

# Seasons

## *The Greening of Maplewood*

Winter 2012-13

### Making Connections

By Virginia Gaynor,  
Natural Resources Coordinator

A few years ago I set out in a canoe to explore the Phalen Chain of Lakes with a small group of Maplewood residents. We launched on Lake Phalen in high spirits – we had a string of six lakes to paddle, right in the City of Maplewood! Our mission was to better understand habitat and recreational connections in the lakes portion of Maplewood's northern-most Natural Area Greenway. But our voyage also brought appreciation for the human and municipal connections that it takes to care for these lakes and adjacent natural areas.

Maplewood's four Natural Area Greenways are large contiguous areas of habitat made up of a patchwork of public and private lands. These are habitat corridors for wildlife. The Phalen-Casey Chain of Lakes Greenway is one of four greenways in Maplewood. It runs through four cities, starting in North St. Paul then Maplewood, Little Canada and North St. Paul (see map on page 2). Along the way, it captures stormwater runoff from

nearby developed areas including the Maplewood Mall.

Greenway management goals include: improve connections between natural areas, enhance habitat, and provide recreational opportunities where feasible. These may seem like ambitious goals, but if we tackle one project at a time, working with partners, we can achieve this vision for the greenway.

For example, in 2013 the Minnesota Department of Transportation will reconstruct a portion of Highway 36 in Maplewood. The project will give Ramsey County the opportunity to create a hiking trail under the highway connecting Keller Lake and Spoon Lake. The article on page two has more information about the County's plans for restoration and trails. In addition, partners hope to someday create a more suitable canoe portage around the weir dam located in the canal between Keller and Phalen Lakes.

Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District is another agency that has done many projects to enhance the Phalen-Casey Chain of Lakes Greenway. Some of their work has focused on reducing phosphorus and

improving water quality in Kohlman Lake, which is on the state's list of impaired waters. This includes projects such as the stormwater management retrofit at Maplewood Mall, an enhanced sand filter basin on Beam Avenue (nicknamed "Stonehenge"), alum treatment in Kohlman Lake, and carp research and management (see [www.rwmwd.org](http://www.rwmwd.org)).

In addition to public improvements, individuals and groups such as Gervais Lake Association and Phalen Stewards have also taken on important roles caring for sections of the greenway, such as holding annual clean up events (see article on page 3). Many residents that own homes in the greenway help care for natural resources by leaving a bit of their yard naturalized, by restoring shorelines with native plants, or by capturing roof and yard runoff in rain gardens.

Stewardship of the greenway relies on making connections – to nature, to neighbors, and to the municipalities, agencies, and groups that care for natural resources in our community.



