

2023 Education & Outreach Report

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rpbcwd.org/events
rpbcwd.org/calendar

There are many ways to have a positive impact on watershed health, and we can't do it alone. The District's Education & Outreach program aims to support the goals outlined in the 10-Year Management Plan by fostering an engaged community and offering opportunities for involvement. This report provides an overview of the ways the program continues to provide opportunities for stewardship and build a network of engaged community members.

EVENTS

Water Resources Summit

Water Resources Manager Josh Maxwell hosted the annual Water Resources Summit for partner organizations in March 2023. The summit provided an opportunity to share monitoring results, planning efforts, and identify potential partnering opportunities.

Lake Association Summit

Fifteen representatives from seven lake associations attended the 2023 Lake Association Summit at the RPBCWD office in April. The event provided an opportunity for staff and consultants to provide an overview of the District's role in watershed protection, how to achieve a healthy lake, and capital improvement projects. Fifteen lake association representatives attended.

Fall Tour

Staff and consultants hosted a tour on September 26th for the Board of Managers and Citizen Advisory Committee. The public were also invited to join at tour stops. The purpose of the tour was to see and learn about ecotypes within the District. The



group was provided a tour guidebook to provide supporting information about the five ecotypes visited.

Open House for Upper Riley Project

An open house was held on October 24th at the District office for the Upper Riley Creek Ecological Enhancement Project scheduled to begin construction in fall 2024. Attendees had the opportunity to view exhibits about the project and talk to project designers and District staff. About a dozen people attended the event.

Upper Riley Creek Ecological Enhancement Project

Overview

Project Need

Upper Riley Creek does not meet water quality standards for streams set by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The creek also discharges pollution to Lake Susan, which is also below water quality standards.

The primary concerns for the creek are:

- Streambank erosion
- Perched culverts and outfall pipes
- Incised channel disconnected from floodplain
- In-channel debris
- Sediment deposit at outfall into Lake Susan

Project Benefits

- Improves ecological function of Upper Riley Creek.
- Provides diverse habitat layers for wildlife.
- Significantly reduces streambank erosion.
- Demonstrates to public importance of stream stability.
- Improves public access to Upper Riley Creek.

Timeline

2022	2023	2024	2025
Final design & permitting	Solicit Award bid project	Construction	Maintenance

One of several exhibits for the Upper Riley Creek Project open house.

Creek Week

October brought the District's first ever Creek Week with activities for all. A Build Your Own Rain Barrel workshop hosted at the RPBCWD office had participants convert retired wine barrels into rain barrels to capture roof runoff. Residents could also pick up a tree sapling reserved earlier in the year; the trees spent the summer growing strong roots in gravel beds at our office, giving them a strong start when planted in fall. Creek Week wrapped up with the annual Cycle the Creek – a staff-guided bicycle tour along Riley Creek. Beginning with Creek Week, and lasting all month long, the Passport Adventure encouraged people to get out to explore the watershed district by offering a prize pack to determined explorers.

Creek Week Statistics

- Passport Adventure: 35 completed
- Build Your Own Rain Barrel Workshop: 19 attendees
- Gravel Bed Tree Giveaway: Distributed 100 trees of five species (Bur Oak, Red Splendor Crabapple, American Plum, Red Osier Dogwood, White Pine) to 35 households
- Cycle the Creek: 22 riders joined staff on a crisp fall morning to tour a portion of Riley Creek



Creek Week 2023



2023 Creek Week events (left to right): Build a Rain Barrel Workshop, tree seedlings ready to harvest for Gravel Bed Tree Giveaway, participants at the Urban Soils Walkshop, and riders at Cycle the Creek.

VOLUNTEERS

Adopt a Dock

Adopt-a-Dock is a citizen science initiative where lakeshore residents monitor for aquatic invasive species. In 2023, 25 participants used passive plate samplers to monitor for zebra mussels on Duck, Lucy, Lotus, Mitchell, Red Rock, Riley, and Silver lakes.

Adopt a Drain

In 2023, 96 participants adopted 128 storm drains within the Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District, preventing 1,755 pounds of leaves, sediment, salt and other debris from entering our waterways. Led by Hamline University, Adopt-a-Drain allows individuals, businesses and organizations to adopt a storm drain in their neighborhood and pledge to keep it clear of leaves and debris throughout the year. Participants track their impact by logging the amount of debris cleared into an online portal. Homeowners who have adopted drains can opt to receive small yard signs to place near their drains, educating their neighbors about their positive impact on clean water. Across all of Minnesota, the Adopt-a-Drain program kept 118,233 pounds of debris out of waterways in 2023.



