

Mid-America Regional Council
**Regional Water Quality
Public Education Program**

2008-2009
A N N U A L R E P O R T



Clean Water. Healthy Life.

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Regional Water Quality Public Education Program
Annual Report
March 2008 - January 2009

Background

For the past six 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 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 they can take to reduce non-point source (NPS) pollution.

***Program
Details***

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 10,000 Rain Gardens campaign. 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 below.

***Media
Campaigns***

During the past five years the program has addressed several top NPS pollution issues facing our region. The program's theme — "Clean Water. Healthy Life." — focuses on changing behavior throughout the region in ways that improve water quality, community health and quality of life. Each year the committee, with MARC staff support, develops a NPS pollution-focused message that supports the program's theme, and determines the most effective means for disseminating the message. In 2008-2009, the committee chose to focus on how proper maintenance of lawns and gardens. MARC staff assisted the committee with message development, design and strategy for public service announcements, paid advertising, printed materials and miscellaneous collateral activities.

Sub-Campaigns

To support the primary message of proper lawn and garden maintenance, the committee elected to build upon the momentum of past campaigns by revisiting topics such as native plants and pet waste. Messages were disseminated by targeting specific audiences with workshops, Web-based resources, publications, advertising and public signage.

Local Government Action Suggestions

The program recognizes that municipalities have varying capacities and resources to devote to NPS pollution education; as such, the 2008–2009 program included local government action suggestions in its work plan. Action suggestions consist of a list of potential voluntary outreach projects for current or upcoming NPS pollution topics. Actions support regional campaign messaging with a local emphasis, and are designed for municipalities of all sizes. Local government partners that use the action suggestions have opportunities to share or highlight their activities through quarterly reports prepared by MARC, which reach a varied audience.

Grant Programs

The committee provides funding to organizations in the Kansas City region for educational and outreach events related to reducing NPS pollution. Each proposal goes through a competitive selection process and is evaluated by a selection committee comprised of representatives from contributing local governments.

Public Attitude Survey

The committee administers a biennial public attitude survey* to gauge the public's knowledge of and attitudes about water quality in the metropolitan area. The survey questions are designed to measure the impact that water quality public education efforts have on the public's overall awareness of water quality concerns, and behaviors that impact water quality in the region. The water quality survey provides a benchmark for objectively evaluating water quality public education initiatives over time and provides guidance for future public policy, planning and education efforts. The next survey will be conducted in 2010.

Additional Support

Committee funding is frequently leveraged toward grants awarded by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, U.S. EPA and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment for projects and other activities supportive of NPS pollution reduction.

Program Accomplishments

Soil Testing

- Distributed 485 soil test vouchers (out of 500 total vouchers).
- Received 497 responses to online survey inquiring about regional lawn care habits.
- Printed 10,000 soil testing brochures for distribution.
- 110 radio sponsorships on KCUR 89.3 FM (15-second sponsorships), 610 AM Sports, and KMBZ 980 AM (30 second ads). Over 85,000 estimated listeners.
- Three full-color print ads in *The Kansas City Star* reaching approximately 2 million daily readers (8/23, 8/24, 8/25 Sports).
- 65,000 Web ad impressions on kansascity.com (run-of-site ads).

**Baseline survey conducted in 2003.*

Native Plants

- Organized three regional rain garden workshops for municipal and county employees (129 attendees)
- Printed 10,000 “How to Build a Rain Garden” brochures for distribution

Pet Waste

- Purchased 15 pet waste bag dispensers and distributed them to local municipalities
- Reprinted and distributed 30 NPS-based signs for new and existing pet waste bag dispensers
- Printed 10,000 “Pick Up After Your Pet” brochures for distribution

Lawn Care

- Guest opinion column on soil testing and fertilizing tips appeared in the *Northeast News* (8/27/08), reaching over 25,000 readers
- Ad on earth-friendly lawn care tips in *Greenability* magazine (Sept./Oct. 2008 edition)

Oil Dumping

- Began revamping “Oil and Water Don’t Mix” and “Wash Your Car the Right Way” brochures into a single piece on auto care and water quality to save resources and printing costs

Brochure Translations

- Continued to use existing supply of Spanish-language brochures in 2008

Additional Work

- Created a postcard mailer targeted at residents who live along streams. The cards, which offer tips on how property owners can protect streams and be good stewards of streamside areas, were printed in April 2008.
- Displayed a 3’ x 3’ backlit airport terminal sign, “Do You Know What Watershed You Live In?” informing citizens of local watersheds and their geographic boundaries. The sign was positioned in three terminals for eight months.
- Designed and printed the “passport” booklet for the city of Independence’s first annual EcoFest in June 2008. The festival was designed to educate the public about the importance of water quality, local watersheds, stormwater management and conservation.
- Working with a local marketing and research firm on the third in a series of public attitude surveys on water quality, which will be administered in early 2010.

