

West Metro Education and Outreach Plan
West Metro Water Alliance
~~May 2010~~xxxxx, 2015

Introduction

In 2006 the Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission's Education and Public Outreach Committee (EPOC) invited the Education Committee of the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission to partner in developing joint education and outreach activities. Since that time the voluntary partnership has grown to include ~~most of the other~~ watershed management organizations in Hennepin County, the Three Rivers Park District, the Freshwater Society, and Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services.

~~This In 2010 this~~ partnership ~~has taken~~took the name West Metro Water Alliance (WMWA). This partnership grew from a recognition that the individual organizations have many common education and public outreach goals and messages that could be more efficiently and effectively addressed and delivered collaboratively and on a wider scale. The partnership ~~first~~ developed ~~this a~~ West Metro Education and Outreach Plan (Plan) in 2010 as a way to define those common goals and set forth a plan for implementing those common activities. In 2015 the partnership revised the Plan to reflect updated education and outreach priorities and to recognize the revised education and outreach requirements of the State of Minnesota General Stormwater Permit reissued in 2013.

It is understood that each watershed management organization (WMO) and community may have additional localized goals for their education programming. For example, implementation of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan may require targeted messages to specific audiences. Activities targeted to the urbanized areas of the county are likely to have a different emphasis than activities targeted to developing or agricultural areas. The Plan also serves as a guide for each of the partners to refine their own individual education and outreach plans and activities.

The West Metro Education and Outreach Plan is intended to serve as a framework, to accommodate activities common to most or all WMOs and communities in the county as well as unique local activities.

Purpose, Goals, Target Audiences, and Objectives

This section identifies the vision, mission, and goals set forth collectively by the WMWA. It also identifies the target audiences, and the objectives for learning for each of these target audiences.

Vision:

The West Metro Water Alliance (WMWA) is a collaborative group working to create educational opportunities to protect and improve water resources.

Mission:

The mission of the WMWA is to improve water resources through education and outreach by:

- Identifying and implementing common education and outreach strategies to promote consistency of messages;
- Pooling resources to undertake activities in the most cost-effective manner; and
- Promoting interagency cooperation and collaboration.

Goals:

The actions in this West Metro Education and Outreach Plan are based around the education and outreach requirements of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's General Stormwater Permit. The following is a summary of the goals set forth for this Plan.

- Provide a guide for WMOs and communities to focus their educational efforts;
- Identify partnerships and opportunities to work within Hennepin County on joint educational programs;
- Develop a centralized list of available information regarding water resources issues; and
- Present one common, useable document for all participating communities and WMOs to help them deliver a common message to the general public.

Target Audiences:

Target audiences are individuals or groups to whom education is being directed. The Plan has identified the following target audiences and general educational goals for each. Often more than one target audience will benefit from an educational activity.

1. Single family homeowners and renters
 - a. Have general understanding of watersheds and water resources
 - b. Understand the connection between behavior and water quality
 - c. Adopt sensible practices that protect water resources
 - d. Support protection and restoration efforts
2. Commercial, industrial, and multifamily property owners and managers
 - a. Have general understanding of watersheds and water resources
 - b. Understand the connection between behavior and water quality
 - c. Maintain their properties and best management practices (BMPs) in water-friendly ways
3. Developers, consultants and contractors
 - a. Be aware of laws, regulations and permits and the steps needed to meet them
 - b. Understand the purpose of regulations
 - c. Be informed of and adopt the latest techniques
 - d. Be aware of techniques to go beyond the regulatory minimum
4. Government: elected and appointed officials, staff, board and commission members
 - a. Have general understanding of watersheds and water resources
 - b. Establish and maintain up-to-date ordinances, rules, and practices
 - c. Understand public opinions and needs regarding water resources
 - d. Be adequately trained to better perform administrative, regulatory, inspection, maintenance, and education activities
5. Educators and students
 - a. Incorporate water resources education and activities into curricula
6. Agriculture and animal operators
 - a. Have general understanding of watersheds and water resources
 - b. Understand the connection between behavior and water quality
 - c. Undertake conservation and nutrient management practices

Joint Education and Outreach Activities

Activity 1. Facilitate Online Information Availability and Sharing –~~County Coordinated Website~~

Description:

Provide a convenient, “one-stop” online location for water quality/quantity information and resources. A website hosted by Hennepin County will provide informational, educational, and training materials; links to individual watershed management organization websites; and the latest news and information about water resources in Hennepin County.

