Your Connection to Pickerel Lake

Water Quality Study on Pickerel Lake

PURPOSE: To understand the quality and conditions of Pickerel Lake and three other lakes in the area. And, to hear from residents in the watershed to understand their thoughts about Pickerel Lake and their willingness to contribute to improved water quality.

This year, the Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization (LMRWMO) is embarking on a project to gain a better understanding of four lakes and to engage the residents that live around or near these lakes. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is funding the project through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Act to study the water quality and pollution sources of Thompson Lake in West St. Paul, Pickerel Lake in Lilydale, Rogers Lake in Mendota Heights, and Sunfish Lake in the City of Sunfish Lake. The project, called a “Watershed Restoration and Protection (WRAP) Study,” will result in restoration plans for lakes with poor water quality, and protection plans for lakes with good water quality.

Your property lies within the watershed of Pickerel Lake. That means that even if you live several blocks or even miles away, the rainwater and snowmelt that leave your property and neighborhood ultimately end up in the lake, in most cases by traveling through Ivy Falls Creek. Therefore, you and your neighbors may play an important role in improving and protecting Pickerel Lake into the future.

In addition to understanding the conditions of Pickerel Lake and the possible sources of degradation, the WRAP Study will involve residents of the watershed, like you. We hope to learn your thoughts about the lake, your vision for its future condition, and your willingness to be part of the solution. Right now, you can help by completing and returning the enclosed survey, and participating in the community conversations about Pickerel Lake.

What is the Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization?

VISION: Water resources and related ecosystems are managed to sustain their long-term health and integrity through member city collaboration and partnerships with other water management organizations with member city citizen support and participation.

The Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization (LMRWMO) is a local unit of government in northern Dakota County and southern Ramsey County that works to manage storm water and protect the lakes, streams and wetlands in all or part of Inver Grove Heights, Lilydale, Mendota Heights, St. Paul, South St. Paul, Sunfish Lake, and West St. Paul. Ultimately, these areas drain to the Mississippi River. Because rainfall and storm water runoff extends beyond municipal boundaries, the LMRWMO was established through an agreement among these cities in 1985. Its purpose is to address intercommunity storm water issues, ensure that storm water projects and studies follow accepted engineering standards, meet regulatory requirements, and ensure that the costs incurred are fairly divided among member cities. The LMRWMO also monitors water quality, provides water resource education to residents, elected officials, and city staff, provides grants to landowners installing practices that improve water quality, and performs studies such as the Watershed Restoration and Protection Study. (See article above.) Further information about the LMRWMO is available on their website: www.dakotaswcd.org/watersheds/lowermisswmo/index.html.
Treat Your Curb Like a Shoreline

Your connection to Pickerel Lake probably isn’t obvious. However, even if you live several blocks or even miles off the lake, runoff from your property drains to the lake through stormsewer pipes under your street – essentially turning every curb into a shoreline. Stormsewer systems are different from the sanitary sewer systems in which water used inside your home is treated at a wastewater treatment plant before being discharged to a waterbody. Outside your home, stormsewers collect rainwater and snowmelt leaving your property and convey them to Pickerel Lake without treatment.

Pollutants carried in that runoff include lawn fertilizers, nutrients from decaying grass clippings and leaves, pesticides, toxins from coal-tar driveway sealants, oil and gas from leaking cars, pet waste, and salt, sand and other deicers. In the lake, these pollutants result in poor water quality – effecting aesthetics and recreational enjoyment of the lake as well as fish, bugs, birds, and their habitats.

As you might guess, once a waterbody is degraded, it can be costly to clean up. You can be part of the solution by using some easy practices at home: 1) sweep up grass clippings, fertilizer, leaves, and extra sand and salt before they get into the storm drain; 2) install a raingarden to capture runoff from your roof or driveway and let it soak into the ground; 3) clean up after your pet; 4) install a rain barrel to collect rainwater for use in gardens; 5) keep your car in good repair; 6) use asphalt-based driveway sealants; 7) wash your car on the lawn.

To learn more visit www.cleanwatermn.org or www.bluethumb.org.