- Began developing templates for regional signage explaining various BMPs and green solutions (rain gardens, native plants, etc.). Working with the Water Quality Education Committee to determine each community's regulations/ordinances regarding public signage and identify core Best Management Practices (BMPs) to promote.
- Provided various information and material (brochure templates, images, etc.) to organizations in communities that are either outside the MARC region or local groups that are not part of the Water Quality Education Program. All organizations agreed to acknowledge MARC's Water Quality Education Program as the information source.
 - o *Lake Quivira Lake & Residential Committee* — Received request for stream stewardship and pet waste printed material and content for neighborhood newsletter for distribution to approximately 400 residents.
 - o *Bluegrass Rain Garden Alliance, Central Kentucky* — Provided rain garden and native plant images and content for organization's Web site development.
 - o Washington Conservation District, Stillwater, MN — Provided brochure templates for use in stormwater education requirements among Minnesota MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) communities:
 - "Oil and Water Don't Mix"
 - "Pick Up After Your Pet"
 - "Use Lawn Chemicals Wisely"
 - o *Shafer, Kline, and Warren, Inc., Columbia, Mo.* — Granted permission for company to use the program's information in outreach and education compliance for various MS4 communities in Missouri.
 - o *Corsica River Watershed Project, Centerville, MD* — Provided "Pick Up After Your Pet" brochure template for use in public outreach.

Grant Program

The committee offered small grant opportunities to provide local nonprofit and educational organizations with funding to support education and outreach events related to NPS pollution. The committee budgeted \$20,000 for grant awards, with a cap of \$5,000 per proposal. Proposals were accepted and reviewed through a competitive selection process. Six proposals were chosen for funding for the 2008–2009 year:

- ***Beth Shalom Synagogue Rain Garden: \$200***

Volunteers from the Beth Shalom Synagogue created a 10' x 8' rain garden on May 18, 2008. The rain garden improves water runoff on the property and can be used as a tool to educate the congregation about water conservation, environmental changes to the land and the specific rain garden plants indigenous to Kansas.

- ***Big Muddy Clean Up: \$2,350***

Missouri River Relief (MRR) conducted a massive community cleanup over 16 river miles of the Missouri River from the mouth of the Blue River downstream to Missouri City on October 4, 2008. This area is heavily impacted by trash from the urban areas of the metro. Waste commonly found in this reach of river is typically nonpoint source pollution carried by stormwater conveyances. Over 400 volunteers collected roughly 9.9 tons of trash during the day's efforts.

- ***Cass County Justice Center Rain Gardens: \$3,011.50***

The South Grand River Watershed Alliance, in partnership with the Cass County Commission and the Missouri Department of Conservation, installed rain gardens and an educational sign at the county Justice Center in Harrisonville, Mo., in fall 2008. Rain gardens were planted with appropriate native plants and mulched with hardwood mulch. Information about the function of rain gardens was developed for a sign prominently located near the site.

- ***KC Clean Streams Event: \$3,500***

KC Clean Streams, sponsored by the Blue River Watershed Association, is the only annual metropolitan-wide trash cleanup event for students of all ages, with a focus on the rivers and streams that cross the Kansas City area. Students witness firsthand the adverse impact of trash on our environment while taking a proactive role in caring for community resources. KC Clean Streams provides students with a hands-on, experiential learning opportunity specifically designed to align with important science curriculum standards.

- ***Missouri Watershed Festival: \$2,900***

The Little Blue River Watershed Coalition held the 2008 Missouri River Watershed Festival on October 3, 2008. The event focused on water quality education for 800 to 1,000 students in grades 6–8. Over 30 exhibitors participated in the event, held at La Benite Park in Sugar Creek, Mo. Each student received a “passport” to answer water quality questions as they visited each booth.

- ***Tony Aguirre Community Center Rain Gardens: \$4,612***

The Westside Community Action Network (CAN) Center sponsored the construction of two rain gardens at the Tony Aguirre Community Center. The Westside CAN Center partnered with the Kansas City, Mo., Parks and Recreation Department, the Missouri Department of Conservation and several community organizations to complete this project. Combined, the two rain gardens cover 1,140 square feet. The garden nearest to the Riverfront Heritage Trail addresses hill and trail drainage issues; the other garden — located east of the center near West Pennway — will mitigate roadway flooding and stormwater runoff from the community center during heavy rains.

Funding

In June 2008, MARC submitted a program funding request to local governments budgeted at \$160,000. During the course of the year, 24 local governments supported the program. Participating governments are listed below.

Participating Governments

Belton, Mo.	Liberty, Mo.
Blue Springs, Mo.	Lenexa, Kan. **
Cass County, Mo.	Lee's Summit, Mo.
Clay County, Mo.	Overland Park, Kan. **
Excelsior Springs, Mo.	North Kansas City, Mo.
Gladstone, Mo.	Pleasant Valley, Mo.
Independence, Mo.	Raymore, Mo.
Jackson County, Mo.	Raytown, Mo.
Johnson County, Kan. *	Riverside, Mo.
Kansas City, Mo.	Sugar Creek, Mo.
Platte County, Mo.	Weatherby Lake, Mo.
Lake Waukomis, Mo.	Unified Government of Wyandotte County / Kansas City, Kan.

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

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

Contact

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