

STREAM-LINE

News for residents of the Lester-Amity rivers watershed

Fish tales from the past

Lester River hatchery was "first class" operation



In 1886 the Lakeside Land Company donated five acres for the hatchery and Lester Park. The hatchery was meant to be "one of the finest in the world."

Ever wonder about the history behind the lovely old building perched on the shore of Lake Superior at 60th Avenue East and London Road?

In the mid-1880s whitefish were the bread and butter of the Lake Superior fishing industry, and their populations were declining dramatically. Local fishermen rallied support for the U.S. Fisheries Commission to build a hatchery at the Lester River to stock the lake. Unfortunately, the wild swings of North Shore weather foiled the plan. But back in the 1880s hopes ran high. Here's what happened according to reports in a local periodical, Lake Superior News, in March 1887 which covered the unfolding story with enthusiasm.

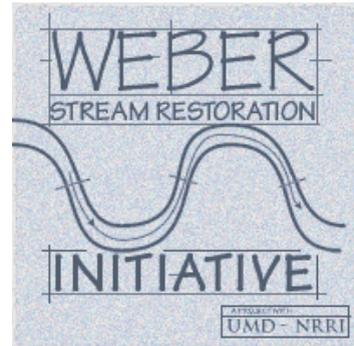
The decrease in whitefish "attracted the attention of the

thoughtful Lake Superior fishermen, and fear of the ultimate total extinction of the species led to a stirring up of the matter, which has culminated in the establishment of the United States hatchery..." at the Lester River.

The market for fish was at just two cents per pound so large catches were critical to make it profitable. "The men [in the industry] saw nothing but loss ahead of them and called a meeting for an interchange of experience to find some way of overcoming the difficulty."

This meeting led to the formation of the Duluth Fishery Association. The group promoted preservation of whitefish and abolition of nets with mesh less than three and a half inches to keep small fish from being caught. The group worked with their legislators to

Duluth fishermen were concerned that the supply of whitefish in Lake Superior was decreasing to the point of ultimate extinction.



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Get to know the Lester-Amity Watershed

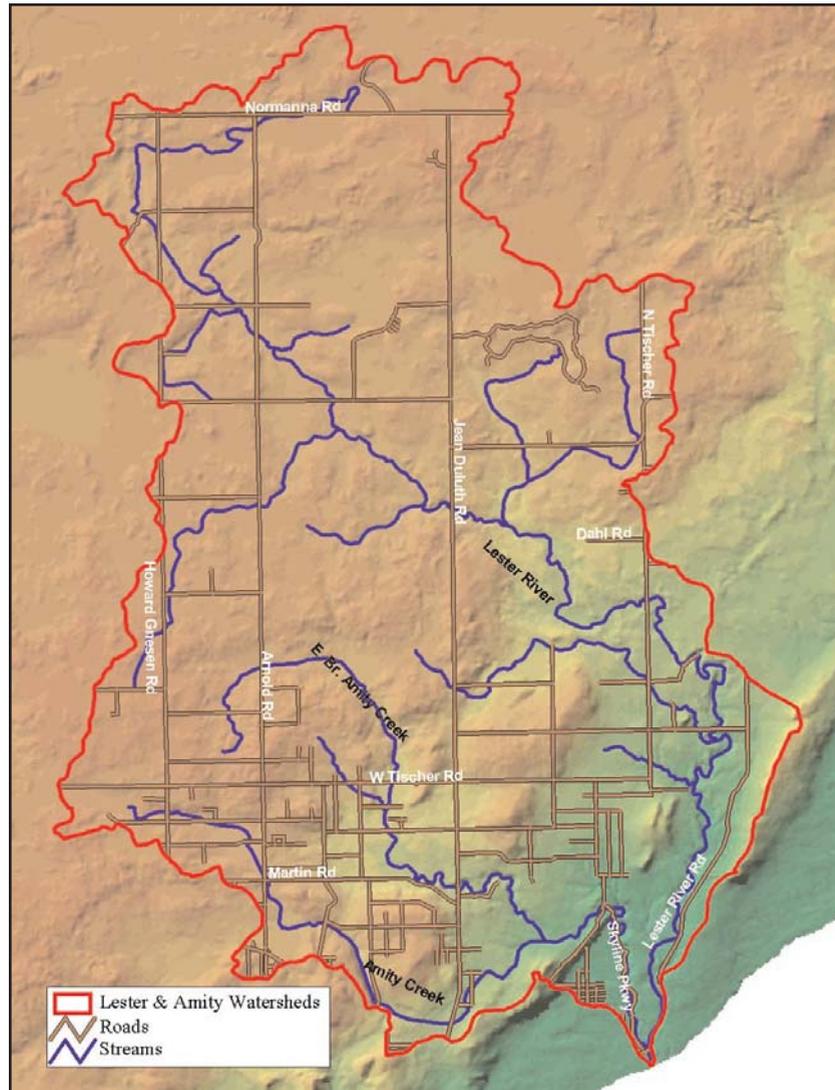
We live here, and we love the water and woods. That's great, because what we do on land impacts water quality all the way to Lake Superior.

