



## Good Neighbors Care About Clean Water Regional Water Quality Public Education Program Annual Report March 2005 – February 2006

### Background

For the past three years 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 Two regulatory requirements. The committee's past efforts have provided a firm foundation to continue its goal of educating the general public about actions they can take to reduce non-point source (NPS) pollution.

### Program Details

The water quality public education program is a comprehensive approach to raising public awareness about watershed issues and water quality in the Kansas City region. Past programs consisted of seasonal campaigns guided by the theme "Good Neighbors Care about Clean Water." Campaigns have targeted the general public with simple messages intended to raise awareness and change household behaviors that impact water quality. Topics for 2005-06 campaigns included: *How to Build a Rain Barrel*, *Disconnect and Redirect Your Downspout*, *What Is a Watershed* and *Know Your Roots*. Supportive resources for these campaigns are posted at [www.marc.org/water](http://www.marc.org/water).

### Accomplishments

- 105,000 brochures produced for distribution
- 100 public radio sponsorships on KCUR 89.3 FM (20-second spots)
- 440 advertisements on Infinity Broadcasting FM radio stations (60-second spots)
- Web resources for each seasonal campaign
- 2005 Public Attitude Survey
- Quarterly news releases sent to over 90 area media outlets
- Distribution of native wildflower seeds and rain barrels.
- Distribution of approximately 10,000 instructional rain garden brochures to local municipalities, lawn and garden stores, nonprofit organizations, and state and federal agencies
- Staff displayed educational materials at: Party for the Planet Earth Day Celebration, Missouri River Watershed Festival, River Relief, Lenexa Waterfest, Healthy Streams Fair, and the Kansas City Lawn and Garden Show.

MARC supports participating local governments and partners by providing graphics, support materials, and water quality message text as needed. The following are examples of how selected local governments have used these materials:

- Blue Springs, Mo., broadcast educational programs with water quality messages for local youth on its cable-access channel.
- Liberty, Mo., regularly includes water quality messages in its “Good Morning Liberty” e-newsletter. The city has also partnered with local area hardware stores, including K-Mart and Sutherlands, to distribute water quality public education materials.
- Brochures are distributed at Missouri Department of Conservation Discovery Center and Lakeside Nature Center.
- Lenexa, Kan., distributes pet waste brochures to citizens during the pet licensing process. Animal control officers and local veterinarians receive pet waste brochures to distribute as necessary.
- Overland Park, Kan., organized and sponsored a Healthy Streams Fair in March 2005 aimed at educating the public about the importance of local waterways and how citizens can work to improve local water quality.
- The Blue River Watershed Association distributed public education materials to students as part of its T.R.U.E. Blue program.
- Various local governments included information in city newsletters and on Web sites, and distributed materials at community events, city hall, and in other public buildings.

### **2005 Public Attitude Survey**

In 2005, the water quality public education program conducted its second water quality public attitude survey of residents in the Kansas City region. The survey is part of an ongoing effort to measure the impact that water quality public education efforts in the region are having on the public’s overall awareness and behavior. The survey provides a benchmark for objectively evaluating water quality education initiatives over time. The first survey was conducted in 2003.

The 2005 survey results clearly demonstrate that water quality remains one of the top concerns of local residents; however continuing strong education efforts is needed to promote behavioral change. Results of the survey are available at [www.marc.org/water](http://www.marc.org/water).

### **Grant Program**

The water quality public education committee kicked off its grant program during the 2005-2006 campaign. The committee accepted proposals for regional outreach events related to NPS pollution through a competitive bid process. Funds were used for activities related to event planning such as supplies, media, staff, transportation and other related needs. The committee budgeted \$15,000 for grant awards, with no proposal eligible to receive funding for more than \$5,000.

A brief summary of projects that received funding as part of the 2006-2006 water quality public education grant program:

### **Friends of Lakeside Nature Center, Blue River Rescue XVI**

Project Blue River Rescue XVI will be held April 1, 2006, at the Lakeside Nature Center in Swope Park.

Lakeside's Stream Team 175 and hundreds of volunteers have invested over 25,000 hours on the Blue River in previous rescue events. The project is a model for other organizations to follow and the planning team has been instrumental in assisting other groups with cleanup assistance.

### **Kansas City Wildlands, Riparian Corridor Restoration and Education**

Kansas City Wildlands (KCWL) conducted a community restoration and education event in the Blue River

Corridor in November 2005. Volunteers worked with KCWL restoration leaders to remove honeysuckle that has resurfaced within the project site. As part of the workday, citizen volunteers learned the role that a healthy natural riparian corridor plays in water quality; what makes invasive plants dangerous to the bottomland forest which in turn affects the health of the river; how to identify and appropriately remove invasive plants; and which plants are native to the natural community.

### **Lake Waukomis, Lake Clean Up**

The Lake Waukomis Homeowners Association developed a program to educate residents about the need for improved lake and watershed stewardship. The campaign consisted of monthly articles in its newsletter, and community- and lake-wide cleanup events in conjunction with *Make a Difference Day* on October 24, 2005.

### **BRWA Clean Streams**

The eighth annual *KC Clean Streams 2006* project, to be held Friday, April 14, 2006, is an established local event. The event coincides with National Youth Service Day, enabling the regional cleanup to be part of a national effort. *KC Clean Streams* is the only annual Kansas City regional student cleanup event that focuses on the rivers and streams that wind through the region's communities.

Participants are provided trash bags, gloves and t-shirts, and each student's goal is to pick up at least two bags of litter. Teachers network at a pre-event meeting held 10 days before the cleanup, where they receive resource packets containing information and lesson plans connecting NPS pollutants to stream health, along with t-shirts and supplies. On *Clean Streams* day students, teachers, chaperones, volunteers and sponsors fan out across the metro area wearing *KC Clean Streams* t-shirts.

### **Missouri River Relief, Missouri River Clean-up**

On Oct. 8, 2005, several hundred volunteers gathered at Kaw Point as part of a massive river cleanup effort that removed trash from the Kansas and Missouri rivers. Volunteers collected everything from tires and bottles to giant pieces of scrap metal — and piled it on the shoreline where volunteers sorted it for recycling and proper disposal. At cleanup headquarters, River Relief constructed an outdoor exhibit about NPS pollution — what it is, how it affects water quality, and how to combat it.

## Funding

In February 2005, MARC submitted a request to local governments to fund the program budgeted at \$115,000. During the course of the year, 18 local governments contributed a total of \$118,124. That funding was leveraged towards grants awarded by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Kansas Department of Health and Environment for projects related to non-point source pollution.

## Participating Government

Belton, Mo.	Kansas City, Mo	Platte County, Mo.
Blue Springs, Mo.	Lake Waukomis, Mo.	Raymore, Mo.
Cass County, Mo.	Liberty, Mo.	Raytown, Mo.
Clay County, Mo.	Lenexa, Kan.	Riverside, Mo.
Jackson County, Mo.	Lee's Summit, Mo.	Sugar Creek, Mo.
Johnson County, Kan. Stormwater Management District #1 (representing all Johnson County cities)	Ogden Park, Kan.	
	North Kansas City, Mo.	

## Contact

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