



Rendering of the Master Plan for Fullersburg Woods at Salt Creek showing the naturalized free-flowing channel post project. *(Project update on page 2).*

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Letter from the President
- A Big Win for Salt Creek
- Deicing Workshops Gone Virtual
- What the Fungus?

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dave Gorman

I'm happy to report that we're making good progress towards the projects required in our POTW members' NPDES permits. Notably, we've recently reached a critical agreement with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County regarding granting the DRSCW a license to implement the Master Plan for Salt Creek at Fullersburg Woods. The core component of that project is of course the removal of the dam adjacent to the historic Graue Mill.

The Fullersburg Woods project will provide terrific environmental benefits by allowing passage for a number of native fish species, increasing dissolved oxygen and in-stream habitat through the site, and removing a problem algae site. A concern of those opposed to removing the dam was allowing the mill wheel to turn in the raceway, and we're certainly committed to making that happen. This project and others that we're undertaking are financially feasible thanks to a negotiated special condition in the Illinois EPA's permits that have delayed costly treatment plant upgrades for additional phosphorus removal in exchange for self-funded projects that promise to make substantive progress towards meeting the Clean Water Act goals for our waterways.

The success for this type of project demonstrates the importance of allowing local authorities flexibility in the manner in which they may best meet permit requirements. Locally conceived solutions allow the myriad of stakeholders to identify creative projects with multiple benefits that may finally address the major impediments in local waterways. The DRSCW has enjoyed a terrific working relationship with the United States EPA and the Illinois EPA, and we are grateful for their cooperation with our desire for flexibility in their regulatory processes.

Also in this issue, we discuss our first virtual chloride management workshops, which offered the opportunity for greater number of participants. We also tell a story of cooperation amongst members to identify and remove a major pollution issue on lower Salt Creek.

As always, I thank you for your membership and your involvement. I'm optimistic about what we may achieve together in 2021.

## A BIG WIN FOR SALT CREEK

The Board of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County has voted to allow the DRSCW to implement the Master Plan for Salt Creek at Fullersburg Woods. The Master Plan will dramatically improve the aquatic habitat and water quality at the site while avoiding the need to implement an otherwise required state-mandated solution for massively expensive, yet far less effective, upgrades at upstream waste water treatment plants.

Why largely ineffective? DRSCW studies demonstrate that treatment plant upgrades would not address Salt Creek's underlying problems, those being the inability of fish to move upstream and the harmful effect of the reservoir on both instream habitat and water quality. The Master Plan will resolve all three issues at a much lower cost to the public than such upgrades would.



The next step will be the selection of a professional firm to prepare the bid packet for the project. In addition to the stream restoration, the project will include means to operate the mill wheel and educational signage. Construction is planned for 2022.

## DEICING WORKSHOPS GONE VIRTUAL



Every fall since 2007, the DRSCW has held Public Roads and Parking Lot & Sidewalk deicing workshops to highlight new deicing methods, NPDES water quality goals, and best management practices in order to reduce chlorides and operational costs. The programs have provided training and resources for numerous attendees at numerous agencies.

In past years, these deicing workshops have been held by the DRSCW, the Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition, the Lower Des Plaines Workgroup and The Conservation Foundation in partnership with Kane County and DuPage County. This year, due to precautions necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic, these groups decided to collaborate and host the workshops jointly in a webinar format.

Registration was also made available to agencies in McHenry, Lake and Cook counties who were not holding their usual deicing workshops. Accordingly, the webinars were attended by staff in DuPage, Will, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Cook counties. Fortin Consulting, Inc. from Minnesota was engaged to present the material.

Two Public Roads Deicing Workshops were held on October 1st and October 14th. According to the webinar polling results there were at least 280 persons viewing the Oct. 1 webinar and 190 persons viewing the Oct. 14th webinar for a total of 470 attendees for the Public Roads webinars. The online format, without the space limitations, allowed many more persons to attend the workshops than in past years.

The polling results from the October 8th Parking Lots and Sidewalks Deicing Workshop webinar showed there were at least 123 persons viewing the webinar.

While many people missed the hot, all-you-can-eat buffet breakfast, the webinar format did provide an opportunity for the participants to enter questions in the chat and get answers from the presenters, other attendees,

and the vendors who were participating. Most of those who completed the follow-up survey seemed to think that the workshops were as valuable as the in-person workshops.

New this year were Technical mini-webinars held at 8 AM on four Tuesday mornings. These were offered to provide more in-depth information on some of the topics mentioned in the deicing workshops. The following were the topics presented:

Oct. 20 *Reducing Salt Usage with Organics*, presenter: Denver Preston, K-Tech

Oct. 27 *Sourcwell & Contract Purchasing*, presenter: Darren Simon, JX Enterprises (Peterbilt)

Nov. 10 *Benefits of Segmented Blades*, presenter: Scott Weber & Rob Lowth, Hanover Park Public Works

Nov. 17 *The Fine Art of Brine Making*, presenter: Rob Florio, Henderson Products

Recordings of the mini-webinars are available at [saltsmart.org/workshops](https://saltsmart.org/workshops). Let us know if you're interested in other topics for mini-webinar presentations.

