



Friends of Lake Hiawatha, www.friendsoflakehiawatha.org

February 9, 2021

Dear Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board,

We are writing to request the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board approve the stormwater treatment plan for Lake Hiawatha as laid out in the *Hiawatha Golf Course Property Master Plan*.

With passage of the plan the MPRB will be able to act on its obligation to address the pollution of Lake Hiawatha while also protecting homes and maintaining the historic community asset of Hiawatha Golf Course.

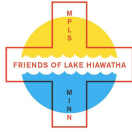
We support the MPRB's plan to maintain a traditional golf at Lake Hiawatha with a 9-hole course, that will also allow for protection of the Lake, its inhabitants and water quality.

Lake Hiawatha's park users reflect the diversity of our community. It is an asset for Minneapolis' Black, Brown, Indigenous and white communities. Maintaining this asset is an equity issue, ensuring that Minneapolis's Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have access to safe, clean water as well as the recreation and respite that parks provide, whether for walking, swimming, gathering with family and friends, playing sports, fishing, or just relaxing.

Additionally, we know that environmental injustice disproportionately impacts communities of color. Removing toxic waste and hazardous materials and protecting natural resources serves all communities, while acknowledging the importance of addressing historic and current environmental injustices as an issue of equity.

Lake Hiawatha is home for more than 249 species of animals and is a key migratory stop along the Mississippi River Flyway. Improving the management of the golf course to address both the ecology and flood resilience of the Lake will also allow for an expansion of biodiversity in this critical location on the Minnehaha Creek ecological corridor. Minimizing or eliminating the use of fungicides, herbicide and pesticides will not only benefit wildlife, but will improve water quality throughout the downstream watershed.

Community members have long asked for stormwater treatment at Lake Hiawatha. The Hiawatha CAC (Community Advisory Committee) agreed that the number one priority for this project should be to address the pollution problem at Lake Hiawatha. The community has gone so far as to organize Friends of Lake Hiawatha. The Friends have removed over 8,000 lbs. of plastic and styrofoam trash from Lake Hiawatha; over half a million pieces were removed by hand. The MPRB dredged and filled what was once a massive and critical wetland until no trace of habitat or its wildlife inhabitants remained. In 1935 the City created the stormsewer system that empties the unfiltered pollution of 920 acres of South Minneapolis' streets directly into Lake Hiawatha. This problem has persisted and gone unaddressed for 86 years. FOLH is relieved that the plan will finally address pollution and trash in the lake.



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Additionally, FOLH hopes the MRPB will build upon the relationships developed throughout the process. For example, the MRPB's groundbreaking *Dakota and Indigenous People's History Focus Session*, led by Healing Place Collaborative and the MRPB, was a highly effective and meaningful focus session and was well attended by neighbors, indigenous and community leaders. Many participants asked the MRPB to do better in their stewardship of the land and water and to address and acknowledge the ongoing trauma of colonization and the legacy of the US Dakota War. FOLH has continued to work with Healing Place Collaborative in our restoration work at Lake Hiawatha. Dakota and Indigenous peoples' knowledge of this place is critical to restoring health to the community and the ecology. Let's continue to work with and listen to our Indigenous communities to bring healing to the Lake and Land.

We urge MRPB commissioners to vote in favor of the plan; in doing so the MRPB will further achieve its mission to "... permanently preserve, protect, maintain, improve, and enhance its natural resources, parkland, and recreational opportunities for current and future generations."

Sincerely,

Friends of Lake Hiawatha

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Photo: Lake Hiawatha spring 2020