

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO



The Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) works to protect and improve the condition of lakes, streams, wetlands, and ponds within its borders. The BCWMC is a cooperative organization among the nine cities within the watershed and it uses a three-pronged approach to managing water resources: projects, policy, and education.

Examples of some BCWMC projects include restoring stream banks to eliminate erosion and improve habitat, installing ponds to treat stormwater before it enters a lake or stream, and improving lake outlet structures to better manage flows and improve infrastructure. BCWMC policies include requirements for stormwater management when a site is developed or redeveloped. And, the BCWMC uses a variety of avenues to educate watershed residents on ways they can help improve water quality in their communities.

WATER WE SHARE

We all live in a watershed and watersheds come in all shapes and sizes. They cross county, state, and national boundaries. A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common lake, stream, or river.



Photo by Dan Johnson

The Bassett Creek watershed begins in western Plymouth where ponds, wetlands, and swales or ditches drain to Plymouth Creek, which flows southeasterly before emptying into the western side of Medicine Lake.

Bassett Creek emerges from the southern edge of Medicine Lake and flows south and then east, picking up water from the Sweeney Lake Branch and the North Branch of Bassett Creek before entering a tunnel and traveling 2.4 miles underground to the Mississippi River. The watershed of Bassett Creek is a small part of the larger Mississippi River Basin.

WILDLIFE CORNER

Bassett Creek and its watershed are home to a vast number of animals, birds, fish and insects. A variety of migratory birds and waterfowl stop on area lakes each fall and spring. If you're really lucky, you might cross paths with a rare Blanding's turtle or trumpeter swan.

Medicine Lake is a birding hot spot with more than 120 different species of birds identified there within the last few years. Forest wildlife like deer, raccoons, skunk, squirrel, opossum and chipmunks abound. Also abundant are water loving mammals like beaver, muskrat and mink. The occasional northern river otter has even surfaced recently at Medicine Lake. All these and many more play an important role in a healthy watershed ecosystem.



Trumpeter Swans: Photo by Dan Johnson



Monarch Butterfly: Photo by Dan Johnson



Osprey: Photo by Dan Johnson



Snapping Turtle: Photo by Ted Hothal



Deer Crossing: Photo by Dan Johnson

WATERSHED AWARENESS & PROTECTION

LIGHTEN YOUR STEP

Did you know the average home uses 100,000 gallons of water per year? That's 274 gallons a day. But that's just the start. Each of us is a consumer of water on a far grander scale. Water is used to produce the food we eat and the beverages we drink. It's used in the production of energy. It's used in the creation of the goods and services we buy and rely on every day. Combine all these elements and you can arrive at your watershed footprint. Your watershed footprint is a measure of how much water you use every day. A smaller watershed footprint means you're taking action to conserve water today so that we all may have enough clean water resources tomorrow.

TREAT YOUR CURB LIKE A SHORELINE

Since we all live in a watershed, it's important to know some basics: Sometimes it's obvious our property drains to a particular body of water; sometimes it's not. Those living in the Bassett Creek watershed may not be aware that runoff from their property eventually gets to a lake or creek and into the Mississippi River. Even if you live several blocks or miles from the nearest creek or lake, runoff from your property drains through storm sewer pipes under your street—essentially turning every curb into a shoreline.

Storm sewer systems are an important part of city infrastructure. They are designed to protect structures and property from floods, by quickly and efficiently conveying water from parking lots, rooftops, and roads. Unlike the sanitary sewer systems that treat wastewater collected from inside the home, storm sewer systems do not treat run off water before discharging it into a water body.

