack a few plastic bags and deposit the waste in a trash receptacle. Do the same in your own yard—especially in late winter or before a predicted rainstorm. As the Southwest Florida Water Management District learned after completing a pet waste study, "Improved urban water quality also results in an improved economy, with better lakes for fishing and swimming." Picking up after your pet protects the environment—but it's also the neighborly thing to do, making our community healthier and more beautiful.

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## Natural Resources

### Exploring the District: Harrison Park





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Harrison Park is a 32.5 acre park in Bloomington. A family friendly park, it boasts picnic areas, a playground, and a community garden. In addition, the parking lot is made up of pervious asphalt, which collects and filters rain water. Finally, the parking lot's center island is a raingarden.

Beautiful trails provide access to Nine Mile Creek. The graceful paper birches that leap into view on the trails are jewels in a north woods-like landscape. Along the trails, great boulders provide an interesting counterpoint to the winter bare woods.

This year, the City, in partnership with the District, is repairing creek banks damaged by flooding, so some trails may be closed when you visit. A barrier of living willow sticks (called root wads) dug horizontally into the banks will stop the creek from scouring away more soil. "Engineered log-jams" will keep the water in the middle of the creek, instead of battering against the banks. Workers also protected bridge footings from future floods with strategically placed stones. By spring 2016, Harrison Park will be ready for explorers once again.

Where is your favorite place in the District to explore? Send us an [email](#), and tell us where and why!

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## Winter Phenology

Photos and text by Gael Zembal





Does the winter landscape depress you with its dreariness? Looking out at the dormant trees, does your eye long for something interesting? Use these tips to pick out the unique features in that wash of bland brown trunks.

Learning the individual characteristics of even a few trees can make a winter walk more interesting. Take the picture above, which shows what I like to call “scat-on-a-stick”. It’s not a new fair food; it’s a fungus called black knot. Seeing these “burnt marshmallow” shaped lumps can help you identify a Black Cherry tree. Trees can host many of these lumps (called galls) with no ill effects for years, as long as the gall does not circle the whole trunk. On a bigger tree, the bark normally looks like burnt potato chips, which can help confirm the identification of the Black Cherry tree.

If color is what you wish, seek out the evergreens. Minnesota has about ten types, but here are the differences between the main three. Spruce needles are sharp and square (if you pluck one, you can roll it between your fingers). Fir needles are flat, and will not roll. In both cases, each needle is attached singly to the branch. Pines, on the other hand, have bundles of needles, called fascicles, attached to the branch—there will be anywhere from two to five needles per fascicle. Pine needles are longer than spruce and fir needles, too.

Hopefully now you can find some cheer in seeking out these features of the winter landscape.

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## Snapshot



Worried about your houseplants when you're out of town? Try this homemade watering system: 1. Fill a milk jug or pot with water. 2. Cut a length of twine to reach to the bottom of the jug. 3. Push the other end of the twine to the bottom of the plant's pot (a screwdriver works well). The water will wick up the twine and keep your plants watered while you're away.

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by their bill, whereas the females' mustaches are black.

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