

# 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



*Mid-America Regional Council*

## **Regional Water Quality Public Education Program**

Clean Water. Healthy Life.

# Committee History

Since 2003, MARC has convened a committee of representatives from local governments and environmental organizations to develop a regional watershed public education program. The committee was formed in response to numerous requests from local governments to develop a cooperative approach to water quality public education and to meet federal NPDES Phase I/II regulatory requirements. The committee's efforts have provided a firm foundation for its goal of educating the general public about actions to reduce non-point source (NPS) pollution.



The Regional Water Quality Public Education Program is a comprehensive approach to raising public awareness about watershed issues and water quality in the Kansas City region. The long-term water quality public education strategy capitalizes on momentum created by past water quality awareness topics and community initiatives such as the Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities program.

The program's outreach campaign structure identifies several specific water quality issues to address throughout the year. However, the structure remains flexible by promoting additional messages as opportunities arise. Campaigns consist of varying levels of support and methods of outreach, as explained in this report.

# Focus

During the past 19 years, the program has addressed several top NPS pollution issues facing our region. The program's theme — "Clean Water. Healthy Life." — focuses on changing behaviors to improve water quality, community health and quality of life. Each year, the Regional Water Quality Education Committee (WQEC), with MARC staff support, develops an NPS pollution-focused message that supports the program's theme and determines the most effective means for disseminating the message. The committee's education and outreach activities vary each year but typically consist of a media campaign, a mini-grant program, training, and education and outreach materials.

## Public Attitude Survey 2022

The committee administers a biennial public attitude survey to gauge the public's knowledge of and attitudes about water quality in the metropolitan area. Survey questions are designed to measure the impact that education efforts have on the public's overall awareness of water quality concerns and on behaviors that impact water quality in the region. The water quality survey provides a benchmark for objective evaluation of public education initiatives over time, and provides guidance for future public policy, planning and education efforts. Our tenth biennial survey, conducted in late 2022, included new questions about climate change and resilience within the Kansas City region.

[view the full report here!](#)

**22%**

of residents feel their local water quality is getting somewhat or much worse (compared to 16% who feel it's getting somewhat or much better).

**87%**

of residents are concerned about pollution in lakes, streams and other waterways in the KC region (a 3% increase from 2020).

**41%**

of residents did not know where stormwater goes after it enters storm drains in their community.

**82%**

of residents felt KC was doing adequate, good or very good on climate resilience.

# 2022 Program Accomplishments

## KC Plogtober

In October 2022, MARC conducted the second metro-wide virtual Plog-a-thon to reduce the impact of trash and litter on regional water quality. Plogging, a Swedish term for picking up litter while running, was first introduced to the metro in 2019. In 2022, the committee voted to formalize the virtual format to increase the reach of the Plog and expand participation. During Plogtober 2022,

participants were encouraged to clean up litter to prevent contamination of local waterways. On October 15-16, MARC and partner municipalities organized 11 county-wide Plogs on regional trails. 120 people participated in Plogtober, collection over 120 bags of trash. Clay County had the largest county-wide participation with 40 volunteers, and received the title of *Top Plogger* along with a "found object" trophy made by local artist Alexis Bechtold of Scraps KC.

## Dewy the Droplet

In 2022 the Water Quality Education Committee expanded print and social media featuring Dewy, the Committee's new mascot. Two new 20-second videos were created in partnership with ArtClass Media for the Meet Dewy media campaign. View these new videos at [youtube.com/@MarcOrg/videos](https://youtube.com/@MarcOrg/videos).

Toni Alexander, Public Information Officer for the City of Raytown (and County Captain for Team Raytown) uses a grabber device to pick up litter along the Rock Island Trail as part of KC Plogtober 2022.



## Education and outreach materials

### Native Plants and Rain Gardens

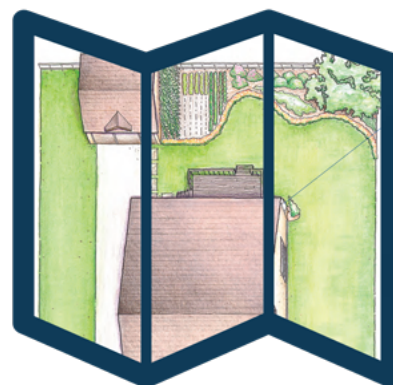
Continued to distribute:

- “Build Your Own Rain Garden” how-to brochure.
- “Know your Roots” brochure.
- Outdoor-rated, “Do Not Mow/Native Planting” signage for BMPs

### Pet Waste

Continued to distribute:

- “Pick Up After Your Pet” brochures.
- Outdoor-rated, “Pick Up After Your Pet” signage to local municipalities.
- Portable, refillable pet waste bag dispensers with “Pick Up After Your Pet” message as promotional giveaway items.



### Lawn Care

Continued to distribute:

- “Build Your Own Rain Barrel” brochure.
- “Redirect or Disconnect Your Downspout” brochure.
- “Know Your Soil” brochure.
- “Making and Using Compost” brochure.
- “Use Lawn Chemicals Wisely” brochure

### Brochure Translations

Continued to:

- Use existing supply of Spanish-language brochures.
- Distribute double-sided doorhangers (in English and Spanish) as a companion outreach tool for neighbors near stormdrain marker installations.

