

Regional Stormwater Protection Team Presents “Creek News” Weekly updates of regional surface water information



Miller Creek – *Creek under stress*

Miller Creek is a cold water trout stream under stress and listed on the state impaired waters list. Along its path the stream collects significant amounts of sediment, warm water and polluted runoff from development and parking lots.



Its headwaters are in Hermantown and in the wetlands around the Duluth International Airport. From there it journeys through the developed areas along Central Entrance, behind the mall. Below the mall the creek enters woods behind Lake Superior College (LSC). From LSC the stream speeds up as it careens down the hill through Lincoln Park to finally enter the St. Louis River at 21st Avenue West.



Students from Hermantown High plant trees along Miller Creek to help control erosion along the banks. Their shade will help also help keep water cooler.
Source: MPCA

Every two to three years, the City of Duluth clears the mouth of the creek of sediment. This can be as much as 500 cubic yards of material (50 truck loads) per year. A lot of this mud is from winter road sanding and individuals raking sand and debris into the streets where it enters the storm drain system. These feed directly into the stream at many points on its route to Lake Superior. Another significant portion is debris from erosion due to increased velocity and volume of runoff coming off

paved surfaces during rainstorms and spring runoff that erodes the streambanks and channel.

During summer, rainwater runoff is heated by running over impervious asphalt surfaces warmed by the sun. The warm water increases the

temperature of the stream placing additional stress on the fish. Trout cannot tolerate warm water for very long. The more development that occurs in the watershed, the more the creek heats up and the greater the stress. Notice also that in developed areas the natural shade trees and shrubs along the stream corridor are gone, further increasing summer temperatures.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is currently developing a TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) study for the creek to fix these problems and could result in increased requirements for creek protection in developed areas. Requirements may include increased buffer zones, holding ponds, sediment treatment devices or other alternatives. It's much cheaper to prevent the problems from occurring than to fix them.

For more information visit www.lakesuperiorstreams.org/streams/miller.html. Find out more about the TMDL study at www.southstlouisswcd.org/miller_TMDL.html and www.pca.state.mn.us/water/tmdl/index.html#tmdl or call the MPCA at (218) 723-4660.