The Lester and Amity streams have been designated as "impaired" by the Environmental Protection Agency. What's the problem? Basically, the water is too mucked up. Scientists call it "excessive suspended sediment and increased turbidity." It's the mud you see flowing in the streams after each rainstorm.

Rain or melted snow either flows across the land or soaks into the soil to become groundwater. When water flows across the land it has a chance to pick up pollutants before it eventually gets to a river or lake.

Excessive sediment can enter a stream from many sources, including eroding bluffs, bridge crossings, bank erosion due to loss of shoreline plants, runoff from dirt roads, winter sand off tarmac roads, and from construction sites.

In order to take good care of the Lester and Amity streams we can't just think about the people who live right next to them, we have to consider every person and every property in the entire watershed. Every yard, rooftop, driveway, farm and home in the Lester-Amity watershed contributes water runoff to the streams.



Unlike a township or other political boundary, a watershed is a natural boundary that depends on the lay of the land. It determines an area of land where rain or snowmelt flows to the same lake or river.

Share the joy ~ Be a North Shore Ambassador

The construction of a stone bridge across the mouth of the Lester River created a gateway to the North Shore. Now, thanks to *Sugarloaf: The North Shore Stewardship Association*, the mouth of the Lester River will once again be a gateway for those eager to enjoy, and preserve, the history and majesty of the North Shore.

Later this year, the historic U.S. Fisheries Lester River Hatchery site will become home to the North Shore Interpretive Center. The center will introduce visitors to the fascinating natural and cultural history of

the coastal region. Exhibits will include North Shore geology, the health of the coastal forest, Lake Superior watershed information, history of the settlement of the North Shore and current issues affecting the area.

Sugarloaf is looking for volunteers to share their love and knowledge of the North Shore to visitors at the Center. If you're interested in being a "North Shore Ambassador" contact Molly Thompson at 525-0001 or molly@sugarloafnorthshore.org. Or sign up online at www.truenorthvolunteercenter.org. Type in "Sugarloaf" and "Duluth, MN" in the search tool.

Go with the flow! Follow a raindrop down Amity Creek

The plink-plop begins slowly this cloudy spring day. Soon it reaches a crescendo as the thirsty earth welcomes each raindrop. Budding leaves, rooftops, and roads become slick and it's just the beginning of a raindrop's earthly journey.

It falls on the roof, into the gutter and onto the driveway. It slicks over oil dripped from an aging car. Now an oily raindrop, it moves into the street and joins forces with the other raindrops to push through a stick and leaf dam. Down the stormwater sewer it goes with the leaves, sticks, pet waste and candy wrappers. Salt and sand from winter de-icing, treads worn off tires, and dripped antifreeze are washed from the street, too.

We welcome these raindrops to clean up our mess, but the crud doesn't really go away. It simply splashes out of the culvert—untreated—into Amity Creek. The creek starts out cool and wooded, surrounded by alder swamps that shade the water, and plants along the bank

that slow water runoff from the land. Brook trout are energized in the cool spring water, snapping up bugs. Unfortunately for them, decades of rainwater "cleansing" has settled on the bottom of the creek as excess sediment, filling in crevasses where the bugs live and hide.

The raindrop moves quickly downstream. Nearby, a well-worn ATV trail exposes loose soil and the rain washes more dirt into the stream. The creek flows past quickly greening backyards where homeowners have spread their spring fertilizer. The raindrops, now loaded with fertilizer nutrients, flow into Amity unhampered because plants along the banks were removed.

