

**East Metro Water Resource Education Program: 2015-16 Partner Update**

**Background:** The East Metro Water Resource Education Program (EMWREP) is a local government partnership formed in 2006 to conduct education about the impacts of non-point source pollution on local lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and groundwater resources and to engage people in projects that will help to protect and improve water quality in the region. In addition to educating the public, EMWREP also provides training for city, county and watershed staff and local elected officials.

**Partnership Structure:** EMWREP partners sign a three-year contract to participate in the program, which is hosted by the Washington Conservation District. Funding levels vary based on city size and watershed district taxable market value. Programming is guided by a steering committee comprised of representatives from each of the 22 partner organizations, which meets twice a year to review program budget and activities. Currently, EMWREP staff includes Angie Hong, full-time education specialist and coordinator for the program, Jenn Radtke, half-time education assistant, and Wendy Griffin, a Washington Conservation District natural resource specialist who provides 200 hours of support per year for rural outreach and education.

**Summary of program activities:**

1. **Public education:** EMWREP uses many strategies to educate the general public about stormwater pollution and other issues affecting the quality of surface and groundwater resources, and to publicize partner programs and activities. In 2015, EMWREP contributed 73 press releases and news columns to 18 area newspapers, in addition to producing educational content for city newsletters, social media, and on-line news sites. EMWREP staff attended more than 20 community events and participated in the planning and program development for several regional water education initiatives as well. Activities in the Grant area included:

* Da Vinci Festival, Stillwater ISD - Jan. 10, 2015 (2500 K-12 students and parents)
* Rite of Spring (Mahtomedi District Education Center) – April 25
* White Bear Lake Arbor Day Event – May 2
* Hugo lawn care workshop – April 28
* Lake Association mtg – Sept. 23
* Newspaper articles: Stillwater Valley Life, White Bear Press
* City newsletters: Grant

In 2015, EMWREP also conducted the following special education projects:

* Continued outreach with Homeowners’ Associations
* Provided education about groundwater and water conservation
* Worked to build relationships with lake associations
* Engaged citizens in watershed activities and plan updates
* Supported water education for area youth
* Helped WaterShed Partners develop a new metro-wide water education initiative

During 2016, special education activities planned include:

* Family-friendly neighborhood nature events designed to educate and connect people with their local resources – will include pond-dipping and guided hikes (multiple communities)
* Community clean-up events in the fall – EMWREP will engage local residents, volunteers, hand community groups to rake leaves out of streets and storm sewers as part of the new WaterShed Partners metro-wide education initiative (multiple communities)
  + City of Grant roadside community clean-up event – April 23
* Continuing to develop relationships with Lake Associations and Homeowners’ Associations
  + Lake Association meeting at Scandia Community Center

1. **Blue Thumb Program:** EMWREP uses Blue Thumb – Planting for Clean Water ([www.BlueThumb.org](http://www.BlueThumb.org)) tools and resources to conduct public education and enhance outreach efforts, as well as promote watershed cost-share programs, conduct targeted outreach for neighborhood raingarden projects, and teach educational workshops for homeowners. The program was developed by the Rice Creek Watershed District in 2006 and is now led by Metro Blooms.

* In 2015, EMWREP conducted raingarden design workshops in Bayport and Marine on St. Croix, and held raingarden maintenance workshops in Lake Elmo and Stillwater. We also coordinated neighborhood parties in Stillwater and Oakdale.
* In January 2015, we conducted a survey of 433 BMP participants and workshop attendees from 2010-2015. 82 people responded. In April, we mailed a maintenance reminder postcard to several hundred properties in the BMP database.
* For 2015, BMP program staff reported:
* 292 site visits
* 31 new projects installed; 14 from previous yrs installed
* 97.5lb phosphorus (P) captured by all projects installed in 2015
* 19,389lb total suspended solids (TSS) captured by projects in 2015
* In 2016, EMWREP plans to:
  + Conduct urban landscaping workshops in Forest Lake, Lake Elmo and Cottage Grove and rural landscaping workshops in Scandia and Denmark Twp.
  + Work with developers to offer eco-landscaping packages
  + Partner with SCRA to develop training opportunities for realtors selling lakefront and riverfront properties

1. **Rural Outreach:** EMWREP provides outreach support for special outreach projects to rural landowners through efforts such as the Washington Conservation District Turf to Prairie grant, Top50P!, and nitrates well water testing in southern Washington County.