Minnesota Water Stewards

A partnership with the Freshwater Society, Minnesota Water Stewards trains and supports community leaders to reduce water pollution and educate their community to conserve and protect our waterways. In 2023, RPBCWD sponsored one steward through the program, while 19 past stewards continued their service hours within the District.

Citizen Advisory Committee

Staff Forbes and Staff Mahon serve as liaisons for the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). In 2023, there were up to 14 members of the CAC with a couple of resignations due to schedule conflicts. The CAC met monthly for a total of 12 meetings with six of those meetings having guest speakers. Meetings began virtually in 2023 and returned to in-person in October. In addition to regular meetings, the two technical

advisory members of the CAC participated in workshops to inform development of the Ecological Health Action Plan (EHAP), and one other member served on the Stewardship Grant review committee.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

In 2023, District staff participated in 15 community events. Staff tabled at these events:

- Minnetonka Contractor's Expo
- Eden Prairie Home, Landscape & Garden Expo
- Eden Prairie Eco Expo
- Eden Prairie Arbor Day Walk & Green Fair
- Minnetonka Winter Farmer's Market
- Mitchell Lake Association Annual Meeting

Staff engaged with youth audiences at these events:

- Cedar Ridge Elementary School Science Night
- Eden Prairie Outdoor Center Animal Open House
- Prairie View Elementary School Watershed Presentation and Art Contest
- Prairie Planting with St. Hubert 7th graders
- Metro Children's Water Festival
- Bluff Creek Elementary STEM Fest
- Staff presented on clean water topics at:
 - Minnesota Educational Facilities Management Professionals Association (MASMS) Conference
 - Minnetonka High School Envirothon



Staff Portoghese at Bluff Creek Elementary STEM Fest.

WORKSHOPS & WEBINARS

Name	Description	Participation	Partner(s)
Turfgrass Maintenance for Reduced Environmental Impacts Training	Turfgrass maintenance professionals learn how turf management affects local lakes and rivers, gain techniques to optimize fertilizer and pesticide applications, and access resources to help implement new techniques into their lawn care maintenance.	59	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, NMCWD
Resilient Shorelines Workshop	Covers fundamentals that shoreline property owners need for protecting water quality near their home, including shoreline site assessments, lakescaping and shoreline projects, plant selection tips, regulatory reminders, and access to resources.	40	Metro Blooms, City of Eden Prairie, NMCWD
Project WET Workshop for Educators	K-12 educators learned how to incorporate Project WET education into their curriculum.	20	NMCWD
Building Healthy Soils Workshop	Participants learn about soil ecology in the urban environment and find out what actions they can take to build healthier soils at home.	20	City of Minnetonka, NMCWD
Smart Salting for Parking Lots & Sidewalks	Training to provide winter maintenance professionals the opportunity to learn best practices to reduce their salt use while maintaining safety and minimizing impacts on the environment and infrastructure.	30	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, NMCWD
Buckthorn Workshop	Hands-on event to learn about how to identify and control the invasive plant.	29	City of Eden Prairie
Urban Soils: Challenges and Opportunities Walkshop	Participants joined Dr. Ann Marie Journey for a walk around Minnetonka's Civic Center Park to see how soil varies between woodlands, wetlands and lawns.	13	City of Minnetonka, NMCWD
Build Your Own Rain Barrel Workshop	Residents learned about the benefits of rainwater reuse and the importance of minimizing stormwater runoff while building oak rain barrels to take home.	19	n/a

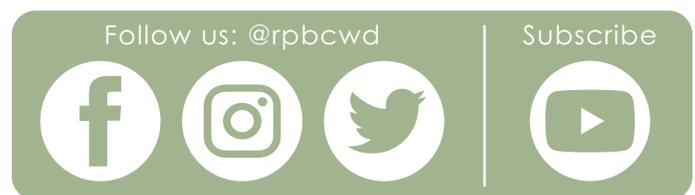
COMMUNICATIONS

Annual Communication

In compliance with Minnesota Statute §103B.227, subdivision 4, the District created and distributed an Annual Communication. The 2023 Annual Communication includes general district information, project updates, and ways community members can help improve our water resources. Approximately 2,000 copies of the Annual Communication were sent to local leaders, distributed to city halls, libraries, and community centers across the District, and handed out at community events. Download the document at rpbcwd.org/annualreport.

