

Master Water Stewards



Community Leadership for Clean Water

WHAT IS THE MASTER WATER STEWARDS PROGRAM?

Master Water Stewards is a program that certifies and supports community leaders to keep pollutants from entering our waterways while educating their neighbors. This program thrives because of its partnerships with cities, counties, watershed management organizations, and watershed districts.

Water Steward candidates participate in online and in-person training, culminating in a capstone project that benefits our water health and educates local communities. Stewards graduate with the skills and knowledge to be a force for change in their communities and an asset to their partner organization. After graduation, Stewards receive support through continuing education and volunteer opportunities from Freshwater and partnering organizations.

The Master Water Steward network is large and growing. Stewards collaborate with each other, their partner organizations, community groups, lake associations, and many others to install best management practices and engage their communities. They volunteer to install raingardens, change policy, engage the public, and protect Minnesota waters.



FRESHWATER

*Master Water Stewards is a program of Freshwater
and its partners across the state*

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TENDING OUR SHARED WATERS

Master Water Stewards collaborated with Water Bar and Public Studio to create space for transforming conversations and engagement around water issues. Through a series of five water story circles, called together by artists and community leaders in northeast Minneapolis, we gained insight into the many ways of knowing about and caring for water. By blending artistic and cultural strategies with water science and policy, Water Bar incubates new relationships and unleashes leaders within communities. Using this project as a launching pad, Water Bar created Water Tender Training, along with a guidebook, and will now be serving as 'One Water Hub' in the northeast Minneapolis community to continue this work.



NEW WATER CONSERVATION ADVISOR PROGRAM

This year, Freshwater is piloting a new branch of Master Water Stewards called Water Conservation Advisor (WCA). The WCA program focuses on the relationship between groundwater and surface water, and helps master level volunteers work as leaders in their communities to protect and conserve water supplies. The workshop serves as both a branching track for those going through the Master Water Steward training and a continuing education option for Master Water Stewards, Master Gardeners, and Master Naturalists. To date, 40 Water Conservation Advisors have been certified. The course will be offered annually each spring.



at a glance

342
STEWARDS
CERTIFIED

9,341
HOURS
VOLUNTEERED

28,296
PEOPLE ENGAGED

SINCE 2013



SUPER STEWARDS STOP SUPERFLUOUS SALT

In addition to becoming Master Water Stewards in 2014, Sue and Randy have become leaders in the fight to put Minnesota on a low salt diet. This year they served on an advisory committee, convened by the City of Edina, to create a model snow and ice management contract. Risk of liability is one of the main drivers behind over salting. People often equate more salt with more safety, and therefore when an accident occurs, both property owners and contractors can be in legal jeopardy. Historically, fear of lawsuit has prevented salt applicators and property managers from jointly acknowledging the harmful effects of chloride. However, this contract is about more than just liability: it is about dialogue. It embodies a new spirit of collaboration between salt applicators and property managers. Sue says, "This is 180 degrees from what contracts have been in the past." Sue, Randy, Joe, Walter, Louann, (all Master Water Stewards) and Barb form the group StopOverSalting (SOS) and have been tireless supporters of a state bill that would protect contractors who choose to use less salt; it has failed to pass three times but they are not giving up. Sue and Randy's work in Edina is a great example of bringing people together on behalf of clean water!

STEWARDS PROFILES



I hope through conversation and creating connections within my community I will find more sense of belonging and strengthen the commonalities between us all.

— Samantha

COLLABORATION BLOOMS IN LIONS PARK

In 2017 a group of Master Water Stewards from Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) teamed up with the Columbia Heights Lions Club to address drainage issues in Lions Park. Together they planted an expansive rain garden with native species and they continue to maintain the garden. These Stewards exemplify the level of coordination and collaboration that we anticipate from all program participants. Freshwater and MWMO are partnering to create a volunteer leadership framework that will give Stewards such as these the structure and support they need to perform high-quality service in their communities. The framework will empower a handful of Stewards to take on a leadership role in order to help others stay engaged and active in their communities. Stewards like John, Mary, Kristen, Donna, and Katherine, who worked on the Lions Park project, consistently exceed our expectations and inspire our support.



