

Keep track of EMWREP updates and reports at www.mnwcd.org/emwrep

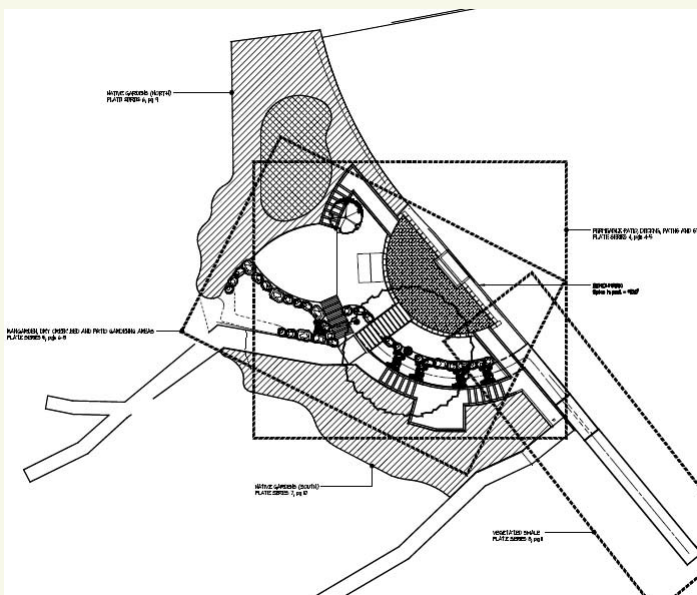
I've recently updated and added new pages to the WCD website to help program partners find documents and reports you might need. The EMWREP page - www.mnwcd.org/emwrep - has links to the Education Plan, annual reports and Education Updates, as well as contact info for EMWREP program partners. There are also links to all of the newspaper articles and press releases written since fall of 2006.

Along with the EMWREP partners page, I've added a new section - www.mnwcd.org/cleanwater - to help connect residents with resources and projects in their area. For each partner, I've created a brief landing page with info about cost-share grants and upcoming workshops, along with links to your websites for more information.

The left-hand navigation bar for both of these pages has links to educational opportunities for community members, city staff and contractors and municipal officials. Those pages have been there for a while, but you might not have known about them.

Welcome Carnelian Marine - St. Croix Watershed District!

Last month, CMSCWD officially joined the East Metro Water Resource Education Program. With this addition, our program now includes all of the watershed agencies that are wholly or partly in Washington County, as well as the county itself, the conservation district and seven local communities.



CMSCWD, along with the Washington Conservation District and Washington County Parks, is currently working on a project to install innovative stormwater treatment measures at Square Lake Park on the hillside leading from the parking lot to the beach.

The project will be completed in June and a major component will be the interpretive elements we are working with Kidzibits to design (see draft blueprint at left).

Spring Workshops are Underway

Spring has sprung, and local residents are clamoring to learn how they can improve their yards to improve habitat and reduce water pollution. We have had three Blue Thumb workshops so far, one at the Oakdale Discovery Center and two at St. Andrews Church in Mahtomedi.

Still upcoming are workshops at the Gander Mountain in Forest Lake (April 13), River Market Co-op in Stillwater (Native Plants - April 20 and Raingardens - May 11), and Woodbury City Hall (April 27). All

workshops are from 6:30-8pm. Contact me for more info.



The wood thrush is dependent on insects that eat native MN plants. Most of these plants are also good for water quality.



At a workshop for lakeshore residents in Mahtomedi this week, people learned how to use native plants to stabilize their shoreline and create habitat for fish and wildlife.

We are also hosting two spring workshops on Bird Conservation in the St. Croix Valley, in partnership with the WCD, Great River Greening and Audubon Minnesota. The workshops are Thu., April 29, at William O'Brien State Park and Thu., May 27 at Afton State Park - 6:30-8:30pm. These workshops are part of a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant project to help landowners in the St. Croix Valley create habitat for migratory birds by planting native trees and shrubs that also reduce erosion and runoff pollution. Register by emailing Shari. Larkin@mnwcd.org.

Where's EMWREP?