### Making Connections in the Phalen-Casey Chain of Lakes Greenway



Recreation –  
Canoeing the Chain of Lakes



Shoreline Stabilization –  
Phalen Lake Shoreline Restoration

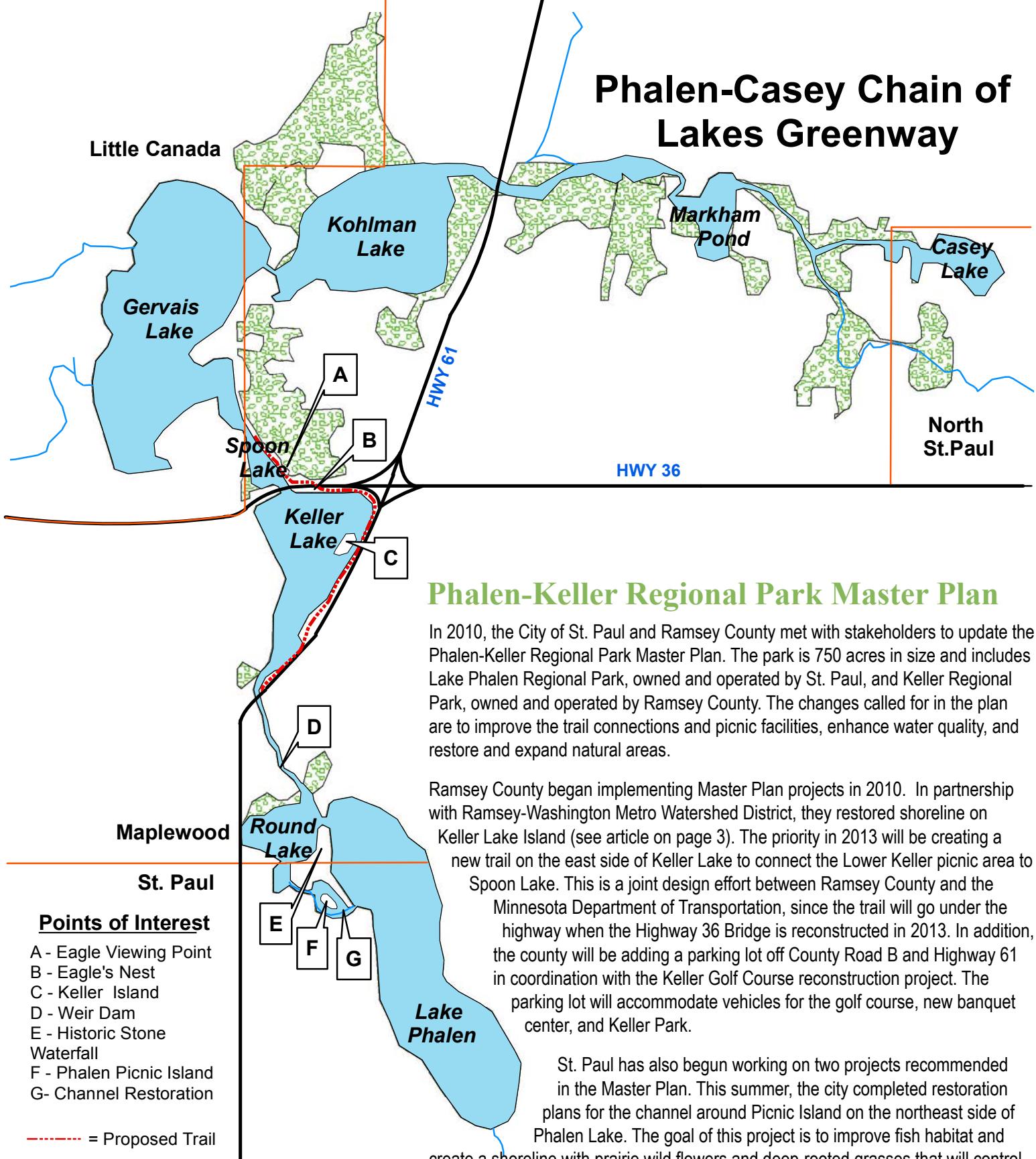


Water Quality –  
Rain Gardens at Maplewood Mall



Wildlife Habitat –  
Eagle's Nest

# Phalen-Casey Chain of Lakes Greenway



## Phalen-Keller Regional Park Master Plan

In 2010, the City of St. Paul and Ramsey County met with stakeholders to update the Phalen-Keller Regional Park Master Plan. The park is 750 acres in size and includes Lake Phalen Regional Park, owned and operated by St. Paul, and Keller Regional Park, owned and operated by Ramsey County. The changes called for in the plan are to improve the trail connections and picnic facilities, enhance water quality, and restore and expand natural areas.

Ramsey County began implementing Master Plan projects in 2010. In partnership with Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, they restored shoreline on Keller Lake Island (see article on page 3). The priority in 2013 will be creating a new trail on the east side of Keller Lake to connect the Lower Keller picnic area to Spoon Lake. This is a joint design effort between Ramsey County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation, since the trail will go under the highway when the Highway 36 Bridge is reconstructed in 2013. In addition, the county will be adding a parking lot off County Road B and Highway 61 in coordination with the Keller Golf Course reconstruction project. The parking lot will accommodate vehicles for the golf course, new banquet center, and Keller Park.