Target Audience:

Government employees and officials, watershed commissions/boards and staff, City Councils and staff, general public, educators, students

Education Goals:

1. Deliver a consistent message
2. Create an efficient and cost-effective means for distribution of messages and resources

Proposed Activities:

- ~~1.~~ Develop and update a website containing relevant information and links curate content and links to off-site content.
- ~~1-2.~~ Assign a person on a rotating basis to serve as “coordinator” for the web site.
- ~~2-3.~~ Develop and make available published materials; newsletter articles; photos, etc. Periodically query key members of the target audiences to solicit ideas for content.
- ~~3-4.~~ Develop and maintain a listserv to update partners Periodically inform the target audience of the website and content.

Measurable Goals:

1. Record number of “hits” on the website; the number of times an article content is used/published. Develop strategy for measurement.
2. Increase in knowledge and adoption of practices as measured in periodic opinion surveys (see Activity 2)

Responsible Party(ies):

- ~~1.~~ Partners – supply materials content for website
- ~~1-2.~~ Coordinator – develop or identify existing content as requested, solicit content from partners, periodically query target audiences for content ideas and requests
- ~~2-3.~~ Hennepin County staff – update website as needed

Timeframe:

Established ~~Online~~ October 2009 at www.hennepin.us/water and www.hennepin.us/residents/environment/conservation-services-organizations
Ongoing activity

Activity 2. Measure and Monitor Public Opinion and Awareness

Description:

Conduct periodic opinion surveys, focus groups, online surveys, etc. to monitor target audience awareness of various issues, and use those results to refine programming and measure success.

Target Audience:

All target audiences

Education Goals:

1. Target education messages and activities based on measures of public opinion and awareness
2. Measure and demonstrate results of education and outreach activities, e.g., increased awareness, adoption of practices, public support

Proposed Activities:

1. Undertake county-wide telephone opinion survey to update the 2007 Shingle Creek, West Mississippi, Bassett Creek, and Elm Creek joint survey
- ~~2. Create a database of potential survey questions for inclusion in city residential surveys~~
- ~~3.2.~~ Undertake targeted surveys at events, regional parks, lake association meetings, etc.
- ~~4.3.~~ Convey results of surveys to communities and other interested parties

Measurable Goals:

1. Number of information-gathering opportunities
2. Use of gathered information
3. Statistically significant change in awareness, adoption of or willingness to adopt practices

Responsible Party(ies):

1. Partners – participate in survey development, distribute potential questions, distribute results, coordinate targeted surveys
2. County – serve as clearinghouse for gathered data

Timeframe:

- ~~1. Survey question database, ongoing~~
- ~~2.1.~~ Targeted surveys, ~~2013-2015~~2015-2019
- ~~3.2.~~ County-wide survey, by ~~2015~~2017

Activity 3. Provide Coordinated Communication, Media Relations, and Information Sharing

Description:

Coordinate and, where appropriate, jointly prepare communications and information pieces such as articles, brochures, newsletters, graphics, photographs, handbooks, etc. Work with regional media to undertake coordinated information campaigns on general water resources issues.

Target Audience:

All target audiences

Education Goals:

1. ~~Produce coordinated materials to avoid mixed messages.~~ Prioritize water issues and develop and implement educational materials focused on those issues.
2. Increase awareness of general water quality/quantity issues.
3. Provide stakeholders with the information and tools necessary to do simple things to make a difference.