## WHAT THE FUNGUS?

Thomas Minarik, Principal Environmental Scientist, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

In late September 2019 some sort of biological growth was observed on the creek bed of Salt Creek where it meets the Des Plaines River in Lyons. The growth covered large areas of the creek floor with large quantities sloughing off into the water column where it had an eerie similarity to a swarm of jellyfish. The affected area even extended out into the Des Plaines River itself.

DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup staff worked with Fox Metro Water Reclamation District staff to photograph samples of the biological growth under magnification. The photographs were shared with DRSCW partners and friends including the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), Lake County Lake Management Unit, and Midwest Biodiversity Institute (MBI). The consensus of the experts was that the biological growth was actually bacterial, *Sphaerotilus natans*, more commonly known as sewer fungus.

After tracking the source to the Brookfield area but being confounded by high water conditions, Deanna Doohaluk from the DRSCW brought it to the attention of MWRD who started an investigation on Sept. 29, 2020. Staff from MWRD's Environmental Monitoring and Research Division who conduct sampling and monitoring on area waterways visited the growth area and confirmed the DRSCW's observations, grabbed a sample, and taking advantage of low water conditions and some waders, made their way upstream looking for a potential source. After two days a storm sewer was found discharging to Salt Creek just upstream of Brookfield Avenue. The MWRD's Industrial Waste Division dispatched an Environmental Specialist to continue the investigation, and they immediately contacted the Village of Brookfield which was able to provide a sewer map. After popping many manhole covers and several days of persistence, the source of the water discharging out of the storm sewer was discovered. A connection pipe to the storm sewer was found discharging sanitary and industrial



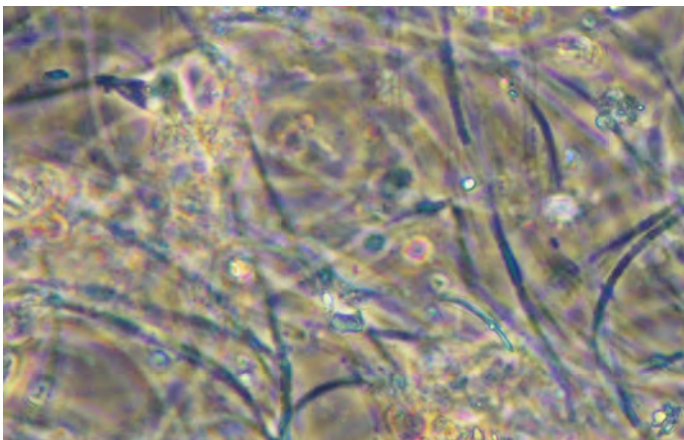
Not what it looks like, the "jelly fish" phase of the bacteria.

waste. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency was notified, and the connection pipe was plugged. Sanitary and industrial flows to the storm sewer ceased on 10/7/20 and the village conducted jetting to clean the storm sewer.

So what was the jelly fish fungus growth? Microbiologists at MWRD's Analytical Microbiology Laboratory did a microscopic investigation of the samples and confirmed that the fungus-like material was actually the filamentous bacteria, commonly referred to as sewage fungus. The environmental conditions in this area of Salt Creek appears to have been optimal for the growth of this filamentous bacteria and now that the source water which contributed to these optimal environmental conditions has been disconnected, the sewage fungus should dissipate. Follow up visits will confirm this.

Do you know what to do if you see something in your local waterway that looks suspicious? If the observation is made in Cook County you can visit the MWRD's website at [mwrld.org](http://mwrld.org) and you will find the Citizen Incident Reporting System. You can report the observation from your smart phone or computer with the use of the citizen incident reporting application or you can also call (800) 332-DUMP.

DuPage County residents and visitors are encouraged to use the County's Citizen Reporter Web App to submit concerns and issues regarding water quality or stream blockages countywide. The app also allows residents to report any stormwater-related issues they may be experiencing on their own property. The user-friendly web app can be used on smartphones or computers. Access the web app at [gis.dupageco.org/CitizenReporter](http://gis.dupageco.org/CitizenReporter). To report urgent flooding issues or spills, call 630-407-6800.



Getting a closer look: the sewer fungus under magnification.

# DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup Members and Executive Board

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East Branch DuPage	Larry Cox, <i>Downers Grove Sanitary District</i>
West Branch DuPage	Erik Neidy, <i>Forest Preserve District of DuPage County</i>

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Watershed Project Manager	Deanna Doohaluk, <i>The Conservation Foundation</i>
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