St. Paul has also begun working on two projects recommended in the Master Plan. This summer, the city completed restoration plans for the channel around Picnic Island on the northeast side of Phalen Lake. The goal of this project is to improve fish habitat and create a shoreline with prairie wild flowers and deep-rooted grasses that will control erosion. The second project is restoring the historic stone waterfall which used to be located at the north end of Lake Phalen. Watch for construction on both of these projects in 2013.

For more information:

Master Plan: [www.stpaul.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/19151](http://www.stpaul.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/19151)

Channel Restoration: [www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=4647](http://www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=4647)

Waterfall: [www.stpaul.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/20813](http://www.stpaul.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/20813)

## Restoring The Shore

By Shann Finwall, Environmental Planner

Shorelines offer an amazing biological and physical connection between the water and the land. These areas can be some of the most ecologically diverse habitats in Minnesota. To improve the condition of the shoreline along the Phalen Chain of Lakes, the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (RWMWD), along with several partners, are restoring degraded shore areas around these important water resources.

Their first project began in 2011 with the restoration of over two miles of shoreline on Lake Phalen. Almost a century of human disturbance along the

lake edge and the watershed left large stretches of shore with severe erosion, invasive weeds, and unsightly conditions. Today the shoreline is stable with over 100 native plant species providing excellent habitat for fish and wildlife species, and providing amazing splashes of color throughout the year.

In 2010 the RWMWD, Ramsey County, and the Minnesota Department of Natural

Resources partnered to restore the shore of Keller Lake Park. Keller Lake, although nearly 72 acres in size, is no more than eight feet deep. Its shallow bays are what aquatic biologists call literal zones, which are essential spawning habitat for warm water fish. Protecting these zones is one of the reasons it is important to restore the shoreline.

Keller Lake Shoreline Before: Galvanized Wire Baskets Filled With Rock Were Placed on the Shoreline in the 1980s to Prevent Erosion

Photo by: RWMWD



Photo by: RWMWD

Keller Lake Shoreline After: Completed Shoreline Restoration on the North Side of Keller Lake Island

To reduce shoreline erosion on Keller Lake in the 1980s, galvanized wire baskets filled with rock were placed along thousands of feet of the park shoreline. Bill Bartodziej, Natural Resource Coordinator with RWMWD states "the main objectives of the shoreline restoration were to place a soil cap over the rock baskets, establish native shoreline plant communities on top of the rock, and install four flagstone access points so people can better enjoy the lake." The project began with Ramsey County Corrections inmate work crews completing site preparation on 800 feet of shoreline in two park locations. After site preparation, classes from Farnsworth Elementary School and many others assisted with shrub and prairie plantings. Seeding and planting was complete this year.

As you can see, public agencies have been hard at work restoring the shore. You can help too! Bill Bartodziej reminds us that a good portion of the shoreline on the Chain of Lakes is privately owned. To restore your shore or to improve the ecology of your watershed, visit [www.rwmwd.org](http://www.rwmwd.org) for information on the RWMWD's cost-share grant opportunities.

## The Stewards of the Phalen Chain of Lakes

By Louise Watson, RWMWD Planning and Education Coordinator



Photo by: RWMWD

Phalen Stewards - Bruce Vento Trail Cleanup

The Stewards of the Phalen Chain of Lakes was a concept to bring together people who identified Lake Phalen as a neighborhood amenity. The goal was to improve local citizen's stewardship of the Chain of Lakes watershed, from Mississippi River to the Maplewood Mall.

