

Watershed Connection

Spring Issue 2009

Get in the know. Get connected to what your watershed has to offer!

Here are some tips to make your life easier, and keep your Walnut Creek watershed healthy.



Council Updates

Last fall as coordinator of your lake council I gave the city council the second annual State of the Lake report. ALL of the scores were high for Walnut Creek. The water is clean, the fish are healthy, and the area is pristine. Our thanks go to all of you for doing your part in following clean lake practices. Please continue to enjoy, respect, and keep our jewel of nature in this healthy and functioning state. All comments are invited to our answering service at (402) 339-8976.

The first annual civil service award for the lake was presented to Ms. Annabel Lee Major by Mayor Blinn in October of 2008. The Council congratulates her on this honor.

Several of the lake council members have been especially active and we would like to recognize their service. John Harnish, Judy Warren, Kathy Oberg, Rita Rudolph, Dave Brown, Mike Craney, Jan Sanderson, Alice and Tom Major, Annabel Lee Major, Mr. and Mrs. Sonny Tex, Keith Hentzen, John Popelka, Marty Weverka, Vince Cummings, and Lee White Hamilton.

Barry Keller
Clean Lakes Council Chair
(402) 339-8976

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!

Aquatic hitchhikers cost millions of dollars in ecological and economic damage.

These *known invaders* harm native fish populations and threaten your waters. By following a few simple rules, you can protect your waters and prevent these harmful species from establishing, harming local fish and plant populations, and ruining your fishing and boating experiences.

Check your equipment for hitchhikers and remove any visible mud, plants, fish, or animals.

What may appear harmless could be an invader like *Zebra Mussel* or *Eurasian Watermilfoil*. These species are known to travel in ballast water, attach to boats, and be transported between reservoirs.

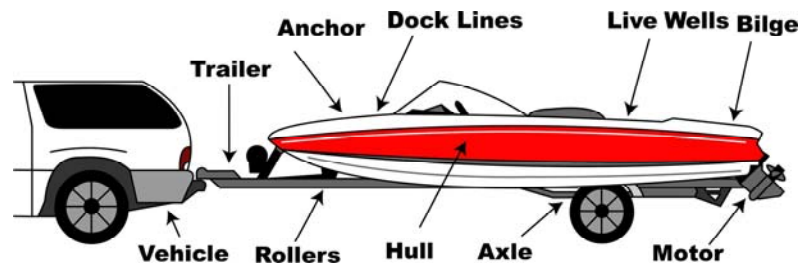
Clean, dry, and drain all equipment that comes in contact with the water.

If there is a place for water to collect, there is a chance you may be transporting something harmful. Some of these costly invaders are not visible to the naked eye, and are therefore transported unknowingly.

Dispose of all bait on dry land and do not release any plants or animals into the water supply!

Rusty Crayfish and *White Perch* hitchhike in bait buckets hidden amongst bait. With a little extra effort, we can keep Walnut Creek Lake clean and healthy!

For more information please visit the Nebraska Invasive Species Project website at snr.unl.edu/invasives or **Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers** at www.protectyourwaters.net



One Step Further

- ❖ This year, when you start planning your summer vacation, consider going on a 'stay-cation'. You can support your state, save some cash, and see what Nebraska has to offer that you may have been missing!
- ❖ Volunteer! It's a great way to get the family together and help your community. Your area parks and nature centers are always looking for dedicated individuals.
- ❖ Buy fresh, buy local! Track down your local farmers market and see what healthy and delectable foods they have to offer. This supports your community, cuts out the middleman, and lessens your carbon footprint.

Pack In/Pack Out

The Walnut Creek Recreation Area is unique in being the only park in the area that is PACK IN / PACK OUT. Pack In / Pack Out refers to what you do with the litter that accumulates during your visit. The only litter removal service at Walnut Creek is YOU. All of the litter generated while you are using the park must be taken with you when you leave. The responsibility of how the park looks, in regards to litter, is up to you, the park users. This is your park. Pack In / Pack Out & leave only foot prints.

Leash Ordinance

The City Of Papillion has an Ordinance in place that requires all dogs to be kept under restraint at all times (85-12-A). All pets must be leashed when on any city property or right of way. The practice of leashing dogs not only protects people, but also the wildlife and public water sources. Unleashed pets can disturb wildlife, scare them away, and prevent their return. Unleashed dogs also make it harder to track where fecal matter is deposited, adding to the risk of contaminating water sources. This behavior also violates city ordinance 85-8 requiring the removal of pet waste. Walnut Creek has a LEASH FREE AREA, the only place within the city limits where pets are not required to be leashed. Help keep our park wild.

Mike Cunningham
Park Superintendent
(402) 592-8877

Bag Less, Relax More

Do you bag your lawn clippings? Do you fertilize your lawn? *If you don't bag, you can fertilize less!* Grass clippings can provide a shot of organic fertilizer to your lawn every time you mow.

Leave the clippings on the lawn. You'll save money, save time, and your lawn will benefit from the organic matter.

If you need to add supplemental fertilizer to your lawn, the best time to do so is in the fall. A soil test can give you this information. This sends your lawn into dormancy with a strong root system, and hey, it all starts at the roots.

Consider using no or low phosphorous fertilizer if you do fertilize. Phosphorous isn't good for the lake and generally our soils contain plenty of phosphorous.

Other advice, set your mower to mow high. In other words, remove less of the grass blade than if you set it to mow low. This causes less plant stress and the shorter clippings break down faster.

Always mow high. It isn't necessary to change mowing height during the growing season.

And remember, concrete has very low N-P-K requirements. *N-P-K means nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, the nutrients in most commercial fertilizers.*

Sweep fertilizer overspray back onto the lawn. Same with the grass clippings since you know they act as fertilizer, too. While the lawn appreciates it, the creeks and lakes don't. And if it stays on the concrete, chances are it ends up in the water with the next rainfall.



Consider A Rain Garden

Have you ever thought, "I just don't spend enough of my free time on lawn care?" Lush green lawns are like super models; gorgeous, but high maintenance.

Reducing the size of your mowed turf can save you time, labor, and upkeep

costs. Keep the gorgeous, but skip high maintenance.

Consider a rain garden. It is another way to have a beautiful native garden. As an added bonus, it can help filter and retain the precipitation that falls on your property.

Essentially, a rain garden is a shallow garden dug to a depth of 4 to 8 inches and situated to intercept rainwater runoff from your roof or other impervious area. It should be planted with native plant species which require *no irrigation, fertilizer, or pesticides when established.* When appropriately designed and

installed, they hold standing water for no more than 48 hours after a rainfall and are not a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

There are many resources available for those who would like to design and build their own rain garden. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension has three NebGuides to get you started; all three are available when you search "rain garden" at <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu>

If you have questions or need help, call University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Douglas and Sarpy Counties at (402)444-7804.