Numerous pollutants are carried in the storm-water runoff, including: Lawn fertilizers, nutrients from decaying grass clippings and leaves, pesticides,



Photo by Dan Johnson

toxins from coal-tar driveway sealants, oil from leaking cars, pet waste, and salt, sand and other deicers. In creeks and lakes, these pollutants accumulate and result in poor water quality—affecting aesthetics and recreational enjoyment of the lakes as well as impacting the health of fish, insects, birds and their habitats.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Our lakes and streams today face difficult environmental challenges. Harmful terrestrial and aquatic invasive species have altered the ecosystems and have sometimes taken over uplands and waters. Increasing population density and development have put pressure on open space and have increased hard surfaces. Parking lots, rooftops, and roadways quickly shed water (rather than letting it soak into the ground), carrying pollutants and increasing flows in our streams. Nutrients like phosphorous from fertilizers and chlorides from road salt, accumulate and affect the ecological function of our lakes, streams and wetlands. These pollutants have degraded some of our lakes and streams such that they no longer meet State water quality standards.

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Twelve easy things you can do at home!

- 1. BE A STORM DRAIN GOALIE**
Rain water gets away from us too quickly sometimes (that must be why it's always running). And with it goes grass clippings, fertilizer and anything else that can run off our rooftops, driveways, and sidewalks. If left to accumulate—and combine with trash and other waste—these organics will find their way through storm drains into our lakes and rivers. Keep your hard surfaces and street front clear of clippings, leaves and fertilizer over spray. Regularly inspect your local storm drain and remove debris where possible.
- 2. CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM**
Use fertilizers, weed killers and sidewalk salt sparingly. Each have negative ecosystem impacts that work against clean water. Fertilize? Cut out the late fall application, it's most susceptible to runoff. Got weeds? Spot treat and look for organic alternatives. In the winter, shovel early, shovel often. Save the salt for the baked potato.
- 3. PICK UP AFTER YOUR PET**
Yes, you've heard it before, but it does make a difference. It's no stretch that small habit changes done by many people over time have a big impact on improving local water resources.
- 4. BUILD A RAIN GARDEN**
Rain gardens are simply gardens with depressions that are designed to catch rainwater runoff in your yard, growing plants that tolerate getting partially flooded on occasion. They provide beautiful landscaping and wildlife habitat. And, by soaking up rain where it falls, they slow stormwater runoff, help prevent erosion, and remove pollutants in the process.
- 5. NATURALIZE YOUR SHORE**
You don't have to live on a lake or creek to do this. Think of your street front as shoreline. Plant some native trees and shrubs. Create a buffer that attracts bees, birds and wildlife. Reduce the size of your lawn. Remember you live in a watershed. We're all in this together.
- 6. RECYCLE EXPIRED MEDICATIONS**
Never put these in the trash or flush them down the toilet. Look for a secure Hennepin County medical waste recycling container at a public facility near you.

7. TURN THE FLOW AROUND

Direct a downspout back into your yard away from driveways and sidewalks where it can run off your property. Make a shallow depression away from your foundation where downspout water can accumulate and soak in the ground. Better yet, save that water in a rain barrel and use the reservoir for watering landscape plants in dry times.

8. TAKE A KID FISHING!

Life isn't all about work. Those who most appreciate the need for water protection and water conservation are those who learn its value through experience. The MN DNR Fishing in the Neighborhood (FIN) program has designated Wirth Lake in Minneapolis a great catch for your planned outing. Wet a line.

9. CONSERVE, CONSERVE, CONSERVE

Swap out a shower fixture with a water saving shower head. Or how about turning off the water while you brush your teeth? Want more? Save up for that low volume toilet. Trade in the garbage disposal for organics composting. Wash your clothes only when they need washing, not after every wearing. You can do this.

10. THINK OUTSIDE THE SINK

Saving water can come in the form of installing compact fluorescent light bulbs, cutting back on the meat you consume or even adding organic recycling to your waste mix. All have an impact on your daily water demand.

11. GET INVOLVED

There are plenty of things you can do with little effort and you certainly don't have to be a water scientist. Monitor a local lake or wetland. Organize a fall clean-up. Learn to identify and control invasive species. Join a lake or neighborhood association. Participate. It's the way change begins.

12. TELL A FRIEND

Share your changes with others. Tell them how easy it was. Help them get started. Make your efforts multiply.



