



Neighborhood Spotlight: Connie Winterhalter



WHITE BEAR LAKE— For the past year Connie has volunteered for our local water resources by adopting her nearest stormdrain. Only a few dozen feet from her home, Connie spends time with her granddaughter clearing leaves, grass clippings, and other debris that gets clogged in the stormdrain. Doing this spares the trash and debris from entering her backyard pond, and helps protect the water body that the pond drains into: Goose Lake.

Connie heard about the adopt-a-drain initiative while VLAWMO was conducting studies and tests on Wood Lake/Oak Knoll pond. The pond collects stormwater runoff from ___ acres of nearby neighborhood, and eventually directs this water to Goose Lake. Because East and West Goose Lake are impaired water bodies through the State of Minnesota, improving the water quality is a top priority for VLAWMO. Goose Lake eventually drains into Vadnais Lake, which is the reservoir of drinking water for the Saint Paul Regional Water Services. Efforts to improve water quality on the front end help support efficiency in the water treatment process, and long-term security of this valuable resource.

VLAWMO commends Connie's effort, and is thankful to have neighborhood support as we plan and implement projects that improve her pond and Goose Lake. Residents can log onto www.vlawmo.org/get-involved to adopt their own stormdrain and sign up to receive more information about the program.

Stormdrain Chat:

What's your motivation for adopting a storm drain?

We adopted our drain because we live on a small lake that runs into Goose Lake here in White Bear Lake. Years ago kids would swim in this lake all the time, but not anymore! I wanted to help clean up Goose Lake water quality at the same time as cleaning up our pond's water quality. The lake I live on is Wood Lake also known as Oak Knoll pond. Quality was getting really bad in the last few years and I wondered why! I had the City come out to see if we could get someone to test it.

So by cleaning drains around the lake from debris such as leaves, tree branches, food containers etc. It will help our lake water quality and Goose Lake.

What's the biggest challenge you come across when cleaning your adopted drain?

There really isn't a big challenge to cleaning drains except for trying to get my neighbors to be more mindful when blowing leaves and grass clippings so they don't go into the street and into the drains.

It is actually fun to do!

What's your favorite part about volunteering in this way?

I love feeling I'm doing something for the environment, however small. I'm also teaching my grandchildren to be more conscious about our beautiful waterways. My Generation had not thought of this too much until recently.

Has anything surprised you along the way?

Yes, I used to just walk right by the drains and notice how much debris was in the drain, thinking about how awful it looks. But I never did anything about it. I also didn't realize how much it affects the water quality of our lakes.

We never use fertilizers with harmful ingredients on our lawn either, and we have a great looking lawn!

What tips would you give to someone just starting out on their own drains?

Fall will be the biggest challenge because leaves are falling everyday. Be sure to wear gloves bring a bucket lined with several plastic bags. You should also bring a rake and a small shovel. You might have to have your vehicle to toss all the bags in!

Once the City comes with the street sweeper, go back and check your drain because leaves and sand can still accumulate after the sweeper goes by and it may not come back a second time. Once your drain is clean for the first time it gets easier, so it should be smooth sailing. You can check on your drain once a month or just go for a walk everyday and casually check your drain while enjoying our beautiful Minnesota!