

## **Report Card Coming on Health of Lakes and Streams in Cannon River Watershed**

This summer, staff and volunteers with the Cannon River Watershed Partnership (CRWP) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) will collect water quality and biological information on lakes and streams in the area draining to the Cannon River, including parts of Steele County.

Funded in part by the Clean Water Legacy Amendment, this Intensive Watershed Monitoring is part of the MPCA's effort to check the wellbeing of the state's 81 major watersheds.

"The Cannon River Watershed already has a valuable network of monitoring stations where water chemistry has been collected over the years. The MPCA and local partners will be sampling at additional lakes and streams to fill in the remaining pieces of the puzzle," said Brenda Asmus, biologist with the MPCA's stream monitoring team.

CRWP staff and volunteers will monitor water clarity, bacteria, and nutrients at the outlets of 13 smaller watersheds that pour into the Straight and Cannon Rivers. MPCA staff will also measure water clarity and phosphorus at 15 lakes, including Beaver Lake. Biologists will sample the fish and insects in large rivers as well as the "fingers" of small tributaries including Maple Creek, Crane Creek, Medford Creek, Turtle Creek and the Straight River. Equipped with electro shocking equipment and dip nets, they will wade the waters to temporarily stun fish for counting and to collect samples of macro invertebrates such as mayflies, dragonflies and caddis flies.

"These small fish and insects are sensitive to different types of pollution that we may not see when we collect water chemistry a few times during the summer, but they can tell us the story of what the water quality is like year round," Asmus said.

Residents are welcome to observe the teams at work and see the fish and insects being found.

MPCA will review all the available information to determine whether the lakes and streams meet state and federal requirements for water quality. The waters with enough information will receive a passing or failing grade, which will be included in a report to the U.S. Congress, as required by the Clean Water Act.

"Through this process, we can see where our waters are doing well and where they are not. We will know which streams are healthy to swim in, how many fish are safe to eat, whether lake and stream conditions are adequate for recreation and can sustain a healthy biological community. We can then target efforts to improve waters that are performing poorly and better protect those that are really special and unique," said Asmus.

For more information:

- On biological monitoring, go to: [www.pca.state.mn.us/r0pgb5d](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/r0pgb5d), click on the "Monitoring and Assessment" tab and then on the "Biological Monitoring" link. Also on this page is a story about CRWP volunteer BJ Norman who monitors Belle Creek.
- On MPCA's water programs, go to [www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/water/water-home.html](http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/water/water-home.html).



MPCA staff caught this Flathead Catfish in the Cannon River near Welch Village in 2010. MPCA scientists will return to the Cannon watershed this summer to further study the fish population as part of a thorough assessment of lakes, rivers and streams. (MPCA photo)



MPCA scientists will study macro invertebrates – bugs and other creatures -- in the Cannon watershed this summer. Their presence – or lack thereof – provides an idea of year-long water quality of streams and rivers in the watershed. Residents are encouraged to observe the teams at work and see what bugs are being found. (MPCA photo)