



NOTE: The information on this map is subject to change and the MCWD does not guarantee its accuracy. Follow posted rules and, when applicable, call ahead to ensure facilities and amenities are available.

MAP AND GUIDE TO
LAKE MINNETONKA

Protecting Lake Minnetonka

Lake Minnetonka is one of Minnesota’s unique treasures. The lake – which is really a series of interconnected bays – boasts more than 14,000 acres of surface water and 125 miles of shoreline. Its natural beauty, abundant fish and wildlife, recreational opportunities and metro location make it one of the most heavily-used water bodies in the state.

Lake Minnetonka has held a special place in the hearts of Minnesotans since well before European settlement, and continues to be a coveted water resource to this day. Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) works closely with other organizations and individuals to keep Lake Minnetonka healthy, beautiful and available for all to enjoy. Have a memorable time on the lake and read on to learn how you can help preserve it for future generations.

REDUCING FLOODING ON THE LAKE AND MINNEHAHA CREEK

The Gray’s Bay Dam regulates the flow of water from Lake Minnetonka into Minnehaha Creek. There has been some kind of structure there since the late 1800’s and the current, adjustable dam was built in 1979.

The dam helps keep the lake and creek from becoming either too high or too low. Several factors are considered in its operation – current water levels on the lake and creek, recent and projected rainfall, time of year, and if the lake is on track to be low enough before ice-in to prevent flooding in the spring.

Given such a complex formula, it’s no surprise it took the communities around Lake Minnetonka and Minnehaha Creek nearly a decade to come up with an operating plan. The MCWD uses that model, approved by its communities and the Minnesota DNR, to operate the dam.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/water-levels

IMPROVING THE HEADWATERS OF LAKE MINNETONKA

The MCWD is focused on protecting and improving natural resources in the Six Mile-Halsted Bay Subwatershed. This complex system of 17 lakes and hundreds of wetlands drains into Halsted Bay, which is among the most degraded bays in Lake Minnetonka. As the headwaters of the entire watershed, improvements to this system have benefits far downstream. The work may include managing carp, restoring wetlands, and encouraging low-impact development.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/six-mile

PRESERVING BIG ISLAND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Since 2009 the MCWD has worked with a variety of partners to restore more than 4,000 feet of shoreline along Big Island, using plants and other natural techniques to keep the shoreline from eroding into the lake. In partnership with the City of Orono the MCWD purchased an easement over the eastern third of the island, keeping it a public place for all to enjoy.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/big-island

PLANT A SHORELINE GARDEN

More homeowners are going natural with their shorelines, using deep-rooted plants to anchor the soil and filter polluted stormwater runoff before it enters the lake. These landscape features – sometimes called “vegetated shorelines” or “shoreline gardens” – add color and beauty to the shoreline, improve water quality, provide critical wildlife habitat and even help keep geese out of your yard.

There are many resources available for people interested in planting a native shoreline, including “The Lake Minnetonka Guide to Shoreline Gardens,” which shows how shoreline gardens can be adapted to suit personal design preference, desired level of maintenance and site conditions. Information in the book can apply to anyone with waterfront property.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/shorelines

About the Minnehaha Creek Watershed

The Minnehaha Creek watershed is a 181-square-mile area of land and water that drains to Minnehaha Creek and eventually the Mississippi River. It stretches from Watertown Township to Minneapolis and includes Lake Minnetonka, Minnehaha Creek, the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, and Minnehaha Falls. There are 129 lakes, eight major creeks and thousands of wetlands in the watershed. It includes all or part of 27 cities and two townships in Hennepin and Carver Counties.

The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) is the local unit of government responsible for managing and protecting the water resources within the watershed. MCWD collaborates with public and private partners to protect and improve land and water for current and future generations. The District’s work aims to support thriving communities by improving water quality, water quantity, and ecological integrity.

Who handles what on Lake Minnetonka?



Hennepin County Sheriff’s Water Patrol

612-596-9880 / hennepinsheriff.org/water-patrol

- Law enforcement on the water
- Ice safety
- Permitting – Temporary structures, special events
- Search, rescue, and recovery



Minnesota DNR

651-296-6157 / dnr.state.mn.us

- Aquatic invasive species prevention
- Fishery management
- Fishing and watercraft licenses
- Permitting – Aquatic vegetation management
- Law enforcement on the water



Lake Minnetonka Conservation District

952-745-0789 / lmc.d.org

- Boating and navigational safety
- AIS prevention and harvesting for navigation
- Permitting - Docks, boat storage, deicing, charter boats/liquor



Minnehaha Creek Watershed District

952-471-0590 / minnehahacreek.org

- Gray’s Bay Dam operations
- Permitting – Various construction activities (in collaboration with municipalities)
- Data collection

WHAT YOU CAN DO

No matter where you live, the rain that falls on your property can pollute nearby lakes and streams. Here are 5 actions you can take to protect clean water at home:

- 1. Redirect Runoff** - Route downspouts away from pavement and into your yard to let water soak into the soil.
- 2. Capture Stormwater** - Install a rain garden or rain barrels to catch runoff on your property before it flows into storm drains.
- 3. Sweep Pavement** - Pick up grass clippings, leaves, excess fertilizer and de-icing salt left on pavement.
- 4. Scoop Poop** - When you grab the leash, don’t forget the bag. Prevent your pet’s waste from washing into waterways.
- 5. Get Involved** – Become a volunteer and take action for clean water.

Learn more at www.minnehahacreek.org/what-can-i-do

BEWARE OF TRANSPORTING AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES

Lake Minnetonka and the surrounding area offer numerous opportunities to get on the water, but if you’re transporting your boat or other watercraft between lakes, make sure you’re not bringing any aquatic invasive species (AIS) with you.

Invasive species like zebra mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil, curlyleaf pondweed and flowering rush (all present in Lake Minnetonka) can cause serious damage to the ecosystem of a lake. They hamper recreation, alter the food chain and quality of fishing, and cost a lot of money to control. **Check out MCWD’s guide to identifying AIS at www.minnehahacreek.org/early-detectors**



CLEAN all visible aquatic plants, zebra mussels, and other prohibited invasive species from watercraft, trailers, and water-related equipment before leaving any water access or shoreland.



DRAIN water-related equipment (boat, ballast tanks, portable bait containers, motor) before leaving a water access or shoreline property. Remove drain plugs to drain the bilge, livewell and baitwell. Keep drain plugs out and water-draining devices open while transporting watercraft.



DISPOSE of unwanted bait, including minnows, leeches, and worms, in the trash. It is illegal to remove aquatic animals from one waterbody and release them in another.