

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

**2010**  
**ANNUAL  
REPORT**



Clean Water. Healthy Life.

# **CLEAN WATER. HEALTHY LIFE.**

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

### **Annual Report**

#### **January—December 2010**

## **COMMITTEE HISTORY**

Since 2003, MARC has convened a committee of representatives from local governments and environmental organizations to develop a regional water quality 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 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 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 below.

## **PROGRAM FOCUS**

During the past seven 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 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, trainings, and education and outreach materials.

## **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 2011.

*\*Baseline survey conducted in 2003; most recent survey conducted fall 2009.*

## 2010 PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Media Campaign

MARC staff assists the committee with strategic planning for media campaigns, including message development, writing, graphic design and media purchasing. Campaigns can include a variety of elements such as paid advertising, earned media, printed materials and other activities. **In 2010, the committee chose to focus on two campaign topics: storm drain awareness and healthy lawn care.**

The storm drain awareness campaign (“*If it’s on the ground, it’s in our water.*”) served as the WQEC’s primary outreach focus, addressing issues such as improperly throwing waste down storm drains, fertilizer runoff and pet waste. Advertising efforts highlighted the connection between certain activities and regional water quality, emphasizing the role of storm drains.

The second campaign drew attention to healthy lawn care (“*Healthy Lawns. Healthy Communities.*”). Messages addressed actions that impact both air and water quality, including the use of gas-powered lawn equipment, fertilizing habits and yard waste disposal.

The fall media campaign was made possible in large part by a partnership between the WQEC and MARC’s Regional Air Quality Program. As healthy lawn care is also a targeted focus of the Air Quality Education Committee, the two groups were able to combine resources and funds to produce a joint campaign with a larger scope. Among the benefits of the programs’ collaboration was the ability to produce television commercials and purchase air time on local TV stations. Campaign elements included:

- Production of two 30-second TV commercials (stormwater spot and healthy lawn spot)
- On-air advertising:
  - 4 network stations (KSHB, KCTV, KMBC, Fox 4)
  - Time Warner Cable (5 stations)
- Online – ads on 4 network TV stations’ websites
- Targeted print ads (approx. 15 ads in 12 regional publications)

The campaign ran for roughly a 3-week period, garnering over 3 million impressions via print, TV and online advertising.

Each commercial is now available on the MARC YouTube account ([www.youtube.com/MARCKCMetro](http://www.youtube.com/MARCKCMetro)) for WQEC use. Additional web videos will be developed from the collected footage; these pieces will be longer in length and feature more of an in-depth discussion on storm drain and lawn care issues. They are expected to be available by spring 2011.

## CAMPAIGN ELEMENTS

### Healthy Yards video



### Storm Drain video



### Newspaper ads



### Web ads



## Sub-Campaigns

To support the messages of stormwater awareness and 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 targeted specific audiences and were disseminated via workshops, Web-based resources, publications and public signage.

## GRANT PROGRAMS

The committee offers funding opportunities to local nonprofit and educational organizations for education and outreach events related to reducing NPS pollution. Proposals undergo a competitive selection process and are evaluated by a selection subcommittee. The WQEC budgeted \$13,500 for grant awards in 2010, with a cap of \$5,000 per proposal. Seven proposals were chosen for funding in 2010:

- ***Cass County Sustainability Committee (\$2,000)***

The Cass County Sustainability Committee worked with students at Pleasant Hill Intermediate School to install a 700–900-square-foot rain garden on school grounds in early October. The project includes continued classroom instruction on nonpoint source water pollution and the value of rain gardens. Additional community outreach will likely include partnerships with the PTA and a neighborhood association, press releases and website postings.

- ***Little Blue River Watershed Coalition (\$1,500)***

Little Blue River Watershed Coalition received funds to conduct three rain garden workshops at Lakeside Nature Center. 2010 workshop activities included classroom lessons on the effects of urbanization on rivers and streams, how native plants can be used to reduce polluted runoff and how to design and install a rain garden.

