

# Bassett Creek watershed project offers multiple benefits, enhanced Golden Valley park



**A \$300,000 Clean Water Fund grant from BWSR supported the stormwater treatment and park revitalization project in Golden Valley.**

A stormwater treatment and park restoration project in Golden Valley's Medley Park will increase water storage, help protect infrastructure and homes from flooding, add habitat and improve water quality of nutrient-impaired Medicine Lake.

The Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) project was completed in close collaboration with the city of Golden Valley and supported by a Clean Water Fund grant from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). The project is in an area of Medley Park once covered by turf grass and a ballfield that was difficult to maintain due to challenging soils and drainage issues.

"We tried to maximize benefits for the community and nature," said Eric Eckman, Golden Valley environmental resources supervisor. "We wanted

to improve ecosystem health and increase community resilience in the face of a changing climate."

Project planning began with a community open house in 2019, where city staff sought residents' ideas about park improvements. Several ideas were discussed, including the addition of an off-leash pet area, but Eckman said residents were most interested in repurposing and naturalizing the underused ballfield.

The BCWMC conducted a project feasibility study in June 2021. Project design plans were approved in spring 2022. Construction work began that November and concluded in May 2023. Native vegetation establishment continued into 2024.

Project costs totaled approximately \$2 million, with most of the funding coming from the BCWMC's capital

*Two new stormwater ponds, shown in spring 2024, were constructed as part of the \$2 million park revitalization project. The ponds will temporarily store water and then release it slowly, reducing erosion and protecting against flooding.*

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*Native vegetation was established throughout the project area to provide enhanced habitat and improved water quality. Shorelines that are stabilized with native plants are less susceptible to bank erosion. Native plants' deep root systems also play a key role in water filtration by absorbing pollutants and excess nutrients.*

improvement program. Additional funding included the \$300,000 Clean Water Fund grant from BWSR. Golden Valley contributed \$240,000.

“Collaboration between the watershed and the city is critical for most of our capital projects,” said BCWMC Administrator Laura Jester. “The city knows its residents best, so they typically do the heavy lifting on community outreach, but we’re there to provide funding and support.”

The city handled project design and oversaw construction.

An existing pond was dredged to remove contaminated sediment, and expanded to increase its water quality treatment volume by 4.3 acre-feet (an [acre-foot](#) measures how much water it takes to

cover 1 acre 1 foot deep; an acre-foot equals about 326,000 gallons). Jester said the project will reduce the amount of total phosphorus entering nutrient-impaired Medicine Lake by an estimated 16.4 pounds per year.

Two new stormwater ponds were constructed as part of the project, creating 8.8 acre-feet of water storage. An intermittent stream was diverted into the new treatment ponds to capture water during heavy rains. The ponds will temporarily store water and then release it slowly, which reduces the risk of erosion and protects against flood damage.

Jester said the increased flood storage capacity will significantly reduce flood risk for six nearby homes during a [100-year flood event](#), for four more homes

during a 50-year flood event and for five more homes during a 25-year flood event.

“Lots of infrastructure — homes, streets and park infrastructure — was at risk of flooding and damage,” Eckman said. “All the excavation work we did to naturalize the park created places for that water to go, so it’s not sitting on the roadways or entering people’s homes.”

Native vegetation was established following construction. A wetland-friendly seed mix was planted on 0.6 acres along the ponds’ edges, and a pollinator seed mix was incorporated into 0.6 acres of nearby uplands.

Golden Valley extended Americans with Disabilities Act accessible trails, creating a loop trail around

the stormwater ponds, and adding benches and solar lighting. The city is responsible for ongoing project maintenance.

Eckman said the project’s diverse scope was intended to create as many environmental and community benefits as possible. The stormwater project also tied into a new community garden installed at the same time.

“We’re not just trying to do one thing,” Eckman said. “If you can design a project to include multiple benefits, we like that — and our partners and funders like that. We’re thinking holistically and sustainably, and we’re striving for community connectedness.”

BWSR staff members write and produce Snapshots, a monthly newsletter highlighting the work of the agency and its partners.