

Annual Report

MARC Water Quality
Education Committee



MARC
MID-AMERICA REGIONAL COUNCIL

RAIN
Keepers

2025

Table of Contents

Committee History	01
Program Accomplishments	02
GSI Certification Program	04
Grant Programs	05
Funding and Participating Governments	06
Committee Chairs & MARC Support Staff	07



Committee History

Since 2003, MARC has convened a committee of stormwater and public education representatives from local governments and environmental organizations. The committee was founded to approach water quality public education cooperatively, meeting federal NPDES Phase I/II regulatory requirements. The committee's goals include educating the general public about actions to reduce non-point source (NPS) pollution, coordinating water infrastructure training opportunities and providing a forum for regional stormwater professionals.



Mission

The Regional Water Quality Public Education Program is a comprehensive approach to raising public awareness about watershed issues, water quality, and water-related projects and supporting professional development 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.

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 21 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, supporting municipal stormwater management best practices, and efforts by environmental organizations to

improve water quality, community health and quality of life. 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.

KC Urban Stormwater Conference

MARC hosted its biennial **Kansas City Urban Stormwater Conference** on October 28-29 at Unity Village near Lee's Summit, Missouri.

The conference convened nearly 70 national, regional and local stormwater presenters and over 250 attendees on topics around watershed planning, civil works projects, Municipal Separate Storm Sewer and Combined Sewer Overflow programs, and the 2025 updates to a combined guidance and best practices manual.

Conference programming included two keynote speakers, over 40 breakout session presentations, and a closing panel session with four regional experts in civil engineering, planning and landscape architecture. Attendees also enjoyed an evening social hour provided by sponsors.

Highlights from the event included keynotes from Mark Doneux, former Capitol Region Watershed District administrator and owner/operator of Watershed Management Solutions, and Dr. Joshua Roundy (pictured), associate professor at the Department of Civil, Environmental and Architectural Engineering at the University of Kansas.

The event concluded with a panel of design, development, municipal and green infrastructure experts talking about the need, benefits and challenges of the update to the MARC/American Public Works Association (APWA) stormwater design and engineering manual.

Panelists Tawn Nugent, APWA Kansas City Chapter executive board president; Sarah Shafer, senior engineer for the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas; Xue Wood, community development director for North Kansas City, Missouri; and Craig Rhodes, principal landscape architect at Vireo talked about their roles consulting on the update as well as ways it can be implemented into development and planning at the municipal level.

The 5600 manual will modernize regional stormwater management using calculations that value onsite retention of rainwater volume as a "credit" to minimize the size of downstream detention facilities, and reduce the amount of high-speed floodwaters entering streams and causing erosion. Its redevelopment criteria recognizes space constraints and provides design and permit submittal guidance to streamline the development process.



Progress on new website

The Water Quality program plans to soft-launch the new water quality website **KC Rainkeepers** in January 2026. Committee members selected the new website name to reflect the site's shift to action-oriented information about capturing rainfall for residential use, with watershed stewardship and pollution reduction as added benefits. Viewers follow step-by-step instructions for rain containment methods and native plantings, search for local, ecologically centered native plant nurseries, investigate green infrastructure and watershed data through the

Green Region Explorer, and explore resources for stormwater professionals. Photos to illustrate rain capture projects will be added in 2026 and paired with a website promotional campaign.



2025 Program Accomplishments

Education and Outreach Materials

The WQEC maintains commercial printer-ready files on a variety of topics to share with participating municipalities who wish to print and distribute high-quality physical materials to their constituents.

Digital posters developed in 2024 and 2025 provide QR codes to additional information online, which will be updated on the new **KCRainkeepers** public education website in early 2026.

NATIVE PLANTS AND RAIN GARDENS

- Available for commercial printing on-demand (via partner municipality's print vendor of choice):
 - NEW "Know Your Roots" rack card & poster with QR code pointing to additional information online.
- Continued to distribute:
 - Outdoor-rated "Do Not Mow Native Planting" signs for existing native plants used as Green Stormwater Infrastructure (looking to update sign in 2026 with wide launch of GSI training program).

STORMWATER EDUCATION

- Continued to:
 - Distribute storm drain inlet markers for local municipalities.
 - Make the committee's Water Quality Education Program banner available for community events and functions.
 - Distribute automotive trash bags with branded "Stop Littering" imprinted message.
 - Distributed Water Quality Education postcards.

PET WASTE

- Available for commercial printing on-demand (via partner municipality's printer of choice):
 - NEW "Pick Up After Your Pet" rack card & poster with QR.
- Continued to distribute:
 - Outdoor-rated "Pick Up After Your Pet" signs.
 - Water Quality branded pet waste bag dispensers.

