

A Valuable Service

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District's Small Streams Maintenance Program (SSMP) helps prevent costly flood damage throughout Cook County. Since it began in 2006, dedicated crews have provided a valuable service by removing debris from creeks, streams, and waterways.

Project sites are determined based on reports from the local municipalities and residents or from our routine inspections. The success of the SSMP depends on cooperation and coordination among all communities to efficiently & respectfully manage the waterways.

How You Can Help

Report debris accumulations in your stream to the MWRD or to your community leaders.

Remove invasive plant species (especially buckthorn) from your property.

Do not discard yard waste near your stream. When the water rises, it can wash away and contribute to a blockage.

Attend your local Watershed Planning Council meeting to learn more about the regional efforts to manage stormwater and prevent flooding.

Suggest or support a Watershed Action Volunteer Efforts (WAVEs) project

For more information about the SSMP or to report a waterway blockage, go to www.mwrd.org.



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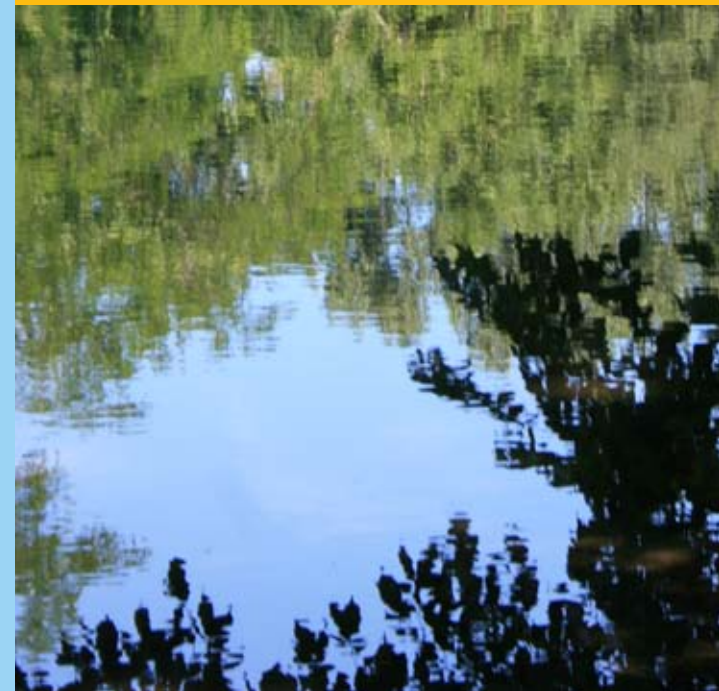
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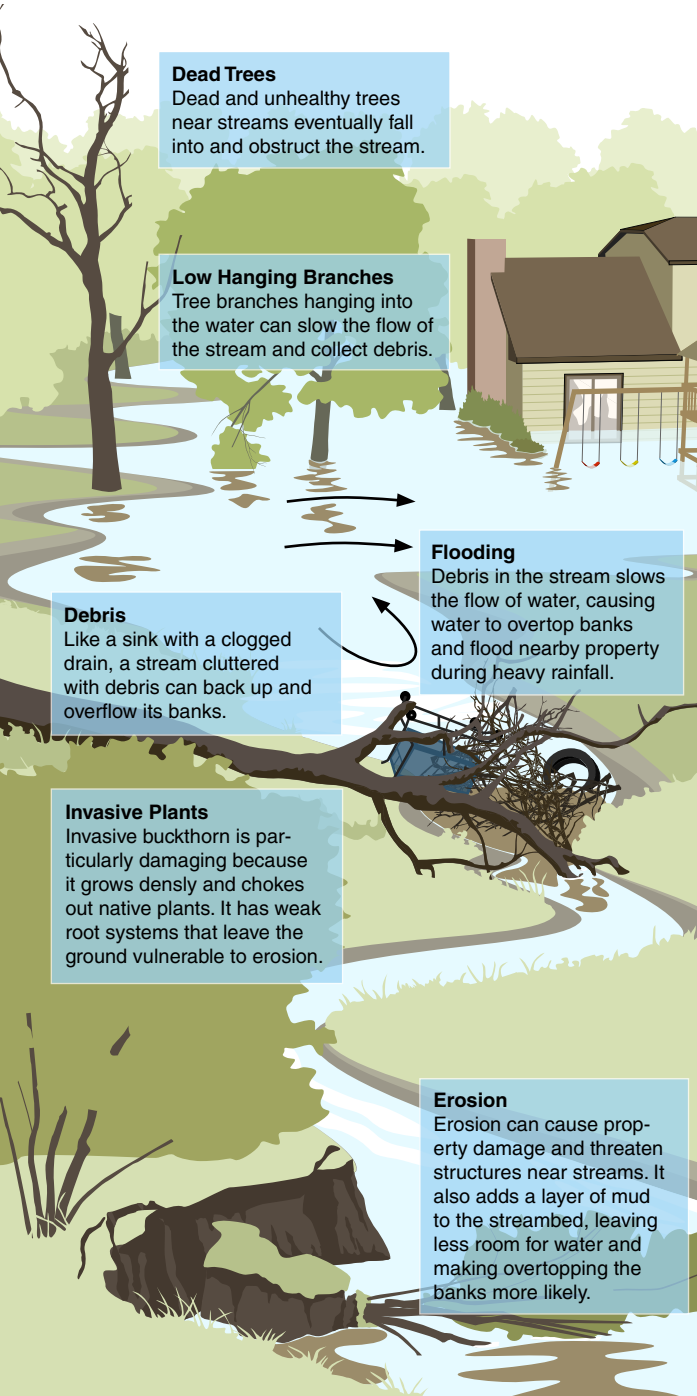
David St. Pierre
Executive Director

Stream Maintenance

Working in your neighborhood to prevent flooding throughout the region



Before



Dead Trees

Dead and unhealthy trees near streams eventually fall into and obstruct the stream.