The Stewards formed four teams: clean up, restoration, education, and events. On November 8, 2012, the Stewards will celebrate their first year of accomplishments which includes:

- Trash cleanup and invasive plant removal along the Bruce Vento Trail.
- New activities offered at WaterFest including Asian heritage fishing and a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Stone Arch Bridge in Phalen Park.
- Enhanced citizen awareness of the connections between the Mississippi River, Phalen Chain of Lakes and the Maplewood Mall through canoe and bike rides along the Chain of Lakes.
- Picnics that brought together residents from the area.
- Leadership of Our Redeemer Church in hosting monthly Steward meetings.
- Increased collaboration between staff from Maplewood, St. Paul, and Ramsey County.
- Collaborative effort with the Girl Scouts Centennial Day of Service on October 13. The project included a neighborhood effort to remove 72 bags of leaves from County Road C in Maplewood and 800 bags of leaves around Lake Phalen. These projects helped water quality in Kohlman Lake and Lake Phalen.

We hope that by bringing people together, each person feels more empowered to continue with their stewardship efforts, knowing that they are not alone in their dedication.

# Eagles at Home on Keller Lake

By Ann Hutchinson, Lead Naturalist

Have you noticed the massive stick nest along Highway 36, on the north end of Keller Lake? The nest was constructed by a pair of bald eagles about eight years ago. Since then the nest has fallen down twice and been rebuilt in the same cottonwood tree, according to Ramsey County Natural Resource Manager John Moriarty. One adult eagle was killed, possibly hit by a car, about five years ago. One was killed this summer, possibly by lightning, leaving its mate to raise one chick by itself. Over the years, Moriarty estimates about 12 chicks have been raised in this nest. Today, two adult eagles can be seen hanging out in the area. Primarily fish eaters, these eagles depend on the Chain of Lakes for their food.

Weighing in at 10-14 pounds, with a wing span longer than a man is tall, these raptors are one of our state's largest birds. Flying up to 10,000 feet in the air, as fast as 35 miles per hour, the bald eagle generates a feeling of awe. Blessed with both binocular and monocular vision, eagles have truly magnificent eyesight. Spotting a rabbit from three miles away is not a problem!

Although delisted as an endangered species in 2007, the bald eagle has enjoyed a comeback thanks to the protection afforded by the Endangered Species and Migratory Bird Treaty Acts. After implementing the ban on DDT, the Minnesota state eagle population increased from about 400 pairs in 1963 to 1,312 nesting pairs in 2005\*.

You can view the eagle's nest from Spoon Lake on the north side of Highway 36. Park in the Spoon Lake East parking lot off Keller Parkway and walk east to the maintenance driveway.

\*[www.dnr.state.mn.us/birds/eagles/history.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/birds/eagles/history.html)



Photo by: Ramsey Co Parks



Photo by: Ramsey Co Parks

Baby eagles (eaglets) and eagle parent in a nest



Thanks kids for submitting such creative recycling skunk names. Make sure to place your recycling bin at the curb once a week so Rosie, Flower, and Smunky the Recycling Skunk can collect the materials and turn them back into new products!



Be a good steward in your neighborhood by helping your family and school recycle.

## The Recycling Skunks Finally Have Names!

The summer edition of Seasons asked kids to help name the recycling skunks. These skunks are found on recycling trucks owned and operated by Tennis Recycling, the City's recycling contractor.



Six kids submitted two names each. They were all such fun creative names it was hard for our judges to decide. But the winners are....

Rosie



Submitted by  
Rosie, age 8

Flower



Submitted by  
Flower, age 6

Smunky The  
Recycling Skunk



Submitted by  
Smunky The  
Recycling Skunk, age 5

Honorable mentions: Freshness by Russel Duncan, age 4; Kalven by Makayla Bruns, age 7; and Chester by Jaad Stout, age 9.

**Fun skunk fact:** Did you know a skunk has about 3-4 Tablespoons of spray in their body? Skunk spray consists of Thiols -- similar compounds to onion and garlic. Skunks spray only as a last resort. First they give you a warning by raising their tails and stomping their front feet. The farthest a skunk can spray is 10 feet! Watch a fun skunk video on the Nature website at: [www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/is-that-skunk/video-full-episode/4581/4](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/is-that-skunk/video-full-episode/4581/4).