

Conservation Education and Implementation Partnership

Overview

The Conservation Education and Implementation Partnership Pilot focuses on improving water quality through three key strategies designed to reduce barriers to taking conservation action:

- Deliver practical and interactive conservation education, outreach, and marketing to increase awareness and literacy of water quality concerns and interest in taking action.
- Provide technical support including workshops, site visits, and project design assistance.
- Offer financial assistance to help defray the cost of taking conservation action.

Funding and partners

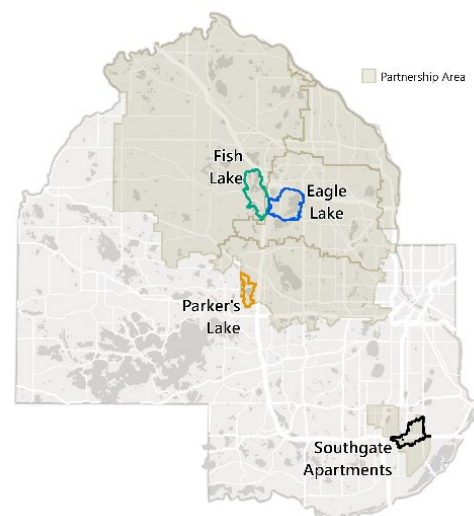
This partnership is funded by contributions from the West Metro Water Alliance, Hennepin County, and grants from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

Funders and additional partners include:

- **Grants:** Metro Watershed-based Implementation Program; Pollinator Pathways Program
- **Watershed commissions:** Bassett Creek, Elm Creek, Richfield-Bloomington, Shingle Creek, West Mississippi
- **Cities:** Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Champlin, Corcoran, Crystal, Dayton, Golden Valley, Maple Grove, Medicine Lake, Medina, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, New Hope, Osseo, Plymouth, Richfield, Robbinsdale, Rogers, St. Louis Park
- **Nonprofit organizations:** Metro Blooms

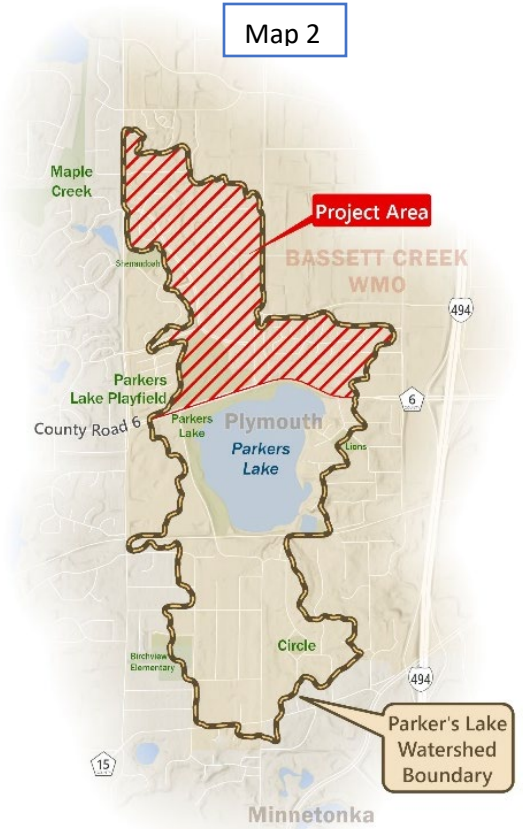
Partnership area map

This map shows the Conservation Education and Implementation Partnership area and locations of water quality improvement projects.



Project area maps

We are working to reduce priority pollutants by implementing water quality improvement projects in the following areas.



Priority pollutants

In 2024 and 2025, the partnership is seeking to address three categories of pollutants:

Chloride

Geographic and audience areas of focus: Businesses north of Parkers Lake (City of Plymouth – see map 2), faith-based facilities throughout partnership area

Client demand and fear of slip and fall lawsuits is the biggest driver of over-salting by contractors. Using the Low Salt, No Salt Minnesota Toolbox, the partnership will offer one-on-one consultations and technical assistance to businesses and faith-based organizations to reduce use of winter deicers. Consultations will generally include presentations and discussions with facility staff or decision-making boards, identification of challenges and opportunities related to snow and ice management, technical and/or financial support to reduce chloride use, and follow-up assistance to help with monitoring, reinforcement, and improvements. Focusing on businesses and faith-based facilities offers opportunities to broaden the impact by changing public perception, awareness, and adoption of practices that reduce chloride pollution.

Bacteria

Geographic and audience area of focus: Pet owners throughout partnership area

There is a major need to address pet waste pollution due to risks it poses to water quality and public health. Pet waste introduces harmful bacteria that lead to human and animal diseases and excess nutrients in bodies of water. A robust [study¹](#) by the University of Minnesota found that a whopping 76 percent of phosphorus and 28 percent of nitrogen found in waterways comes from pet waste. In urban watersheds, household activities dominate nutrient inputs as opposed to commercial, municipal, or industrial actions. All cities within the partnership area are required to complete minimal education on pet waste as a pollutant as part of their Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. This campaign will go beyond that by coordinating messaging across multiple partners and developing more focused strategies to influence household behaviors.

Sediment and nutrients

Geographic and audience areas of focus:

- Middle school teachers, students, and families throughout partnership area
- Residents of Southgate Apartments, area draining to Smith Pond (City of Bloomington – see map 1)
- Residents within area draining to Fish Lake and Eagle Lake (City of Maple Grove – see maps 3 and 4)

To reduce sediment and nutrient loading into bodies of water, the partnership is using three strategies:

1. Promoting the Adopt-A-Drain program in schools to increase stormwater literacy, awareness, and water protection behaviors, specifically the adoption of storm drains by classrooms and families.
2. Working collaboratively with residents of Southgate Apartments (a predominantly underserved, Spanish-speaking community) to improve water quality in Smith Pond and the RBWMO watershed. The project will likely include practices that divert runoff and treat water (e.g., rain gardens) and provide community benefits like nature play areas.

¹ University of Minnesota. *Contrasting nitrogen and phosphorus budgets in urban watersheds and implications for managing urban water pollution*. Retrieved from <https://pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.1618536114>

3. Offering shoreline restoration and resilient yard workshops to residents with the goal of improving water quality in Fish Lake and Eagle Lake in Maple Grove. Workshop participants will be offered technical and financial support to make water quality improvements.

Coordinated messaging and communications

In support of these efforts, the partnership identified a need for a coordinated media strategy. Each month, guided by a calendar, partners are provided with media kits (www.westmetrowateralliance.org/media-kits.html) that include social media posts, newsletter articles, and photos. The partnership is strengthening connections with city communications staff to share messages and resources.