During 2015-16 EMWREP has held the following workshops for rural landowners:

* Horse workshop – Jan. 27, 2015
* Farmer breakfast – March 5, 2016
* Horse workshop – March 21, 2016

1. **Blue Biz:** The Blue Biz program consists of a website ([www.cleanwaterMN.org/businesses](http://www.cleanwaterMN.org/businesses)) and outreach materials that partners can use to engage commercial property owners in BMP projects.
2. **Stormwater U**: EMWREP coordinates with Minnesota Extension, the University of Minnesota Erosion and Stormwater Management Certification Programs, and the Minnesota Erosion Control Association (MECA) to provide professional training and workshops for local government staff and consultants, as well as builders, developers and contractors.

During 2015, we held the following workshops:

* Turfgrass Maintenance – April 10
* Stormwater Practices Inspections and Maintenance – May 5-6
* Erosion Control – Sept. 29

We also distributed a set of ten 10-minute PowerPoint presentations to our 12 municipal partners to use during monthly staff meetings. The presentations cover training topics included under Minimum Control Measure 6 of the MS4 permit.

During 2016, we will conduct the following trainings and presentations:

* MIDS Calculator training for city engineers - Feb. 16
* MS4 brown bag presentations for county and city staff on illicit discharge detection and elimination (IDDE) and erosion control – March 31 and April 18 (county staff)
* Regulatory enforcement training – May 17 in Oakdale
* Innovative BMPs (regional workshop for local communities and stormwater professionals) - TBD
* Erosion control field seminar – TBD

1. **NEMO:** The Northland NEMO program (Non-point Education for Municipal Officials) provides local elected officials and decision makers with resources and information to make informed decisions about land use and water quality in their communities. Northland NEMO is hosted by the University of Minnesota Extension and EMWREP is a partner organization.

During 2015, EMWREP collaborated with NEMO and local partners to host two workshops for local decision makers:

* St. Croix River Workshop on the Water: Aug. 6
* Protecting and improving lakes and streams in Forest Lake: Sept. 1

EMWREP plans to hold another St. Croix River workshop on the water during the summer of 2016.

1. **MS4 Toolkit:** The MS4 toolkit is hosted on the Clean Water MN website at [www.cleanwatermn.org](http://www.cleanwatermn.org). The on-line kit includes training materials to help MS4 entities and EMWREP partners meet the six minimum control measures outlined in the MS4 permit.

**Educational Resources for EMWREP Partners:** We have many educational resources available for EMWREP partners to use, including displays and handouts for community events and workshops, PowerPoint presentations for staff trainings, and K-12 teaching lessons. To see some of the available resources, go to [www.mnwcd.org/emwrep-resources](http://www.mnwcd.org/emwrep-resources) or contact Angie Hong.

**Contact Information:**

* Angie Hong, EMWREP coordinator & education specialist:
  + 651-330-8220 x.35 or [angie.hong@mnwcd.org](mailto:angie.hong@mnwcd.org)
  + Contact Angie if you would like to schedule a presentation or workshop for your board, council, staff or a local community group; to let us know about upcoming events in your area; or to share an idea for a newspaper or newsletter article.
* Jenn Radtke, EMWREP education assistant:
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**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

Grant • Lake Elmo • Middle St. Croix Watershed • Newport • Oak Park Heights • Oakdale

Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed • Rice Creek Watershed • South Washington Watershed Stillwater • St. Paul Park • Valley Branch Watershed • Willernie • West Lakeland

Woodbury • Washington Conservation District • Washington County