

WINDOW ON THE WATERSHED

Get Your Lake on the Honor Roll

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After a long winter and cool wet spring, citizens in Carver County are embarking on another season of recreating on their favorite lake. And in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, most lakes are of good quality for fishing, swimming, and other activities.

The vast majority of the District's lakes that were mentioned in 2010 had a grade C or above, meaning they're enjoyable for recreation during a good portion of the boating season.

The District monitored 56 lakes and bays during the 2010 season for three criteria: water clarity, algae growth, and total phosphorous. Each lake and bay is given a numerical score for each parameter which is then averaged together to compute the lake grade.

For the most part, water quality in the District's lakes has held steady relative to previous years. Only a fraction of the lakes in the most recent report had a lower grade than the year before, which is not unexpected. A slight variation in one of the criteria measured can result in a shift from a B+ for a B, which is within the normal range that has been observed in recent years.

Although the lake grades are used to compare water quality of the District's lakes within one year, they are not considered an indication of water quality trends. That's because a number of factors can impact a lake's grade, including the weather.

In 2010, the amount of rainfall was 12% higher than the average precipitation. Higher than normal precipitation can often result in more runoff, contributing pollution to area streams and lakes.

Just like a student who needs to study to keep up his or her grades, residents also can do their part to maintain or improve their local lake's performance. Among the options available are installing rain gardens, pervious pavers, and other measures to capture rain where it falls. Taking steps like these prevents runoff from carrying nutrients and pollutants into our streams and lakes.

Filtering runoff with native plantings along shorelines and stream banks can help improve a lake's grade by keeping fertilizers and other materials from entering our surface waters.

Native shoreline plantings also can prevent erosion and deter geese, which prefer mown grass adjacent to water. The District has a cost share grant program that



funds up to 50% of these stormwater management practices.

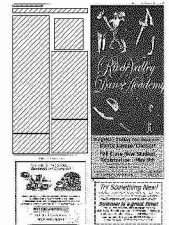
Other ways to protect area lakes and streams include using rain barrels, picking up pet waste, washing your car on the lawn, and bagging leaves and lawn clippings.

Preventing organic materials like leaves and grass from entering stormsewers can keep excess nutrients out of local lakes and streams. Those nutrients can contribute to excess algae growth, which is unsightly and can deprive fish of the oxygen they need to survive. Simple steps like these can go a long way toward getting your lake on the honor roll and keeping it there.

There are about 134 lakes in the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District plus 38 bays on Lake Minnetonka, 27 of those bays being monitored by the Watershed District. Lakes in Victoria received the following grades in 2010. (Stieger Lake and Lake Zumbra are monitored by the Three Rivers Park District so not listed here.)

Grade A. Smithtown Bay, Piersons Lake (A-), Marsh Lake (A-), Lake Tamarack (A-), Carl Krey Lake (A- in 2008). *Crystal clear, beautiful. 90% of District lakes.*

Grade B. Church Lake (B- in 2008)



Generally good quality. Algae may limit swimming, particularly toward the end of summer. 70-90% of District lakes.

Grade C. Lake Virginia, Schutz Lake, East Auburn Lake, Kelzer's Pond. *Average quality. Swimming, boating, fishing, may be undesirable early in the season. Algae blooms occasionally. 30-70% of District lakes.*

Grade D. Lake Wasserman. *Severe algae problems. Little interest in recreation. 10-30% of District lakes.*

Grade F. *Not enjoyable. Severe limitations to recreational use. Lowest 10% of District lakes.*