Closer to urban Duluth and gathering more runoff from roads and bridges, the stream is now a torrent, pushing at its banks, loosening more dirt into the stream, making it harder for fish to see their prey. The brown water rushes into Lake Superior, forming a cloud in the lake's clear waters. It

dissipates slowly.

This annual spring "cleaning," multiplied by hundreds of streams that flow into the lake, can take a toll on a water body even as large as the great Lake Superior.

The snow melts, the rain clouds part and the creek soon runs clear again, but with each spring flush, much of what is washed into the streams and lakes stays behind year after year, after year.



Working together: The Regional Stormwater Protection Team

The Weber Stream Restoration Initiative coordinates its research efforts closely with the Western Lake Superior Regional Stormwater Protection Team made up of representatives from 23 groups and government agencies. Their mission: to protect and enhance the region's shared water resources through stormwater pollution prevention by providing coordinated educational programs and technical assistance.

RSPT is an educational campaign, supported by grants from the Minnesota DNR and the NOAA Minnesota Lake Superior Coastal Program.

Members of RSPT include:

Cities

Duluth, Hermantown, Proctor, Cloquet and Superior

Townships

Duluth, Midway and Rice Lake

University of Wisconsin Superior

Lake Superior College

University of Minnesota Duluth

Natural Resources Research Inst.

Minnesota Sea Grant

Facilities Management

Non-point source Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO)

Government Agencies

St. Louis County

South St. Louis County Soil & Water Conservation District

Minnesota Dept. of Transportation

Western Lake Superior Sanitary Dist.

Fond du Lac Reservation

Minnesota DNR

Wisconsin DNR

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

St. Louis River Citizens Action Committee



UMD student Eric Lichtenberg designed the RSPT logo. The colors represent the soil, streams and lakes that RSPT is trying to protect.

Fish tales, from page 1

The Weber Stream Restoration Initiative is a unique collaboration of agencies and projects flowing from the overall goal of using the best science available to keep the healthy streams clean and restore damaged systems in the Lake Superior watershed. It coordinates with the Regional Stormwater Protection Team.

For more about the western Lake Superior streams and what you can do to protect them visit lakesuperiorstreams.org Click on the Weber Restoration link for more information.

Questions?
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get the U.S. Fish Commission to build the Duluth fish hatchery "first class in every particular" to stock Lake Superior with whitefish, and also spawning walleye, brook trout, rainbow trout, lake trout, and lake herring. The planned capacity was to hatch 150 million eggs.

A trial "planting" in 1884 of whitefish in Lake Superior was reported as proof that the hatchery would be a success. Members of the Duluth Fishery Association noted that Allouez Bay was "fairly alive with young whitefish" that they recognized as those planted in past years. "They were so plentiful that from a boat running through them one could dip up a bucket almost full of fish, thus practically illustrating the work of the fish planting by the U.S. Fish Commission is an assured success."

The new hatchery wasn't, however. Summer temperatures made the waters too warm for coldwater breeding. The hatchery remained in service until 1946 and in 1948 it was acquired by UMD for a limnology lab. Over the years it has been used for various things, including an office for EPA contractors, Izaak Walton League employees, Great Lakes Aquarium staff, and is now being used by the Sugarloaf Stewardship Association. It is listed on the National Historic Register.

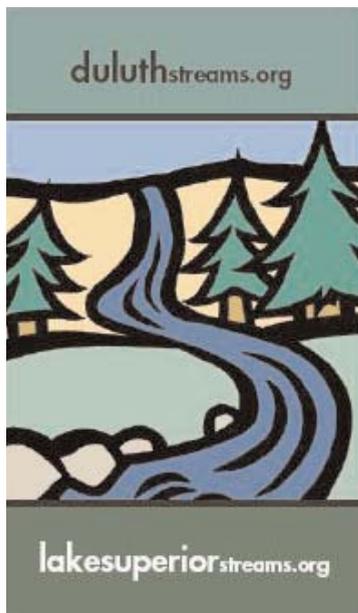
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Natural Resources Research Institute
5013 Miller Trunk Highway
Duluth, Minnesota 55811

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Get to know your watershed!



Join Us!

"ZAAQIDAWAA"
Ojibwe word meaning
"Flow Into The Lake"

Second Lake Superior Watershed Festival

Sat., June 2nd
10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
K-Mart Parking Lot,
Duluth