Proposed Activities:

1. ~~Prepare new and update existing published materials~~ In consultation with partners, annually identify high priority issue(s) of focus in the coming one to two years.
2. ~~Prepare follow-up campaign materials for brochure, *Ten Things You Can Do to Improve Minnesota's Lakes and Streams*.~~ Develop a communications plan for each priority issue that identifies specific implementation actions for each relevant target audience, including measurable goals and responsible parties.
3. Assign a person to serve as "coordinator" for each communication plan, responsible for tracking and reporting activities.
- 2-4. Annually evaluate the extent to which the communications plans were implemented and the measurable goals attained
- 3-5. Maintain an up to date general media and communications plan.
- 4-6. ~~Consider alternate communication strategies such as billboards, PSAs, professional writers and photographers, etc.~~

Measurable Goals:

Number of pieces printed, number of hits on website for publication, number of requests for copies of materials

Responsible Party(ies):

Coordinator- track communications plan implementation

All partners including financial support, editorial skills, graphic design skills, printing

Timeframe:

~~*Ten Things* brochure printed in summer 2009~~

~~Follow-up campaign begin 2010~~

Annual, ongoing activity

Activity 4. Develop and Coordinate County-Wide or Regional Activities

Description:

Provide information-sharing and training opportunities on topics of wide-scale or general interest on a regional or county basis.

Target Audience:

All target audiences, particularly elected officials and decision-makers.

Education Goals:

1. Train elected officials in storm water practices
2. Deliver consistent message
3. Deliver most current information regarding BMPs

Proposed Activities:

- ~~1. Coordinate and present West Metro Water Alliance conferences~~
- ~~2. Coordinate Countywide Watershed cleanup~~
- ~~3.1. Coordinate Promote~~ Project NEMO – Watershed Game. Lake Game, River Game, general and project-specific presentations
- 4.2. ~~Coordinate Consider~~ multi-jurisdictional training opportunities such as salt workshops, NPDES-related training, BMP workshops
- ~~5. Develop and coordinate West Metro Water Festival~~
- ~~6.3. Coordinate~~ special programming with Metro Blooms such as the potential projects 5,000 Acres By 2025 or 10,000 Rain Gardens For 10,000 Lakes

Measurable Goals:

1. Number of attendees
- ~~2. Results of workshop evaluations~~
- ~~3. Number of certified attendees~~

Responsible Party(ies):

Staff-appropriate individuals, other partners for attendee recruitment and promotion

Timeframe:

~~Begin early 2010, continued as requested or needs are identified and funding is available~~
Ongoing activity

Activity 5. Pursue and Obtain Funding for Joint Education and Outreach Activities

Description:

Investigate options and pursue funding from foundations, grant agencies, and other sources to supplement WMO and city funding for education and outreach activities.

Target Audience:

WMOs and cities

Education Goals:

1. Obtain funding to undertake and expand activities
2. Raise awareness of the WMWA with funding agencies and sources

Proposed Activities:

1. Identify fiscal agent(s)
2. Identify funding options and funding goals
3. Identify matching funding sources and amounts
4. Develop packet of information for funding sources describing WMWA and its partners, the organization's goals and activities, and education and outreach strategies
5. Write and submit grant proposals
6. Document outcomes of previous programs.

Measurable Goals:

1. Number of applications successfully made
2. Grant and matching funds raised

Responsible Party(ies):

Staff-appropriate individuals, other partners for research, grant writing, and matching funding identification

Timeframe:

~~Begin early 2010, Ongoing activity~~ continued as funding opportunities are available

Activity 6. Watershed PREP (Protection, Restoration, Education and Preservation)

Description:

Support and promote Watershed PREP (Protection, Restoration, Education and Preservation) activities providing classroom watershed education to K-12 students and education and outreach at school and community events.

Target Audience:

Educators and students, and all other targeted audiences

Education Goals:

1. Increase student and educator understanding of watersheds, water quality, the hydrologic cycle, and stormwater issues in their neighborhoods.
2. Increase general public understanding of watersheds, water quality, and stormwater issues in their cities and neighborhoods .

Proposed Activities:

1. Continue to work with school districts and individual schools and teachers to provide structured fourth-grade classroom lessons on watershed-relevant topics.
2. Expand Watershed PREP activities to other grades based on Minnesota science standard requirements and to other activities such as family nights and outreach activities.
3. Provide education booth staffing and other assistance to member cities, lake associations, and other groups to deliver information on priority issues.
4. Write and submit grant proposals
5. Document outcomes of ongoing programs.

Measurable Goals:

1. Number of students served
2. Favorable comments from teachers
3. Community members receiving targeted information at events

Responsible Party(ies):

Contracted educators – solicit school district approval and classroom teacher interest, coordinate and deliver lessons

Staff-assist with grant writing, and matching funding identification

Timeframe:

Ongoing activity continued as funding is available