Low Hanging Branches

Tree branches hanging into the water can slow the flow of the stream and collect debris.

Flooding

Debris in the stream slows the flow of water, causing water to overtop banks and flood nearby property during heavy rainfall.

Debris

Like a sink with a clogged drain, a stream cluttered with debris can back up and overflow its banks.

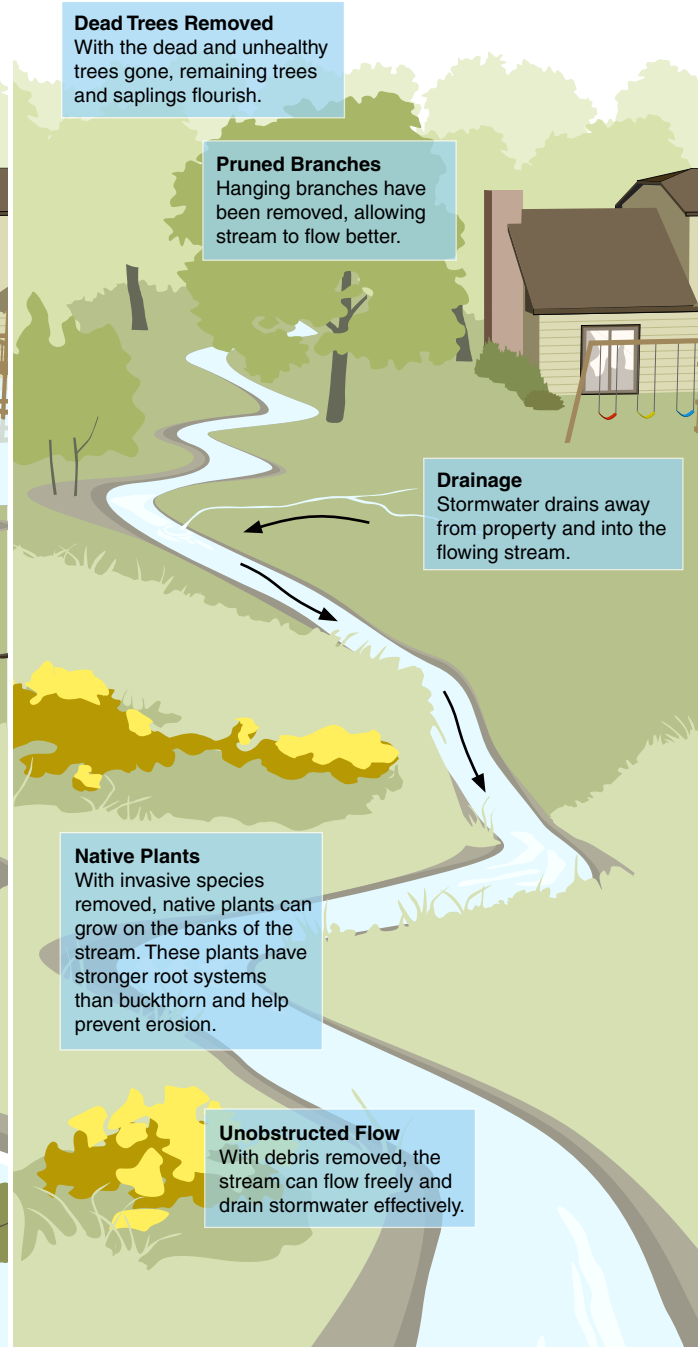
Invasive Plants

Invasive buckthorn is particularly damaging because it grows densely and chokes out native plants. It has weak root systems that leave the ground vulnerable to erosion.

Erosion

Erosion can cause property damage and threaten structures near streams. It also adds a layer of mud to the streambed, leaving less room for water and making overtopping the banks more likely.

After



Dead Trees Removed

With the dead and unhealthy trees gone, remaining trees and saplings flourish.

Pruned Branches

Hanging branches have been removed, allowing stream to flow better.

Drainage

Stormwater drains away from property and into the flowing stream.

Native Plants

With invasive species removed, native plants can grow on the banks of the stream. These plants have stronger root systems than buckthorn and help prevent erosion.

Unobstructed Flow

With debris removed, the stream can flow freely and drain stormwater effectively.

Stream Maintenance Prevents Flooding

The stream that flows through your neighborhood is more than just a scenic part of the landscape or a habitat for wildlife. It serves the vital function of draining stormwater and preventing flooding. In order to function effectively, the stream must be maintained.

The Chicago region is so flat that our streams tend to move slowly and are naturally prone to flooding. Many areas that are now developed were originally uninhabited muddy marshes with meandering streams that often overtopped their banks. As the region was built up, our creeks and streams were deepened and enlarged to drain water and to prevent flooding.

The MWRD's SSMP works to keep our streams functioning by removing debris that can restrict their flow.

Minor blockages can build up quickly in heavy rains, as floating debris piles up and creates a dam. In our flat landscape, obstructions in one spot can contribute to flooding far upstream.

Thinking Ahead

Besides removing existing blockages, our crews and engineers also work to identify and fix potential problems before they can cause flooding. Dead and dying trees, which can eventually fall into streams and cause blockages, are removed from the banks. Harmful invasive plant species are also removed. Buckthorn is particularly harmful and thrives in our climate. It chokes out native plants and has weak root systems, leaving the ground vulnerable to erosion.