



MS4 STORMWATER POLLUTION PREVENTION PROGRAM: East Metro Water Resource Education Program Annual Report (2009)

Background: The East Metro Water Resource Education Program (EMWREP) is a comprehensive water resource education and outreach program for the east metro area of St. Paul, MN. Members of EMWREP in 2009 included Brown's Creek, Comfort Lake-Forest Lake, Ramsey-Washington Metro, Rice Creek, South Washington, and Valley Branch Watershed Districts, Lower and Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organizations, the cities of Cottage Grove, Dellwood, Forest Lake, Lake Elmo, Stillwater, and Willernie, West Lakeland Township, Washington County and the Washington Conservation District. The EMWREP region covers all of Washington County as well as a small portion of Anoka, Chisago and Ramsey Counties.

The mission of EMWREP is to improve the quality of local surface and groundwater resources through education and outreach about non-point source water pollution. By using the six minimum control measures in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) as a structure for the education program, EMWREP is able to help partners meet MS4 permit requirements.

Program Components: The EMWREP education plan was revised in 2009 to include the following six activities:

- 1. General Education Campaign:** Articles in newspapers and newsletters, displays and presentations at community events, and collaborative work with other groups.
- 2. Blue Thumb Program:** Collaboration with Blue Thumb program partners, website (www.BlueThumb.org), workshops, neighborhood parties and presentations for community groups.
- 3. Stormwater U:** Workshops and field sessions for engineers, planners, public works staff and other municipal and agency employees.
- 4. MS4 Toolkit:** Completed in June 2009, the kit includes materials for educating a variety of audiences about water resources – www.cleanwatermn.org/MS4toolkit.
- 5. NEMO:** Presentations and workshops for elected officials and decision makers.
- 6. Commercial Outreach:** New in 2009 - EMWREP is working with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Metro Association of Conservation Districts and local watershed agencies to develop an outreach program for businesses.

**MS4 Permit requirements for the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program:
Requirement (a) – Public Education Program**

EMWREP activities used to meet requirements:

- 1) General Education Campaign
- 2) Blue Thumb Program
- 3) Commercial Outreach Program

Requirement (b) - An program that addresses the six minimum control measures

- 1. Public Education and Outreach**
 - General Education Campaign
 - Blue Thumb Program
 - Commercial Outreach Program
- 2. Public Participation**
 - General Education Campaign
 - Blue Thumb Program
- 3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination**
 - MS4 Toolkit
- 4. Construction Site Storm Water Runoff Control**
 - Stormwater U
 - MS4 Toolkit
- 5. Post Construction Storm Water Management**
 - Stormwater U
 - NEMO
 - MS4 Toolkit
 - Commercial Outreach Program
- 6. Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping in Municipal Operations**
 - MS4 Toolkit

Requirement (c) - For each minimum control measure, list: 1) Audience, 2) Educational goals, 3) Activities used to reach goals, 4) Activity implementation plans, and 5) Available performance measures

* See East Metro Water Resource Education Plan. Individual program areas specify audience, goals, activities and performance measures.

Requirement (d) - Coordination with other local stormwater education programs

The East Metro Water Resource Education Program had 17 partners in 2008. EMWREP also coordinates with several other public agencies, collaboratives, non-profits and citizen groups in the metro area.

Requirement (e) - One public meeting per year

EMWREP partners held individual public meetings.

2009 Program Activities and Highlights:

Public Education: In 2009, the EMWREP educator continued to write weekly columns about water resource issues, which were published in several local newspapers. EMWREP's educator also contributed newsletter articles for thirty cities in the area, as well as the Washington County newsletter. For the third year, EMWREP partners coordinated a joint booth at the Washington County Fair. EMWREP also participated in the Children's Water Festival as well as several local community events for children and adults.

As a member of the Metro WaterShed Partners steering committee, EMWREP helped to coordinate media campaign activities, which included 261 ads on Channel 45 TV during the summer, 221 ads on cable television in the fall, 12 billboards in June, 18 public service announcements on MPR, and a partnership with Saints Baseball that included multi-media coverage throughout the season. The WaterShed Partners also had a prominent booth in the Minnesota DNR building at the Minnesota State Fair.



Fifth grade students search pond water for aquatic invertebrates at the OH Anderson Elementary Field Day in Mahtomedi in May 2009.



Blue Thumb: EMWREP has continued to use the Blue Thumb – Planting for Clean Water program to promote partner BMP (best management practice) programs and has been active in developing the Blue Thumb partnership and its shared website, www.BlueThumb.org.

EMWREP organized six Blue Thumb introductory workshops during the spring in Cottage Grove, Denmark Township, Forest Lake, Lake Elmo and Stillwater with 130 attendees in total. A three-part series on Blue Thumb, raingardens and shoreline plantings was held in Lake St. Croix Beach as well, with an additional 18 participants. EMWREP also attended dozens of community events, coordinated several neighborhood parties and gave many presentations. In part due to this outreach, EMWREP partners approved or installed nearly 130 water quality improvement projects on privately owned land in Washington County in 2009.



