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 use 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 public about actions they can take to reduce non-point source (NPS) pollution.

The Regional Water Quality Public Education Program uses a comprehensive approach to raise public awareness about watershed issues and water quality in the Kansas City region. Its long-term water quality public education strategy capitalizes on momentum created by past water quality awareness efforts and community initiatives such as the Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities program and the committee’s biennial public attitude survey. Each year, the program identifies specific water quality issues to address through its biannual public outreach campaigns; however, the structure is flexible enough to promote additional messages when opportunities arise. Campaigns encompass varying levels of support and outreach methods, as explained below.

During the past 12 years, the public education program has addressed several top NPS pollution issues facing the Kansas City region. The program’s theme — “Clean Water. Healthy Life.” — focuses on changing behavior throughout the region in order 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 to disseminate 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. This year, the program has identified and participated in stormwater management and training opportunities.
2015 PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Media Campaigns
In 2015, the public outreach campaign continued to target residents and homeowners, focusing on two topics of importance to water quality: reducing litter and encouraging the use of native plants. Campaigns typically include a variety of elements such as paid advertising, earned media, printed materials and other activities. MARC staff helps the committee with strategic planning for media campaigns, including message development, writing, graphic design and advertising purchases.

Stop Littering
The anti-litter campaign was designed to educate the public about how litter on the ground ends up in our region’s streams and waters, untreated. The campaign’s second phase in 2015 also targeted young adults and smokers, encouraging them to stop littering by raising awareness that cigarette butts are litter and should be disposed of properly. In addition to motivating people to stop littering, the campaign elements directed people to visit a Stop Littering web page to get more information and connect to resources that can equip them to help keep the community litter-free. MARC provided HTML emails with the anti-litter message for committee members to distribute through their own channels. A companion giveaway of automobile litter bags rounded out the campaign.

CAMPAIGN ELEMENTS
“Stop Littering”

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<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Number of Ad Placements</th>
<th>Estimated Gross Impressions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indoor</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Unknown*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>672,527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>285,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>957,572+</strong></td>
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*Actual impressions were significantly higher; Union Indoor Advertising does not estimate impressions.

Native Plants
The committee’s fall media campaign encouraged homeowners in the greater Kansas City area to choose native plant species for their yards and gardens. Messaging was developed with inspiration from the Blue Thumb program founded in Minnesota. Advertising targeted homeowners, neighborhood associations, gardeners/landscapers and those interested in green living. The campaign’s goals were to educate...
audiences about the water quality benefits associated with the use of native plants, and to drive traffic to a website landing page for more information. Using a highly targeted media mix, the native plants campaign had strong results, with a cost per thousand impressions of $8.85, and an above-average click-through rate for the digital advertising mix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Number of Ad Placements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Print</td>
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<td>1,960,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
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<td>53,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
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Blue Thumb – Planting for Clean Water Program

In 2015, the WQEC joined the Blue Thumb – Planting for Clean Water program. This award-winning collaborative program was founded by Rice Creek Watershed District in Minnesota. The Blue Thumb program encourages homeowners to use native plants, rain gardens and other best management practices to reduce runoff from home landscaping and improve water quality. The program helps partners present a unified public education message and provides access to tools and information for communities to plant effectively for clean water.

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 budgeted $20,000 for grant awards in 2015, with a cap of $5,000 per proposal. The following seven proposals were chosen for funding:

**Missouri River Relief ($1,000)**

Missouri River Relief expanded its educational offerings with a pilot program of classroom presentations for middle- and high-school students, a watershed learning festival and a “Day on the River” program. The education events finished with a Big Muddy River Clean-up for people of all ages on Oct. 3, 2015. Students, parents and area residents went on the river to witness the highly visible effects of stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution in the riverscape. Debris removal was a part of the river clean-up.