### General Stormwater Education

Continued to:

- Distribute stormdrain inlet markers for local municipalities.
- Distribute “Keep Sediment Out of Our Water”, “Know Your Watershed”, “Protect Our Streams” and “Stormdrain Stewardship” brochures.
- Make the committee’s Water Quality Education Program banner available for community events and functions.
- Distribute automotive trash bags with the “Stop Littering” imprinted message.
- Distribute Water Quality Education postcards

## Training

### Green Infrastructure, Stormwater and Resilience

In 2022, the committee hired the Center for Watershed Protection to develop a plan for contractor training on Green Infrastructure (GI) installation and maintenance. This plan will guide programming within the Kansas City metro for at least the next 3-5 years, with trainings offered on a regular basis.

MARC also conducted two webinars about APWA 5600 updates and water quality’s role in climate resiliency, respectively.

## Grant Programs

Each year, the committee offers funding opportunities to local nonprofit and educational organizations for education and outreach events related to reducing stormwater runoff and improving water quality in area creeks and streams. Proposals undergo a competitive selection process and are evaluated by a grant selection subcommittee. The Water Quality Education Committee awarded grants to the following organizations:

### Friends of Kaw Point Park (\$5,000)

FOKPP promoted the From Runoff to Rivers video project to educators and interested parties and held a community wide From Runoff to Rivers event on October 15, 2022 at Kaw Point. Participants enjoyed hands-on water testing activities that taught about water quality in our watersheds and encouraged participants to improve water quality at home and in the community. FOKPP also implemented six From Runoff to Rivers school-based classes to six Sumner High School biology, chemistry and environmental science classes reaching over 110 students.

### Groundwork Northeast Revitalization Group (\$5,000)

Groundwork NRG's Green Team established green infrastructure practices on three neighborhood lots in Northeast Kansas City, Kansas to educate residents about the adverse effects of climate change and to promote native landscaping as a way to combat climate impacts. Projects included the installation of a spigot on a green infrastructure demonstration lot at 710 Oakland Avenue, two community events to help educate KCK residents about green infrastructure, and three rain gardens and native landscaping installations on formerly vacant lots in NE KCK.

### Missouri River Relief (\$2,000)

With the help of 186 volunteers, Missouri River Relief was able to remove 247 large bags of trash from 10 miles of the Missouri River, totaling an estimated 5.1 tons of trash..

### Pendleton Heights Community Orchard (\$3,605)

The Pendleton Heights Community Orchard held several events with 2023 grant funds: a native flower planting day, doggie depot installation, an OrchardFest with Stone Lion Puppets performing "Down the Drain" and the installation of interpretive trailhead signage at the orchard.

### Platte Land Trust (\$4,795)

The Platte Land Trust (PLT) is currently working to restore 20 acres of land in southern Platte County. Work includes eliminating invasive species, targeted forest thinning, prairie restoration, trail construction and routine maintenance with prescribed burns and goat grazing. With the funds from this grant, PLT will continue this process by planting additional prairie, restoring wetland, eliminating invasive species and educating the public with interpretive signs, public educational events, and volunteer opportunities. The property is currently open to the public for hiking and wildlife viewing through a cooperative agreement with the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). This project is currently scheduled to conclude in February 2023.

### StoneLion Puppet Theatre (\$4,600)

In 2023, StoneLion Puppet Theatre created a new stormwater educational puppet show providing public education about the adverse impacts of stormwater runoff and water pollution and promote policies and management practices to reduce stormwater runoff giving age-appropriate examples to both children and adults. Special emphasis was given to highlighting the need to stop roadside pollution (trash) and dumping. Stonelion also performed nine free school assembly performances of "Off the Deep End – Puppets Trash Talking" or one of SPT's other acclaimed clean water productions into area schools.

## Funding

In January 2022, MARC submitted a program funding request to local governments for \$147,500. During the course of the year, 14 local governments supported the program. Participating governments are listed below.

## Participating Governments

Clay County, Missouri	Mission, Kansas**
Excelsior Springs, Missouri	Mission Hills, Kansas**
Fairway, Kansas**	North Kansas City, Missouri
Gardner, Kansas**	Olathe, Kansas**
Gladstone, Missouri	Overland Park, Kansas***
Independence, Missouri	Platte County, Missouri
Jackson County, Missouri	Prairie Village, Kansas**
Johnson County, Kansas *	Raymore, Missouri
Kansas City, Missouri	Raytown, Missouri
Leawood, Kansas**	Roeland Park, Kansas**
Lenexa, Kansas **	Shawnee, Kansas**
Lee’s Summit, Missouri	Westwood, Kansas**
Liberty, Missouri	Westwood Hills, Kansas**
Merriam, Kansas**	Unified Government of Wyandotte County /Kansas City, Kansas***

*\* (Contributes for all Johnson County cities and unincorporated areas)*

*\*\* (Cities covered by Johnson County contribution)*

*\*\*\* (Contributes additional funding above standard per capita rate)*

### WQEC COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Meghan Woolbright,  
Assistant City Administrator  
Mission Hills, Kansas

Hobie Crane,  
Planning & Zoning Engineer  
Platte County, Missouri

### MARC STAFF

Tom Jacobs, Director of Environmental Programming

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Nordia Epps, Public Affairs Coordinator

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### CONTACT

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[www.marc.org/water](http://www.marc.org/water)