RESIDENTIAL CHEMICAL USE

- Available for commercial printing on-demand (via partner municipality's printer of choice):
 - NEW "Use Lawn Chemicals Wisely" rack card & poster with QR.
 - NEW "Winter Illicit Discharger" rack card & poster with QR.
 - NEW "Illicit Discharge" rack card & poster with QR.

MID-AMERICA GSI PROGRAM INFORMATION (see next page)

- Created dual-language field resource materials and promotional materials.





Mid-America GSI Maintenance Certification Program

In recent years, Kansas City regional cities have installed green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) projects for improved stormwater management. Local government utilities and public works staff, institutional staff, and private landscape contractors do not yet have a developed knowledge base for the technical skills required to maintain these sites.

To address this gap, the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP) and MARC launched the **Mid-America GSI (Green Stormwater Infrastructure) Maintenance Certificate Program** in January 2025. The current program offers a series of five interactive online training modules with accompanying reference materials and a program plan.

Certification content is aligned with the update to the **MARC/American Public Works Association (APWA) stormwater design and engineering manual** which provides improved design and maintenance guidance for practitioners, and will be available for approval after December 10.

MARC is partnered with CWP, Bridging the Gap (BTG), Metropolitan Community College (MCC), and Groundwork NRG to expand program content offerings and build an outreach and collaboration network in the Kansas City region. Over 60 majority local government staff completed the program in 2025. Program outreach plans include working with partners to engage with schools, private companies and commercial properties about the benefits of being certified and hiring certified individuals for maintenance work.

The program convenes an expanded governing board including regional non-profit workforce development groups KC Can Compost – Green Corps, BTG – Tree Corps, MCC, and Groundwork NRG and local government representatives from Johnson County, KS, Kansas City, MO, Lenexa, KS, North Kansas City, MO, Platte County, MO, Shawnee, KS, and the United Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS. Program materials and registration for the training are available at marc.org/GSI.



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:

Little Blue River Watershed Coalition (\$1,000)

LBRWC hosted Blue at the Zoo on April 26 as part of Party for the Planet to educate zoo attendees about the adverse impacts of stormwater runoff and water pollution in the Kansas City metro area and Blue River watershed. The event included four exhibits from the Missouri Department of Conservation, Heartland Conservation Alliance, LBRWC and Healthy Rivers Partnership displayed for 10,000 attendees.

Deep Roots KC (\$2,500)

Deep Roots KC organized and hosted two on-location green roof garden webinars in March and April at a rooftop garden in Kansas City's Crossroads district. A total of 1,125 live and online viewers learned about the challenges and benefits of green infrastructure in our urban core, including stormwater mitigation and wildlife support in environments with limited soil depth and space.

Missouri River Relief (\$3,000)

Missouri River Relief conducted a large-scale cleanup of 10 miles of Missouri River bank near Kansas City, Missouri, paired with an educational workshop on the impacts of improper trash disposal on water quality. On April 12, 224 volunteers removed 4.28 tons of trash during an event partially funded by the Water Quality Education Committee.

StoneLion Puppet Theatre (\$2,500)

StoneLion Puppet Theatre gave educational performances around stormwater and plastic consumption reduction to 1,277 students at five elementary and middle schools in the Kansas City metro area. Students participated in "Winner Winner Chicken Dinner – The Game Show for the Water," which taught lessons about stormwater runoff, fast fashion, and the need to reduce pesticide and microplastics.

Friends of the Kaw (\$5,000)

Friends of the Kaw (FOK) connected with Wyandotte County neighborhood organizations to discuss trash and water quality issues and to develop a neighborhood cleanup campaign and a bilingual FOK Cleanup Toolkit. The toolkit was distributed to 386 community members, and 207 participants volunteered at the final program event, One KC Cleanup, on Sept. 7.