KEEPING THE CREEK COOL

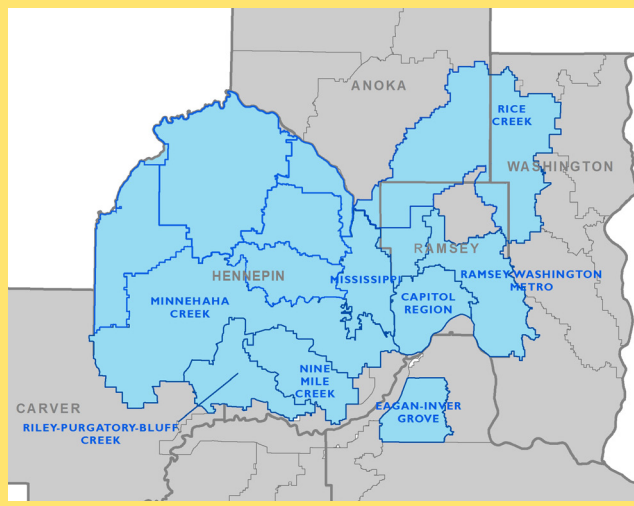
Master Water Stewards David, Andy, and Brad are working with their partner organization, Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization to plant trees along a stretch of the North Creek. The Stewards are planting flood-tolerant species such as swamp white oak, hazelnut, and silver maple. North Creek, and many other tributaries of the Vermillion River have temperatures that are too warm for sensitive aquatic creatures. These trees will provide much needed shade — lowering water temperature, raising dissolved oxygen levels, and eventually providing woody habitat for aquatic species. This multiphase project will not only improve the health of North Creek, but ecosystems downstream, too!

PARTNER PROFILE:
NINE MILE CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT

Nine Mile Creek Watershed District (NMCWD) has been part of the Master Water Stewards program since 2016. The watershed encompasses approximately 50 square miles and includes parts of Edina, Eden Prairie, Bloomington, Minnetonka, Richfield, and Hopkins. Since 2016 they have gained 17 stewards! From developing and implementing educational events to serving on the board, NMCWD Stewards are heavily involved in furthering the core mission of the organization. Some projects Stewards have helped with include an Adopt-a-Drain program in Bloomington, a buckthorn removal project around the NMCWD office, and creation of an educational dragonfly program. Two NMCWD Master Water Stewards won the District's Volunteer of the Year Award for their commitment to clean water. NMCWD Stewards are educators, advocates, and practitioners and they give the organization critical support to ensure clean water for the future.



WHERE ARE STEWARDS VOLUNTEERING



I want to be a catalyst to help community members get involved in limiting stormwater pollution.

— Ryan

thank you

TO OUR PROGRAM PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS:

Mississippi Watershed Management Organization
 Minnehaha Creek Watershed District
 Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District
 Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District
 City of Eagan
 Capital Region Watershed District
 Nine Mile Creek Watershed District
 Cannon River Watershed Partnership

Vermillion River Watershed Joint Powers Organization
 Lower Mississippi River Watershed Management Organization
 Hennepin County
 Washington Conservation District
 Rice Creek Watershed District
 City of Rochester
 Vadnais Lake Area Watershed Management Organization
 Winona County
 Metropolitan Council

Lower Minnesota River Watershed District
 Brown's Creek Watershed District
 Carnelian Marine Watershed District
 Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed District
 South Washington Watershed District
 Valley Branch Watershed District
 Minnesota GreenCorps
 Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources

City of Minneapolis Public Works
 Blue Thumb
 Minnesota Department of Health
 University of St. Thomas
 Macalester College
 University of Minnesota Extension
 Metro Blooms
 Climate Generation
 Water Drop Design
 City of Edina

Learn more at masterwaterstewards.org