- ***Green Works of Kansas City (\$2,000)***

Green Works offers a twelve-week program called Environmental Connection Opportunities for Students; it is part of the organization's after-school environmental stewardship learning program aimed at urban high school students. Grant funds supported the "Urban Water" session for the program's 10-15 high school students. The sessions teach students about green solutions and point source pollution, including a trip on the Missouri River, water quality testing of an urban lake or stream, and tours of Kansas City's water and wastewater treatment plants. The session concludes at the end of 2010.

- ***West Branch Sni-A-Bar Consortium (\$500)***

In spring 2010, about 50 fifth graders at Mason School received water quality training through the True Blue program presented by the Blue River Watershed Association. They spent two days in the classroom preparing for water quality testing at Lake Lotawana on the third day. Grant funds helped pay for a portion of this program and for a full-page color ad in the *Lotawana News*. The ad explained the school's activities in the area and presented information on the hazards of non-point source pollution. The publication was distributed to about 1,500 residents in the Lake Lotawana area.

- ***Blue River Watershed Association (\$2,000)***

The Blue River Watershed Association held its 10th Annual KC Clean Streams Litter Pick-Up for area students in April 2010. This month-long activity arranged for an estimated 5,100 students to visit area creeks and streams to learn about water quality issues. This year's event was BRWA's largest and most successful cleanup, drawing the participation of over 60 schools and more than 100 teachers. WQEC funds helped provide resources such as trash bags, gloves and educational materials.

- ***Bridging the Gap's Keep Kansas City Beautiful (\$2,000)***

Keep Kansas City Beautiful — an affiliate of Bridging the Gap that brings together local residents and organizations to create a cleaner and more beautiful community — implemented a pilot version of the Sowers of Sustainability program, targeting residents in Johnson County, Kan., and the Green Impact Zone in Kansas City, Mo. Grant funds went towards developing 10 teams of citizens that will engage in activities such as community organizing, building resources and partnerships, and planning, designing, and installing rain gardens and rain barrels. The pilot program is scheduled to run through fall 2010; results are expected to be reported in early 2011.

- ***Stone Lion Puppet Theater (\$3,500)***

Through the art of puppetry, the theatre provided environmental education opportunities for families to learn about the hazards of stormwater at community events, festivals and school assembly shows. The WQEC grant funded 30 performances of Stone Lion's "Down the Drain" show at school assemblies and community events throughout November and December. Most performances were targeted to low-income students in Jackson County, Mo., and Wyandotte County, Kan.

## **TRAININGS**

The training subcommittee formed a new work group in 2010 with the aim of developing trainings for meteorologists at the four local network news stations. Initial presentations held during the spring provided education on stormwater issues and supplied meteorologists with water quality facts and figures to use during their broadcasts. The sessions were an attempt to enlist the help of weather experts in disseminating water-related messages to a wider audience and to strengthen public understanding of the connection between weather and water quality.

A number of materials were produced in conjunction with the trainings:

- a PowerPoint presentation that included background information on the WQEC and key water quality issues in the Kansas City region
- a reference sheet featuring seasonal messages and other weather-related water quality tips
- a mouse pad with water quality tips for meteorologists and station staff to keep near their desks and weather center stations

The subcommittee reported that meteorologists at Fox 4 used the information during programming. In 2011 the group plans to track use of messages and will follow up with the stations' staff to reinforce the information provided during the 2010 meetings.

The WQEC also oversaw the development of several PowerPoint products intended to provide committee members and local communities with “ready to use” presentation information that can be tailored and adapted to fit local communities’ needs. Two presentations — one for the general public and another for city staff and elected officials — articulate the different non-point source pollutant issues and identify opportunities for stakeholders to improve water quality.