WATERSHED CREEK BASSETT of the SECRETS

DISCOVER

The secrets of the Bassett Creek Watershed, a great resource hiding in our own backyards...

MEMBER MUNICIPALITIES



- Crystalci.crystal.mn.us
- Golden Valley..... goldenvalleymn.gov
- Medicine Lakeci.medicine-lake.mn.us
- Minneapolisci.minneapolis.mn.us
- Minnetonka..... eminnetonka.com
- New Hopeci.new-hope.mn.us
- Plymouthplymouthmn.gov
- Robbinsdale..... robbinsdalemn.com
- St. Louis Parkstlouispark.org



BASSETTCREEKWMO.ORG

SECRETS of the BASSETT CREEK WATERSHED

JOEL BASSETT

In 1852, a fellow by the name of Joel Bean Bassett claimed 160 acres at the mouth of a gently flowing stream on the west bank of the Mississippi River across from St. Anthony. Bassett began as a farmer but soon ventured to lumber milling. He was elected first probate judge of Hennepin County. He was appointed Indian agent of the federal government.

He started a newspaper and formed a couple of railroads. He was a flour miller. In fact, he was just about one of the most important persons in the early formation of the new city of Minneapolis. But one thing he didn't do was choose the name Bassett's Creek. A school teacher by the name of Mary Schofield, the first school teacher in Minneapolis, applied that brand.

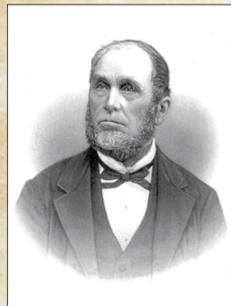


Image Courtesy of the Hennepin History Museum

GRANDEST SCHEME NEVER COMPLETED

Imagine getting in a boat on Lake Harriet, traveling over to Lake Calhoun, then through Lake of the Isles, cross over to Cedar Lake then enter a canal that would take you all the way to Medicine Lake via Bassett Creek in Golden Valley's Brookview Park. Between 1904 and 1911, a plan was hatched known as "Henry's Plan" and was pushed by many.

The vision was to connect these lakes in the hopes of diverting water from Bassett Creek in enough volume so that the spring flooding that often impacted Bassett Creek residents in North Minneapolis could be curbed. Water could be diverted to Minnehaha Creek so that Minnehaha Falls could be guaranteed an ample supply of water through dry spells. This plan was a contentious one. Years passed before it finally fell out of favor. The realization came that neither creek could possibly benefit without causing even more problems along both their courses.



Images Courtesy of The Medicine Lake Collection

THE WILDEST RIDE, ALMOST

In 1889, high-thinking Jacob Barge, the gentleman behind developing the Medicine Lake Park properties, incorporated the St. Paul and Minneapolis Rapid Transit Company and secured rights through Golden Valley for the construction of "an elevated road which has but a single rail for the track."

Surprisingly, this "monorail" was already a proven design of the time with a similar line constructed in South St. Paul. This Medicine Lake curiosity was never raised.



Photo Courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

FIRST BREWERY PARK

September 18, 1887 — Germania Park springs from the wild eastern shores of Keegan's Lake (Wirth Lake), a dream of Minneapolis ice baron Herman Westphal. Situated just outside the early Minneapolis city limits, this most impressive new adult playground would feature the new Germania Association brewery, a dance hall and beautiful lakeside park and gardens.

Eventually, a lack of jurisdictional authority would pave the way for unsavory and ill-mannered crowds that would soon spell the brewery and park's demise. Its "No Hokus Bokus" and "Muenchner" brand beers were not enough to save this resort park from an early undoing. Not all was lost, however. The Germania Brewery merged with the Frederick Noerenberg Brewery, the John Orth Brewery and the Heinrich Brewery to form the Minneapolis Brewing Company, which would become home to world famous Golden Grain Belt beers.

