A Low Salt Diet for Shingle Creek

Most of us who live and work in Brooklyn Center are familiar with Shingle Creek. It is an 11-mile-long creek that winds through our City and many others throughout the area. It collects drainage from 43 square miles in nine cities throughout Hennepin County. Shingle Creek has been designated as an Impaired Water by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency because of high levels of chloride contamination. Most of the contamination comes from winter de-icing salt.

Winter de-icing salt is used throughout the winter months to control ice buildup on roads, parking lots, sidewalks, and driveways. About 85 percent of the chloride in Shingle Creek is estimated to come from the salt used to keep roads clear. The remaining amount of chloride comes from the salt used to keep parking lots, walkways, driveways, and private roads clear. This de-icing adds up to a lot of salt being used in the community, much of which ends up in our lakes, streams, and wetlands.

Municipalities are required to manage the amount of salt used for snow and ice removal activities. Many organizations are also researching and investing in new technology and materials that allow less salt to be used without compromising public safety.

You can help reduce chloride pollution by:

- Shovel or plow first- less snow build-up means less ice.
- Only use salt when necessary and where needed- such as on steep slopes or high-traffic areas.
- Don't over-apply. More salt does not mean more melting. The ideal spacing between salt granules is about 3 inches. Use a hand crank spreader to apply evenly on large areas.
- Use alternative products- such as calcium magnesium acetate.
- Read labels- know what you are applying and the effects of exposure.
- Temperature matters- salt is less effective in low temperatures. When the temperature falls below 15ºF consider using sand as an alternative to salt.
- Store in a covered space - Keep road salt covered year-round to protect from rain and snow.