**South Grand River Watershed Alliance (SGRWA) ($2,475)**

The SGRWA partnered with Raymore Parks and Recreation, the city of Raymore, and the Missouri Department of Conservation to provide public education about the adverse impacts of stormwater
runoff and water pollution. Two demonstration landscape features were installed to mitigate the effects of runoff. SGRWA also purchased a mixture of native prairie forbs and grass seed for a prairie planting; a diverse selection of native shrubs and trees for streamside planting; and installed an informative sign.

**StoneLion Puppet Theatre ($4,000)**
StoneLion Puppet Theatre conducted a two-part program: first, educating the public about the adverse effects of stormwater runoff and water pollution; and second, promoting policies and management practices that help reduce stormwater runoff and water pollution. Part one used a curriculum called “Stormwater in the Classroom.” Part two included a stormwater demonstration project and neighborhood tour called “Reducing Runoff in Rosedale.”

**West 39th Street Community Improvement District ($3,525)**
In 2015, the organization’s Stormwater & Native Landscaping Initiative was adjusted to incorporate requests made by the community. Building on the successes of a hands-on workshop held in 2014, the CID hosted a public forum that focused on four topics: reduction of water use through native plant selection; preventing stormdrain debris and common stormwater runoff issues; best management practices with native species; and beautification through maintenance.

**Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council ($3,500)**
Ivanhoe Neighborhood Council restored its existing rain garden using a unique, diverse and culturally relevant approach. The Toni & Zora memory garden will help improve air and water quality; reduce excess water runoff; recharge ground water; foster grass-roots, neighborhood-level educational outreach; increase access to fresh food; and offer positive economic impact on a small scale.

**Blue River Watershed Association ($2,750)**
The Blue River Watershed Association and its partner organizations will conduct a “Revolving Green Around the Blue” restoration event in spring 2016. This public event has multidimensional goals, including habitat restoration for a section of the Blue River in the Conservation Opportunities Area (COA); emphasizing stream quality, good forest management practices and watershed health; promoting awareness, understanding and appreciation for Missouri’s natural resources; recruiting new outdoor users; and attracting and engaging new partners while strengthening existing partnerships.

**Friends of the Kaw, Inc. ($2,750)**
Friends of the Kaw managed and facilitated two educational cleanup floats on the Kansas River, and prepared and implemented a water quality educational activity called “WQ Hydrocaching” (a geocaching activity) for area adults, families and groups.
Webcasts
The committee hosted six webinars in 2015:
• “Using Illicit Discharge Programs to Monitor Bacteria,” Feb. 18, 2015
• “Green Infrastructure & Green Jobs,” May 20, 2015
• “Multi-Sector & Industrial Stormwater Permits,” June 10, 2015
• “What to Do About Trashy Watersheds,” Sept. 16, 2015
• “Checking in on Post-Construction Stormwater Management,” Nov. 18, 2015

Stormwater Training
The WQEC hosted Installation and Maintenance of Stormwater Treatment Best Management Practices in November 2015. The one-and-a-half-day training course covered a broad range of topics geared toward landscapers, subcontractors and general contractors currently working with stormwater treatment BMPs and those wishing to gain experience with those systems. The training was held at the Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center and attracted 40 participants.

The training featured internationally renowned North Carolina State University instructors William F. Hunt III, Ph.D., P.E., and Bill Lord. Hunt is a professor and extension specialist in North Carolina State University’s Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering. Lord is an area environmental agent with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service.

PRINTED MATERIALS

Native Plants and Rain Gardens
• Continued to distribute How to Build Your Own Rain Garden and Know Your Roots brochures.
• Continued to distribute rain gauges designed with native species landscapes as promotional giveaway items.
• Redesigned and distributed Do Not Mow/Native Planting signage for BMPs.
• Ordered customized seed packets of a hardy, native biennial (for highest rate of growing success).

Pet Waste
• Distributed Pick Up After Your Pet waterproof signage to local municipalities.
• Continued distribution of Pick Up After Your Pet brochures.
• Distributed 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, Redirect or Disconnect Your Downspout, Know Your Soil, Making and Using Compost, and Use Lawn Chemicals Wisely brochures.
**Brochure Translations**
- Continued to use existing supply of Spanish-language brochures.

