

2024 Annual Communication

This annual communication provides an overview of our work in 2024. For more details on the work we accomplished this year, visit our website or subscribe to our newsletter at ninemilecreek.org.

Managing the Watershed

The Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (NMCWD) is a government organization that works to protect and restore the water and natural resources for everyone’s benefit in the 50 square mile land area draining to Nine Mile Creek. NMCWD has regulatory authority over this land area, monitors lake and creek health, installs projects, and provides grants and educational programs to improve water quality.

Five managers, appointed by Hennepin County Commissioners to three-year terms, direct the District’s activities. The Board of Managers works with state agencies, Hennepin County, non-profit organizations, and the cities within the District to implement the goals and policies of the approved water management plan set forth in state law. Our activities are funded through property tax levies.

Lake & Creek Monitoring

NMCWD conducted lake and creek monitoring in 2024 on waterbodies across the watershed. The monitoring program provides data about water quality and ecological health conditions. In 2024, we collected data on the following lakes: Arrowhead, Cornelia, Indianhead, and Mirror in Edina; Normandale and Southeast Anderson in Bloomington; Bryant, Northwest Anderson, and Southwest Anderson in Eden Prairie; and Holiday and Minnetoga in Minnetonka. In addition, we partnered with the City of Minnetonka to collect data on Wing and Rose lakes and with the City of Bloomington to collect data on Adelman Pond. Spots along Nine Mile Creek were also monitored. The data establishes a reference point for normal water quality conditions, tracks changes, and informs studies. It also allows us to measure the success of past and ongoing water quality improvement projects. Our monitoring reports are available at: ninemilecreek.org/lake-creek-monitoring.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Plan

NMCWD worked with ZAN Associates to develop its first DEIA plan. This plan has several concrete objectives to help integrate environmental justice and equity into the different program areas of the watershed district. Staff will focus on five overarching initiatives in 2025—accessibility, inclusivity and representation, equity in education and outreach, equity in the cost share grant program, and equity in capital improvement projects. To learn more about this initiative, visit: ninemilecreek.org/DEIA

Grants

In 2024, we awarded 26 cost share grants totaling approximately \$200,000 in project funding. Residents, associations, nonprofits, businesses, and cities are eligible to apply for grants for projects that protect and improve the water and natural resources within the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District. Eligible projects include rain-gardens, shoreline buffers, permeable pavers, habitat restoration, and projects that reduce chloride use, among others. For more information on available grants visit: ninemilecreek.org/grants. Apply early in 2025 for your best chance of funding!

LOW SALT DESIGN

This year, our Cost Share Grant Program funded new low salt design pilot programs for the cities of Hopkins, Richfield, and Minnetonka. These pilots have taught city staff how to manage and design new development projects to reduce ice formation, and therefore not need salt in the first place. Simple strategies like facing a building’s entrance south can utilize sun melting and lead to less hazardous zones which require salt. Richfield and Hopkins have already taken strides to include low salt design principles into various city initiatives and policies while Minnetonka is just starting internal planning meetings for this work. Bloomington and Eden Prairie are also participating in Low Salt Design pilot programs, without the use of NMCWD grant funds.

Planning

HOPKINS CENTRAL PARK FEASIBILITY STUDY

NMCWD is partnering with the City of Hopkins on their feasibility study of Central Park. Watershed staff worked with the city to expand the scope of work to look at above and beyond regulatory requirements for: flood mitigation, stormwater management, habitat improvement, and an opportunity to incorporate a new headwater to Nine Mile Creek.

BLOOMINGTON NINE MILE CREEK CORRIDOR RENEWAL PROJECT

NMCWD is partnering with the City of Bloomington on their Nine Mile Creek Corridor Renewal Project. The city approved a local sales tax to support project funding. The design team is assessing the stability of Nine Mile Creek, including streambanks, gullies, and wetlands, as well as considering upland restoration opportunities and improvements to Moir Park. Watershed staff have assisted on development of the streambanks assessment scope and hope to inform design approach to align with watershed goals. We hope to stabilize the streambanks and narrow the creek channel where possible to support a more consistent low flow for improved fish passage while maximizing in-stream function, floodplain connectivity and habitat.

Permitting

NMCWD’s rules are the cornerstone of the regulatory program, protecting lake and creek water quality, floodplains, wetlands, and more. Staff processed (or are processing) 162 permits and performed 971 inspections as of mid-October 2024. We have approved or conditionally approved 111 of the 162 permits. 21 permits have triggered stormwater management which has created 143,998 cubic feet of storage and removed 7,421 pounds of total suspended solids and 37 pounds of phosphorus.

Projects

SOUTH FORK NINE MILE CREEK STREAMBANK STABILIZATION PROJECT

We completed the South Fork Nine Mile Creek Streambank Stabilization project in 2024, restoring approximately 3,000 linear feet of the creek’s eroding banks in Eden Prairie. The South Fork of Nine Mile Creek, from Lake Smetana in Eden Prairie to Normandale Lake in Bloomington, is listed as impaired by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for biotic impairment. This means that the creek is considered unhealthy for fish and other aquatic life.

The reconstructed side slopes use bioengineering techniques such as toewood, root wads, brush bundles, and vegetated reinforced side slopes (VRSS). These practices helped narrow the channel for more consistent flow in times of drought, while still accommodating the fluctuating water levels in the creek after it rains. The project also installed a series of rock riffles—strategically placed rocks to increase instream habitat. This improved stream design will limit erosion, increase flood storage, improve fish passage, and instream habitat for aquatic life. We also removed invasive buckthorn in the surrounding forest and re-seeded with native flowers and grasses beneficial to wildlife. The Eden Prairie portion was completed in 2024. We will work with landowners on the Bloomington portion to stabilize eroded creek banks in 2025. Learn more at: ninemilecreek.org/southfork.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Invasive common carp and goldfish are found in several NMCWD water bodies and have negative impacts on water quality and native fish diversity. Using stream trapping and baited box net traps, 1,279 carp (collectively weighing 4,580 pounds) were removed from the Normandale Lake system in Bloomington. Goldfish from Lake Cornelia in Edina were also managed. Approximately 11,000 goldfish (weighing 1,914 pounds) were removed and an increase in native fish abundance and diversity has been identified as a result. NMCWD has also conducted invasive fish surveys in lakes in Edina, Bloomington, and Eden Prairie. (Photo: Stream trapping carp in the creek.)



Education and Outreach

NEW WORKSHOP SERIES FOR TEACHERS

In partnership with the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District, we have created a new workshop series for teachers called STEM on Tap. These workshops are not only informative but are also opportunities for networking in a relaxed social setting. Topics ranged from stormwater to invasive species, all with the unique lens of STEM learning and incorporating real-world science into classrooms. Learn more at stemontap.com.

(Photo: Teachers listen to a presentation at STEM on Tap.)



MN GREENCORPS PROGRAM HOST SITE

NMCWD was selected to host a MN GreenCorps member for 2024-2025. Claire Volk will help watershed district staff with creek erosion assessment, inventory and monitoring, and education and outreach throughout the watershed.

Upcoming in 2025

KICKOFF FOR THE PLANNING OF THE 2027 WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

In mid-March 2025, at the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District Annual State of the Waters Event, the NMCWD will officially kick off the planning process for the 2027 Watershed Management Plan. Please join us in person or online to contribute to the next 10 years of watershed management.



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