This rain garden in Mahtomedi was just one of dozens planted in Washington County in 2009.

The 62 Blue Thumb program partners including cities, watersheds, non-profits and businesses, put in more than 2000 hours of work to promote, design and install native gardens, raingardens and shoreline plantings in the Twin Cities



Blue Thumb partners collaborated on an exhibit at the U of M Arboretum in 2009.



A demonstration raingarden at the State Fair Eco Experience was viewed by 350,000 people.

area. In addition to a spring media blitz that included magazine ads, a 20-minute radio interview on WCCO, and several large events, partners also added a virtual project tour to the website and hired a professional photographer to take photos of demonstration gardens around the area.

The Blue Thumb website received more than 23,000 visits in 2009, which was an 11% increase from 2008. The program was also a part of the Eco Experience at the Minnesota State Fair, which was visited by 350,000 people.

Stormwater U: During 2009, EMWREP continued its Stormwater Pond Management series in conjunction with Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District and University of Minnesota Extension. A workshop on stormwater pond excavation was held in May in North St. Paul, with 56 participants.



Todd Hubmer discusses how to map a stormwater pond to prepare for sediment excavation at the May 6 workshop.

MS4 Toolkit: In June 2009, EMWREP completed the MS4 Education Toolkit, which is now available online at www.cleanwatermn.org/MS4toolkit. In addition to the on-line materials, there are toolkits available with sample materials at MPCA regional offices, the Washington Conservation District office and through WaterShed Partners.

The website is divided into categories based on the six minimum control measures for the SWPPP and within each category, there are also sections for different topics and audiences. Many of the print materials in the kit are on-line in both pdf and editable versions, giving EMWREP partners and other MS4 communities the ability to add their logos and contact information and modify content to reflect local conditions and issues.



In addition to on-line resources, there are toolkits with sample materials at the MPCA regional office and through the WCD and WaterShed Partners.

Some of the new and exciting educational materials created for the MS4 Toolkit project include:

- **Two training videos for parks and public works staff**, addressing raingarden maintenance and stormwater pollution prevention in parks maintenance. The videos are part of training packets that also include posters, wallet cards and PowerPoint presentations.
- **Blue Thumb Guide to Year-Round Yard Care**, a 25-pg color manual that provides guidance for residential lawn and yard care.

- **Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination education materials**, including posters, mailers and utility bill inserts.
- **Dozens of newsletter articles** on a variety of topics related to stormwater and water resources.

In addition to educational materials, the MS4 Toolkit provides guidance on using these materials as effectively as possible. There is information about community based social marketing and how to conduct a focus group, as well as tips for using the materials in the kit to address specific stormwater issues within a community. Each section of the kit also includes surveys that can be used to evaluate the impact of outreach efforts.

EMWREP will continue to provide basic website maintenance for the MS4 toolkit and to occasionally add new materials to the kit as they are developed. With new materials now available, EMWREP will now focus on using these materials to help partners reach target audiences in their communities.



EMWREP partners can use the two training videos from the MS4 Toolkit for their public works staff.

NEMO: In 2009, NEMO teamed up with a group of local and state agencies, including the Minnesota and Wisconsin DNR's, Northland NEMO, Middle St. Croix WMO, Washington Conservation District and the National Park Service to bring attention to issues facing the St. Croix and to educate local decision makers about how they can help to protect the river.



The Watershed Game was specifically designed to help local decision makers learn about best management practices and pollutant loading.

A March 31 workshop at the Stillwater Library had 65 participants, while a second workshop at the Science Museum on April 28 had another 30 attendees. Perhaps the largest success was *A view from the river: A guided tour of the St. Croix Valley's land and water resources*, which was held on June 17 with 104 local decision makers and more than 20 presenters and instructors. During the 4.5-hour workshop, participants rotated through three activities. At the Watershed Game, they used a large game board to role play how to decrease water pollution in the watershed using best management practices. In another exercise, instructors highlighted points of interest along the route from Hudson to the Kinnickinic, providing background information and

suggestions for action. Along with the Watershed Game and the guided view of the river, staff and researchers from the Minnesota DNR, National Park Service and St. Croix Watershed Research Station presented information about fisheries, mussels and aquatic bugs in the St. Croix Basin.

Commercial Outreach: EMWREP has begun working with the MPCA, the Metro Association of Conservation Districts and local watershed agencies to develop educational materials and outreach strategies for local businesses. During the fall, EMWREP added a new section to the WaterShed Partners “Minnesota Water – Let’s Keep it Clean” website that is specifically geared toward business owners and managers. The new content can be found at www.CleanWaterMN.org by clicking on “Businesses.” There is information on Low Impact Development, parking lot and grounds maintenance and other topics of interest, as well as local case studies.

In 2010, the next step will be to conduct focus group sessions with representatives from local businesses to identify incentives or programs that might motivate them to install BMPs on their property. These sessions will also be used to review the outreach materials already developed and to craft an outreach message that will be compelling for commercial property owners.



The goal of the commercial outreach program is to have more businesses adopt best management practices that benefit water quality.