MOST SPECTACULAR WALK OVER WATER

August 4, 1889 — In an effort to promote real estate sales at Medicine Lake Park, real estate speculator Jacob Barge holds a grand picnic. The finale is a high-wire performance by Professor Granada, who would stand on his head on the wire stretched across Medicine Lake. It's unknown to this day whether this performance went over without a splash. It is believed that Professor Granada (perhaps not a true professor) continued his career as Herr Granada, one of the most dazzling high-wire acts of his time.

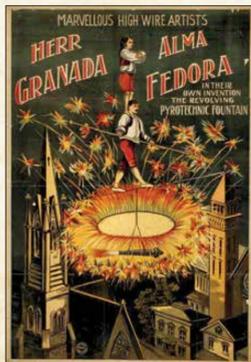


Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

HIGHEST DIVER

August 28, 1891 — World-famous high-diver Joseph Louvenmark dives 60 feet from a platform on Keegan's Lake (Wirth Lake) into 13 feet of water. The dive was a delight for the crowds of spectators watching. Possibly, upon leaving the water with a red chest and red face, an unknown spectator may have been the first to utter those now famous words: "That will leave a mark."



Image courtesy of the historic Minneapolis Tribune as digitized by ProQuest LLC for the State of Minnesota

FIRST PROFESSIONAL BALLPARK WITH A CREEK RUNNING THROUGH IT

The Minnesota Twins Baseball Club faced a challenge when constructing what would be their new home, Target Field. What appeared to be an ordinary Minneapolis parking lot had a hidden secret buried below: The Bassett Creek tunnel. Engineers went to work to design a foundation that would accommodate the existing creek tunnel. Today, Target Field is recognized as a leader in green design with many water conservation features that reduce and recycle water.



Photograph courtesy of the Minnesota Twins



Photo courtesy of The Medicine Lake Collection

FAMOUS SPRING WATERS

The next time you reach for a cold clear one, check the label on front. Glenwood Ingleswood is a familiar local brand that began bottling pure spring waters from the artesian wells along Bassett Creek in Minneapolis starting in 1882. Glenwood and Ingleswood were separate springs running separate businesses adjacent to one another when they decided to pool resources and merge waters back in 1896. In addition to water, they were an early bottler of seltzer waters and soft drinks, too.

A NATIVE NAME LESS FAMILIAR

Author Paul Durand's life-long study of Dakota Indian place names of Minnesota and parts of North and South Dakota, Wisconsin and Iowa is presented in his book, *Where the Waters Gather and the Rivers Meet*. His research notes the Mdewakanton Dakota name for Bassett Creek:

"HA-HA WA-KPA-DAN [Pronounced K-ah Ha Wa KPA dan] (1) to laugh, bubble and curl—the general term for a waterfalls (2) creek. This creek was so named because of its proximity to St. Anthony Falls. The French called it "Petite Rivière des Chutes."

HA-HA' WA-KPA'-DAN
Bassett Creek as known by the Mdewakanton Dakota

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR BASSETT CREEK WATERSHED?

- 1) Medicine Lake was once stocked with this uncanny fish in 1876.
- 2) This famous park feature drew water from Wirth Lake beginning in 1917.
- 3) This wildflower garden is the oldest of its kind in America.
- 4) This famous tree is estimated at more than 315 years old and still stands along the shores of Wirth Lake.
- 5) Bassett Creek is bisected by this important earthly dividing line.
- 6) This famous railroad crosses Bassett Creek seven times, was the last independent railroad to develop in the state of Minnesota and is now a popular biking trail.
- 7) This long-time Minneapolis Aquatennial event was held on a floating stage and featured synchronized swimmers and divers.

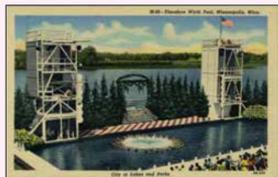


Photo Courtesy of The Medicine Lake Collection

ANSWERS 1) California Salmon 2) The Loring Cascade 3) The Hoise Butler Wildflower Garden 4) The Rockwood Oak 5) The 45th parallel 6) Luce Line 7) The Aqua Folles