**General Stormwater Education**
- Updated the design for the Stormdrain Inlet Markers for local municipalities.
- Updated the design for the *Stormdrain Stewardship* and *Know Your Watershed* brochures.
- Continued to distribute *Keep Sediment Out of Our Water, Know Your Watershed, Protect Our Streams,* and *Stormdrain Stewardship* brochures.

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<tr>
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**ADDITIONAL WORK**

**Sponsorships**
The WQEC sponsored events that promoted the awareness of water quality issues:

**2015 Sustainable Success Stories** — Mid-America Regional Council honored local projects as 2015 Sustainable Success Stories. The 2015 awards highlighted a cross-section of sustainability efforts, with a focus on green infrastructure projects and initiatives, such as stormwater management, natural resource conservation and restoration, model policies and design approaches, community engagement, and urban forestry.

The honorees, selected by a panel of local judges, include:
- Antioch Urban Growers, Kansas City, Missouri.
- Avenue of Life Mattress Recycling Initiative, Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas.
- Composting Program at Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas.
- Swope Campus Parking Lot and Sustainable Stormwater Improvements, Kansas City, Missouri Water Services.
- Legacy Park, Lee’s Summit, Missouri.
Sponsorships continued

**Waterplaces: 100 works on paper by Lynn Benson** — This exhibit displayed 47 feet of vellum reflecting “water places” around the world. On Nov. 5, 2015 an artist lecture and panel discussion held at the Kansas City Design Center focused on water issues. The WQEC sponsored this event along with Kansas City Design Center, and members of the committee served as panelists.

**Streamlining Communications**

An email listserv was established to aid internal committee communications, allowing members to share news with and ask questions of the entire group. A photo and campaign materials “server” was also created, allowing members to access and use MARC’s water quality-related photos in their own outreach and communication efforts. The email listserv and Dropbox “server” are maintained and hosted by MARC staff.

**Art Requests in 2015**

Shared “Know your Roots” illustration, comparing roots of native plants with non-native plants, with the government of Lincoln County, Missouri. This popular illustration has been requested by numerous organizations across the Midwest over the last decade.
FUNDING

In January 2015, MARC submitted a program funding request to local governments for $166,000. During the course of the year, 23 local governments supported the program. Participating governments are listed below.

PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS

Belton, Missouri
Blue Springs, Missouri
Clay County, Missouri
Excelsior Springs, Missouri
Peculiar, Missouri
Platte County, Missouri
Kansas City, Missouri
Lake Lotawana, Missouri
Lake Waukomis, Missouri
Liberty, Missouri
Lenexa, Kansas **
Lee’s Summit, Missouri

Overland Park, Kansas **
North Kansas City, Missouri
Gladstone, Missouri
Independence, Missouri
Jackson County, Missouri
Johnson County, Kansas *
Raymore, Missouri
Raytown, Missouri
Sugar Creek, Missouri
Weatherby Lake, Missouri
Unified Government of Wyandotte County /
Kansas City, Kansas**

*(Contributes for all Johnson County cities and unincorporated areas)
**(Contributes additional funding above standard per capita rate)

WQEC COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Nico Cantenero, Water Quality Specialist,
City of Overland Park
Overland Park, Kansas

Lara Isch, Water Quality Educator
KC Water Services,
Kansas City, Missouri

MARC STAFF

Tom Jacobs, Director of Environmental Programming
Alicia Kates, Water Quality Planner
Kym Bledsoe, Public Affairs
Nordia Epps, Public Affairs
John Staples, GTI
Caitlin Dix, Environmental Planning Intern

CONTACT

To learn more about the MARC Regional Water Quality Education Committee, contact Alicia Kates at akates@marc.org or 816-701-8233

Clean Water. Healthy Life.
www.marc.org/water