

Regional Stormwater Protection Team Presents “Creek News”

Weekly updates of regional surface water information



Week of February 20, 2006

Lester River/Amity Creek: Understanding Watershed Problems

The Lester/Amity system is a large watershed (32,000 acres; which equals 13,200 hectares) located within an urban/rural interface on the eastern edge of Duluth. Their combined flow enters Lake Superior at about 61st Avenue East, just before the EPA's national research lab. The watershed is highly valued by local residents for year-round recreation due to an extensive trail system, scenic views, automobile access, and an excellent sport fishery. The bridges of the river are a popular site for photography and children have found the system a perfect place for swimming, wading and fishing.



Amity Creek is one of the least urbanized streams within the city limits and is a designated trout stream that joins the Lester River before entering Lake Superior. The Lester River is named after a pioneer, and is called Busabika zibi by the Ojibwe, meaning "Rocky Canyon River" or "the river that comes through a worn hollow place in the rock". However, the Lester/Amity system is undergoing extensive development pressure as population growth in the region increases and rural development continues to escalate.



Since 2002, Amity Creek has been the focus of an MPCA long-term monitoring effort. Both streams have been designated as “Impaired” due to excessive suspended sediment. Following designation as an impaired water body, the federal Clean Water Act requires that the State develop a TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) target for each impaired stream system. Ultimately, the goal is total restoration, but no firm deadline or schedule is

developed until a “TMDL” study is done. We know the stream is impaired by excess sediment, elevated temperatures following storm events, and too much mercury in the fish. However, not enough is known about these problem sources to cost-effectively fix them. For more information on TMDLs contact the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency at (218) 723-4660 or visit www.pca.state.mn.us/water/tmdl/index.

The Lester/Amity watershed is currently the focus of a privately endowed restoration initiative, the Weber Stream Restoration Initiative that began in 2005 following a \$198,000 endowment, with an objective of improving trout stream habitats in tributaries of Lake Superior (WSRI: www.lakesuperiorstreams.org/weber). A consortium of University staff, state and local agencies, and community groups have committed resources and in-kind support to increase community interest and understanding of local water bodies, provide quality scientific data, and protect and restore stream habitat.

Creek news is a weekly press release of happenings along our streams, lakes and rivers. For more information contact the Regional Stormwater Protection Team c/o Marnie Lonsdale, City of Duluth (218) 730-4063

Regional Stormwater Protection Team Presents “Creek News”

Weekly updates of regional surface water information

The Lester/Amity system serves as an excellent pilot study site for the long-term goal of WSRI: successfully implement guidelines that foster environmentally-sustainable development in the region and mitigate future impact to streams.

1. Impairments have been identified by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency;
2. The streams are classified as sensitive trout habitat by the Minnesota DNR;
3. The watersheds are urban/rural locations with high recreational use by the public;
4. Community partnerships provide strong possibilities for leveraging and securing additional funds;
5. The potential for scientific collaboration is strong, including MPCA, MN DNR, Minnesota’s Lake Superior Coastal Program, the City of Duluth, U.S. EPA, and others;
6. Substantial landscape and water quality information is currently available to help calibrate a modeling effort and to design a comprehensive decision support network.

For information on the Weber Initiative contact Dan Breneman at University of Minnesota, Natural Resources Research Inst. 218.720.2722, dbrenema@nrri.umn.edu
For more information on the creek visit www.lakesuperiorstreams.org.

To learn more about the St. Louis River become involved in the “Year of the River”. Join the St. Louis River Citizens Action Committee the week of March 19th to March 25th. to celebrate the significant progress in restoring the river call (218) 733-9520 or visit www.stlouisriver.org.



Creek news is a weekly press release of happenings along our streams, lakes and rivers. For more information contact the Regional Stormwater Protection Team c/o Marnie Lonsdale, City of Duluth (218) 730-4063