**PROTECT MINNESTOA LAKES AND YOUR FAMILY THIS WINTER**

Minnesotans love to talk about and plan for the weather. Winter is no exception. My neighborhood was abuzz with activity the day before the first snow of the year. Neighbors completed last minute preparations for Christmas by hanging lights and gassed up their snow blowers to get ready for the pending storm. Many also purchased salt and sand to keep their families from falling on icy sidewalks and driveways. These annual rituals are often passed down through generations.

In December, the beginning of spring feels like an eternity, but, soon enough; the snow will begin melting and replenishing our lakes and streams. As water washes from city streets and sidewalks, it carries all of the remaining salt and sand with it to our favorite swimming holes and fishing spots – where it remains. Chloride, found in road salt, causes problems for fish and other aquatic life, and the only way to reduce the amount found in lakes and streams is to use less over time.

Salt is a necessary part of winter road and sidewalk maintenance. Follow these six steps to protect Minnesota lakes and your family this winter.

* Shovel to remove snow and ice. Less salt will be needed to keep driveways/sidewalks safe.
* Only use salt when the air temperature is above 15 degrees Fahrenheit.
* Use less than 4 pounds of salt per 1,000 square feet (an average parking space is about 150 square feet). One pound of salt is approximately a heaping 12-ounce coffee mug.
* Sweep up to remove salt or sand on dry pavement before it washes into lakes and streams.
* Slow down and drive for the conditions; give plow drivers plenty of space to work.  
  (Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency)

For more information, please visit Rice Creek Watershed District’s website at [www.ricecreek.org](http://www.ricecreek.org).