Giving Workshops and Presentations

March 16 - Oakdale - Blue Thumb
March 23 - Mahtomedi - Raingardens
March 24 - Forest Lake Rotary
April 6 - Mahtomedi - Shorelines
April 13 - Forest Lake - Blue Thumb
April 20 - Stillwater - Native Plants
April 20 - N. St. Paul - Turf Management Class
April 27 - Woodbury - Blue Thumb
April 29 - Scandia - Birds for Clean Water
May 11 - Stillwater - Raingardens
May 14 - OH Anderson Field Day in Mahtomedi
May 27 - Afton - Birds for Clean Water

Conducting the NEMO Watershed Game

Jan. 8 - DNR stakeholder workshop
Jan.21 - RWMWD advisory committee

On Display

Feb. 1-5 - Washington County Gov. Center
March 20 - Woodbury Sustainability Fair
March 25 - Hugo Feed Mill
April 10 - Forest Lake Home Show
April 24 - Cottage Grove Arbor Day Event

Sharing our Work with Others

Feb. 17 - IECA conference in Dallas
March 12 - MECA conference in St. Cloud
March 30 - Wisconsin Lakes Conference
March 25 - UofM environmental ethics class

Developing our Outreach Programs and Reaching New Audiences

At the EMWREP partners meeting in February, we discussed several possibilities for expanding our programming to improve communications and reach new audiences. There was strong support from program partners for a community-based social marketing effort that would target rural property owners in the county. This effort would be in addition to existing WCD rural assistance programs already underway.

We will be using the County Conservation Plan to identify priority areas in EMWREP partner communities and selecting a specific audience, such as people with horses, to engage in water quality projects. Together with the NFWF bird habitat grant and updates to the Rural Preserves Property Tax Program, we hope to make a big impact on local land and water resources with this outreach.



Along with the new rural outreach efforts, we are experimenting with a few different strategies for connecting with people in our communities. We've heard from many residents that more people would "do the right thing" if they knew about our programs. We've been very successful in generating interest through articles in community newspapers and newsletters, but we also know that not everyone reads these publications. At the same time, we simply don't have the budget for television or other high-cost advertising strategies.



The cost to print and mail 1000 color postcards is just under \$400.

Last month, we put together two colorful postcards to mail to people living in priority areas. We sent the first postcard mailing to 1000 people with more than 5 acres of land in key parts of Washington County and the second to people with shoreline property in the Comfort Lake - Forest Lake Watershed. We've heard from a lot of interested people so far, so we will likely try this strategy in other target areas.

We are also continuing to look for ways to work with existing social networks. St. Andrews Church, for example, worked with the WCD to install a raingarden last year. This year, I worked with their Environmental Stewardship Team to organize two Blue Thumb workshops. I am also in the process of gathering Blue Thumb kiosks from the libraries where they have been stationed since 2007 and redistributing them to some of the larger churches and public facilities where we might reach a new audience.

In CMSCWD, we are planning two neighborhood meetings with people living around Sand and Long Lakes to let them know about upcoming watershed research projects in their neighborhoods and get them excited about starting projects on their properties once the research is complete. We may use this same strategy for the Lily - McKusick and Carver Lake neighborhoods where subwatershed assessments will be underway this year.

BMP Survey Says...

In mid-January I sent an on-line survey to 143 people who have been involved with our partner best management practice (BMP) programs, either as cost-share grant recipients, workshop participants or people who contacted the WCD to request site visits. A total of 57 people responded to the survey. Some notable findings are listed below:

- ◆ Two key components of our outreach helped people to make the leap to install a project on their property:
 - 1) Getting information and resources about raingardens and other water quality projects, and
 - 2) Getting landscape design assistance from WCD staff.
- ◆ 45% of people learned about partner BMP programs from a friend or neighbor, while 25% of people found out through an article in the paper.
- ◆ When asked what they liked best about the BMP programs, 15 people mentioned the design assistance and site visits, 5 people mentioned the information and resources, and only one listed the grant.
- ◆ When asked how we could convince more of their neighbors to build raingardens and other BMP projects, the majority of people recommended more education and promotion of the programs as opposed to offering additional services.

What's new with WaterShed Partners?

EMWREP is part of the WaterShed Partners (WSP), a coalition of more than 50 public, private and non-profit entities that are teaching and engaging people in protecting our Minnesota water resources. WSP coordinates the Clean Water Minnesota media campaign, which produces billboards and public service ads on radio and television. EMWREP worked with WSP to create the MS4 Toolkit for the www.cleanwatermn.org website, as well as to develop resources on the website for businesses.



The WSP also convenes monthly meetings, which allow local water educators to share programs and strategize approaches to new problems. Since 78% of the land in Minnesota is privately owned, education is a critical first step to implementing projects that will keep our surface and groundwater clean. Due to lack of funding, however, quality education is not happening in many parts of the state. In upcoming meetings, WSP will continue to strategize ways that we can communicate the importance of funding for education, as well as (and in order to have) “in-the-ground” projects.

Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:

Brown's Creek Watershed • Carnelian Marine - St. Croix Watershed
Comfort Lake - Forest Lake Watershed • Cottage Grove • Dellwood
Forest Lake • Lake Elmo • Middle St. Croix Watershed
Ramsey - Washington Metro Watershed • Rice Creek Watershed • Stillwater
South Washington Watershed • Valley Branch Watershed • Willernie
West Lakeland • Washington Conservation District • Washington County

