

## Latest Stormwater U Workshop marked by ... a storm!

The second in our series of stormwater pond management workshops, held on July 31 at the North St. Paul Community Center was well attended by public works staff from Washington and Ramsey Counties. In keeping with our tradition, a rainstorm kept the group inside until after lunch, when we were able to head outside to a nearby stormwater pond to discuss visual inspection techniques. During the morning, Andy Erickson, from the St. Anthony Falls Research Laboratory, introduced a new visual inspection form created by the University of Minnesota to help cities inspect and prioritize maintenance needs for their ponds. Staff from Washington County, Forest Lake, White Bear Lake, Hastings, Woodbury, St. Paul Park, and North St. Paul attended the workshop, as well as several cities within the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District. We hope to have a third workshop in late fall, which will likely cover the topics of easements, HOA's and dredging.



Joel Schilling discusses visual inspection procedures at the inlet to a stormwater pond in North St. Paul. This was the second in a series of stormwater pond management workshops.

## Getting feedback from the public

Last week, CURA researcher Kay Qualley and I held our first two focus group sessions with residents in southern Washington County to discuss water quality concerns, landscaping preferences and strategies for marketing the Blue Thumb program. A third focus group session will be held this Thursday in Cottage Grove.

Kay has worked hard over the summer to compile a list of community leaders in Woodbury, Cottage Grove and other South Washington communities for these focus groups, including representatives from the Chambers of Commerce, school districts, churches, service groups and major business institutions. She will be creating a report with her findings and recommendations towards the end of August, which I will be sure to e-mail to all of the EMWREP partners.

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I am also sorting through general awareness surveys conducted during the Washington County Fair this year. We have a pretty small sample to work with, but below are a few interesting findings:

- 1) About 20% of people had heard of the Blue Thumb program before visiting our fair booth.
- 2) The majority of people reported runoff from agriculture or residential areas to be the biggest threat to water quality in Washington County.
- 3) When asked what one thing they could do to prevent water pollution, many people listed reducing fertilizer use or installing a raingarden.
- 4) Recommendations for their cities to prevent water pollution included restricting fertilizer use and providing more education for residents.



Thirty people turned out for the Lake Elmo prairie hike on Aug. 5. The next Tuesday in the Park will be at Point Douglas Park in Denmark on Sept. 2 at 6pm. Families will collect trash at the park to create art sculptures.

## **NEMO on the Water**

With John Bilotta now coordinating the regional NEMO program (to provide education for elected officials and decision makers), several new program activities are underway. One of the most exciting has been the creation of a workshop called NEMO on the Water.

During a typical NEMO on the Water workshop, 40-50 representatives from local councils and commissions gather on a boat to tour their local water resources, meet staff and board members from their watersheds and learn about water resource issues in their communities. These are not passive tours - participants are put to work with "games," quizzes and other activities.

Next year, I hope to work with EMWREP partners to put on two to three NEMO on the Water workshops in the east metro, perhaps on Forest Lake and the St. Croix or Mississippi Rivers.

## **Train the trainer series and Blue Thumb workshops for spring of 2009**

This past spring we partnered with Metro Blooms to host two raingarden design courses for residents in the East Metro area. The first, held in Mahtomedi, has about 60 people in attendance, while the second, in St. Paul Park, had about 25 people.

In spring of 2009, I would like to try hosting five Blue Thumb workshops in EMWREP partner cities - Cottage Grove, Lake Elmo, Forest Lake, Stillwater and Dellwood/Willernie - following a model developed by Dakota County SWCD.

For the past two years, Dakota SWCD has partnered with cities in Dakota County to offer a three-part training series that includes introductory, design and installation workshops. They have garnered high attendance by working with the cities to advertise workshops through city mailers, newsletters, websites, water bills and more.

This fall, Mike Isensee and I plan to work together to create a train the trainer program for Blue Thumb, so that we and other partners can follow a similar model for our public outreach. At the train-the-trainer workshops, EMWREP will also be exporting our Blue Thumb neighborhood party concept to other Blue Thumb partners.

I will be contacting EMWREP partners sometime this fall to work out details for the workshops this coming spring.

### **Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:**

Brown's Creek Watershed District • City of Cottage Grove • City of Dellwood • City of Forest Lake • City of Lake Elmo • City of Stillwater • City of Willernie • Lower St. Croix Watershed Management Organization • Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization • South Washington Watershed District • Valley Branch Watershed District • Washington Conservation District • Washington County