Social Media

The District posts content on three social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (now known as X) under the username @rpbcwd. Through interactions and on handouts, the District encourages residents to follow District social media accounts.



Newsletters

Electronic newsletters are sent quarterly to mailing list subscribers who opt-in for district updates. Subscribers can also opt to receive emails for volunteer opportunities and board meeting notices. A summary of newsletter distribution is provided below.

2023 Newsletter Summary

Issue	Recipients	Opens	Link Clicks
Winter	740	289	14
Spring	743	300	23
Summer	751	302	28
Fall	808	370	28

Direct Mail

Herbicide treatments to control aquatic invasive plants were conducted on five lakes in 2023. Before the treatments,, property owners adjacent to the treatment sites were notified with a postcard mailing. A website link was provided on the postcard so that residents could find out the latest information about treatment timing. Lake residents were also encouraged to sign up for a new lake email notification service set up in 2023. Lake association contacts were also emailed regarding treatment timing.

Example of postcard notification for AIS lake treatment.

In July, 618 postcards were mailed out to residential lake properties to alert them to the need for a permit before doing shoreline work. The postcard provided contact information as well as a website link with more detail.

Postcard mailed to lakeshore properties regarding permitting needs.

Water Quality Factsheets

Every year, staff update water quality factsheets for the three creeks and thirteen lakes:

- Ann
- Duck
- Hyland
- Lotus
- Lucy
- Mitchell
- Red Rock
- Rice Marsh
- Riley
- Round
- Silver
- Staring
- Susan

The 2022 factsheets were distributed electronically through email and on the website. A list of the factsheets may be accessed online at rpbcd.org/factsheets and on individual waterbody webpages at rpbcd.org/waterbodies. Printed copies were placed in the District office's front vestibule and provided upon request to lake associations and others.

Example of a 2022 lake factsheet.

Other Communication Materials

In addition to growing content on the RPBCWD website, Education and outreach staff continue to expand the library of community engagement materials. We've also sponsored booklet printing with the Prairie Edge Chapter of Wild Ones and purchased a full-page advertisement in the Eden Prairie Community Guide.

In 2023, staff participated in development of a brief video about stormponds by the City of Chanhassen. As of this report, the video is in final production and will likely be part of a broader series.



Staff developed a [guide on How to Beat Buckthorn](#) for the 2023 Buckthorn Workshop, which was co-hosted with the City of Eden Prairie.

CHEMICAL TREATMENT AREA FOR CONTROL OF ZEBRA MUSSELS

A yellow silt curtain has been installed in the water to establish a zebra mussel treatment zone.

A small number of zebra mussels were discovered in this area in mid-July. On August 7-11, a licensed applicator will apply copper sulfate treatments in an attempt to kill remaining zebra mussels.

No water use restrictions are associated with the treatment. Upon application, the water will have a slight blue tint, which should dissipate the same day.

Staff from Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District will continue to monitor the lake for the presence of zebra mussels.

rpbcwd.org/zebramusself

E&O staff continued assisting other District staff with needs for temporary or permanent signage, webpages, e-notifications, and graphics for reports. The temporary sign (below) was created to post at Lake Ann when at Zebra Mussel infestation was discovered and treated.



Staff developed a [Grow Wild!](#) handout and a [Favorite Native Plants for Suburban Yards](#) guide in 2023. The plant list was developed by Stewardship Grant committee members.

DO NOT DISTURB

WETLAND BUFFER

NO MOWING, NO SPRAYING, & NO DUMPING BEYOND THIS POINT

This buffer of vegetation protects water quality for people and wildlife.

Learn more: rpbcwd.org

A new wetland buffer sign was produced in 2023 for the District's regulatory program. These signs are required to be posted at permitted sites with delineated wetlands.

What's Your Watershed?

If you live in Eden Prairie, you live within one of three watershed districts.

Find your watershed address: rpbcwd.org/map

What will you discover in your watershed? Find out at rpbcwd.org

- Planning a project on your property? Find out if you need a permit.
- Apply for a grant for a water quality improvement project.
- Sign up for an event, workshop or volunteer opportunity.

For the past few years, RPBCWD has purchased a full page ad in the Eden Prairie Community Guide.



In 2023, staff developed a new set of stickers celebrating our creeks. Stickers are popular giveaways and a great draw at tabling events.