The committee continues to house and expand a library of training videos for local communities’ use. Available videos include:

- ***Storm Water Pollution Prevention: Storm Warnings; Everyday Best Management Practices\****
- ***Septic Systems Revealed: A Guide to Operation, Care and Maintenance\****
- ***Storm Water Pollution Prevention: A Drop in the Bucket***
- ***Ground Control: Storm Water Prevention for Construction Sites***
- ***Municipal Storm Water Pollution Prevention: Storm Watch***

\*new in 2010

## **PRINT MATERIALS**

### **Native Plants**

- Reprinted 1,500 *10 Natives for the Kansas City Region* posters
- Continued to distribute *How to Build Your Own Rain Garden* and *Know Your Roots* brochures
- Continued to give out informational rain garden signs for local community demonstration projects

### **Pet Waste**

- Purchased 39 pet waste bag dispensers and distributed them to local municipalities.
- Reprinted and distributed 80 pet waste signs for new and existing pet waste bag dispensers.
- Printed 7,600 *Pick Up After Your Pet* brochures for distribution.

### **Lawn Care**

- Continued to distribute *Build Your Own Rain Barrel, Redirect or Disconnect Your Downspout, Know Your Soil, Making and Using Compost,* and *Use Lawn Chemicals Wisely* brochures

### **Vehicle Maintenance**

- Continued to distribute *Oil and Water Don't Mix* and *Wash Your Car the Right Way* brochures

### **Brochure Translations**

- Continued to use existing supply of Spanish-language brochures previously printed.

## General Stormwater Education

- Continued to distribute *Keep Sediment Out of Our Water*, *Know Your Watershed*, *Protect Our Streams*, and *Storm Drain Stewardship* brochures
- Continued to make available the committee’s Water Quality Education Program banner for community events and functions

## Youth Stormwater Education

- Continued to distribute youth giveaways to help promote stormwater education: “From Rain to River – Keep it Clean” bracelets, *Discover Stormwater* activity booklet and *Healthy Water, Healthy People* activity booklet.
- Continued to make the committee’s watershed display and marble game available for local community events

## ADDITIONAL WORK

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.

- **Fort Leonard Wood Environmental Division, Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.** — Provided artwork files for various WQEC brochures so Environmental Division staff could print and distribute them at Fort Leonard Wood’s Earth Day 2010 event. Brochures included: *Protect Our Streams*, *Use Lawn Chemicals Wisely* and *Wash Your Car the Right Way*.
- **Kansas Department of Health and Environment – Bureau of Water, Watershed Management Section** — Provided scripts for WQEC soil testing and lawn care radio spots that aired during fall 2008 campaign. KDHE re-recorded spots and aired them on the Kansas Information Network throughout summer 2010.
- **City of Scottsbluff, Nebraska, Stormwater Program** — Provided *Know Your Roots* illustrations and information for use in informational signage to accompany the city’s demonstration rain garden project.
- **Sysco Corporation, Olathe, Kan.** — Provided PDF copy of *How to Build a Rain Barrel* brochure. Sysco provided employees with plastic barrels used by their fleet services department in order for them to construct rain barrels. Sysco requested an electronic copy of the brochure to forward to staff as part of this project.
- **Weston Cottage Garden Club, Weston, Mo.** – Provided “Know Your Roots” illustrations and information to place on a signage for rain garden in Benner Park. The project was one of the 2009 WQEC grant recipients.

## FUNDING

In January 2010, MARC submitted a program funding request to local governments budgeted at \$120,000. During the course of the year, 22 local governments supported the program. Participating governments are listed below.

## PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS

Belton, Mo.	Lake Waukomis, Mo.
Blue Springs, Mo.	Liberty, Mo.
Cass County, Mo.	Lenexa, Kan. **
Clay County, Mo.	Lee's Summit, Mo.
Excelsior Springs, Mo.	Overland Park, Kan. **
Gladstone, Mo.	North Kansas City, Mo.
Independence, Mo.	Raymore, Mo.
Jackson County, Mo.	Raytown, Mo.
Johnson County, Kan. *	Sugar Creek, Mo.
Kansas City, Mo.	Weatherby Lake, Mo.
Platte County, 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)*

## WQEC COMMITTEE CHAIR

Nate Baldwin, Platte County, Mo.

## MARC STAFF

Ginny Moore, Environmental Program Manager

Kassie Shelton, Planner

Andy Dandino, Public Affairs Specialist

## CONTACT

To learn more about the Regional Water Quality Education Committee, contact Kassie Shelton at [kshelton@marc.org](mailto:kshelton@marc.org) or 816/701-8233.



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