

Macroinvertebrate Monitoring (River Watch)

The Elm Creek watershed is the largest watershed completely within Hennepin County boundaries. Located in the north central section of the county, it covers an area of 109 square miles. Elm Creek and its tributaries are 23 miles long. There are three major tributaries in the watershed. The North Fork of Rush Creek starts in Greenfield and flows through Corcoran, Rogers and Hassan; the South Fork of Rush Creek originates in Corcoran and the main stem begins in Medina and flows through Plymouth, Dayton and Champlin, where it discharges to the Mississippi River.

Since 1995 the Commission has worked with Hennepin County to create and maintain a benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring program. Led by Mary Karius, Program Coordinator, River Watch, as this program is now called, is used both for education and data collection. It is a goal of the Commission to sustain existing monitoring sites, gain water quality data, and promote river stewardship through teaching and project participation by students.

In 2009 students from four schools performed monitoring at five locations in the Elm Creek watershed. Todd Martin and students from Maple Grove High School monitored Elm Creek site 5. The site is located in a wooded natural area. MGHS students began monitoring this site in 1996. Elm Creek runs directly behind the school, downstream from Rice Lake, giving the students an excellent opportunity to learn about their local creek. Results were not received from Mr. Martin.

Students from Champlin High School, led by teachers Peter Ockuly and Jackie Paul, monitored Rush Creek site 6. This sample site is located in the Elm Creek Park Reserve and has a naturally vegetated riparian zone. It is a slow-moving, meandering stream at this site. Just upstream, the south fork of Rush Creek joins the north fork of Rush Creek. Site 6 has been sampled since 1995. Results were not received from these teachers.

Wayzata High School students and teacher Susie Newman monitored Elm Creek site 17. This site is located on the Wayzata High School campus just downstream from the school's stormwater holding ponds near the crossing of Elm Creek and Peony Lane. Ms. Newman has been sampling this site with her Environmental Studies class since 2006. The stream was monitored in spring 2009 but was too dry to sample in the fall. Average grade over six years at this site is C-.

Sarah Klinger and her Champlin High School students monitored Elm Creek site 26. The most downstream site on Elm Creek, site 26 is located in Josephine Nunn Park in Champlin between Hayden Lake and the Mill Pond. It used to be in a forested stretch of river with high banks and several riffle areas. In 2003 development started along the banks and the entire character of the river has changed. Average grade over nine years at this site is B-.

Rush Creek site 4 has been monitored by Kaleidoscope Charter School and their teacher Paula Higgins since 2006. This is farthest upstream sample site on Rush Creek. Rush Creek is a tributary of Elm Creek, north of its main stem. This is the only site on the south fork of Rush Creek and the only grazed agricultural sample site in the River Watch program. Water draining from most of Corcoran and northern Maple Grove flows into this stretch of creek. Average grade over 11 years at this site is C-.

RiverWatch Sites in Hennepin County