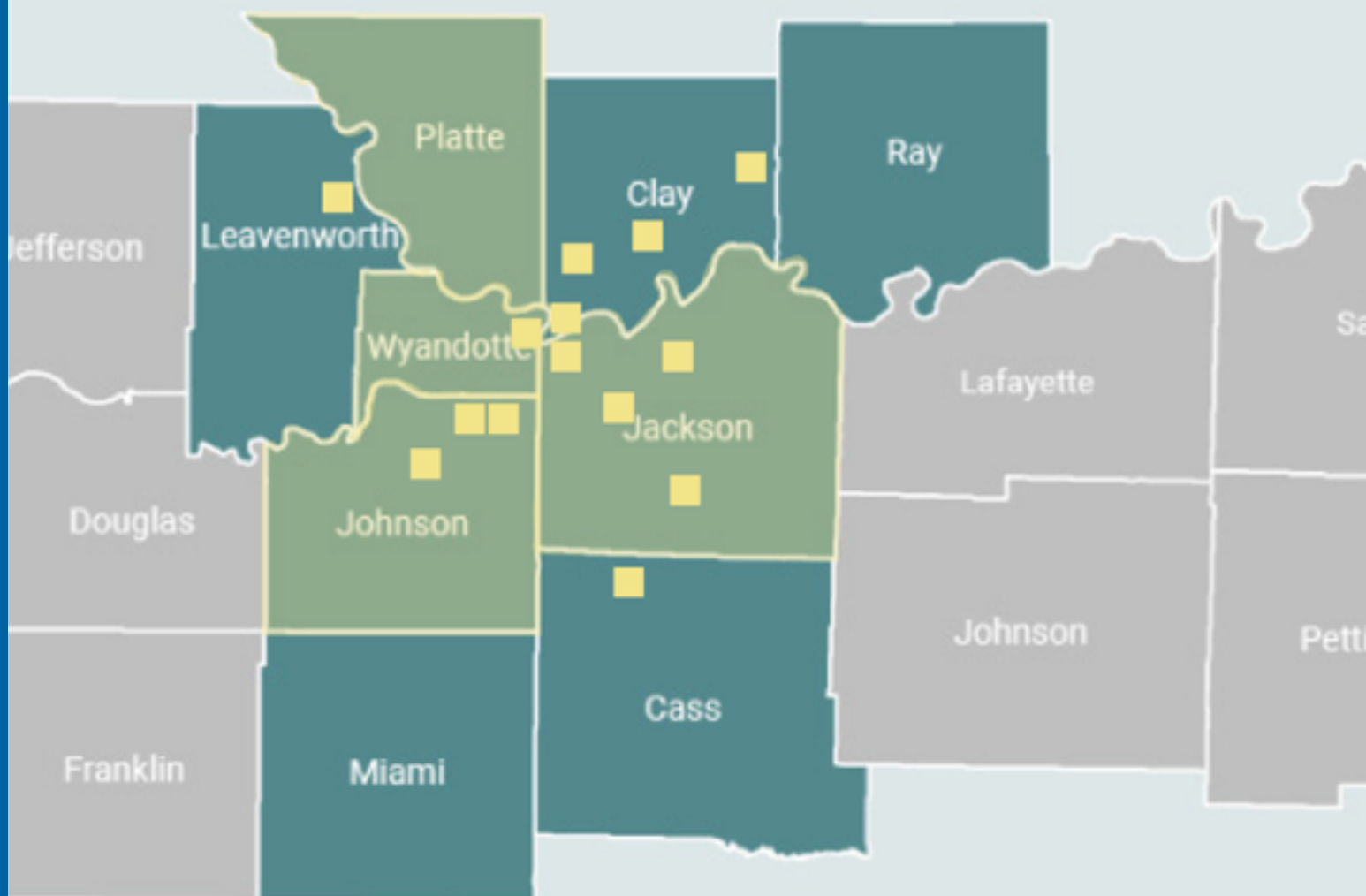
Funding

In March 2025, MARC submitted a program funding request to local governments for \$125,171. During the course of the year, 18 local governments supported the program.

Participating governments are listed below.

- Excelsior Springs, Missouri
- Gladstone, Missouri
- Independence, Missouri
- Jackson County, Missouri
- Johnson County, Kansas
- Kansas City, Missouri
- Leavenworth, Kansas
- Lenexa, Kansas
- Lee's Summit, Missouri
- Liberty, Missouri
- Mission, Kansas
- North Kansas City, Missouri
- Platte County, Missouri
- Raymore, Missouri
- Raytown, Missouri
- Shawnee, Kansas
- Unified Government of Wyandotte County / Kansas City, Kansas

Green counties are a part of the federally-designated MARC Metropolitan Planning Organization and Council of Governments for the region surrounding Kansas City. Participating Water Quality Education Committee governments are highlighted below in yellow.



Thank you to our committee and program staff

WQEC COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Justin Stuedemann,
Stormwater Specialist
Lenexa, Kansas

Hobie Crane,
Planning & Zoning Engineer
Platte County, Missouri

MARC Program Staff

Tom Jacobs, Director of Environmental
Programming

Natalie Unruh, Water Quality Planner

Joe Gauer, Public Affairs Coordinator

Nordia Epps, Public Affairs Coordinator

Caroline Knecht, Public Affairs Web Admin

Ashlyn Stone, Special Events Manager,
Government Training Institute

Kate Ludwig, Environmental Programs
Assistant

Kyanne Carlgreen, Environmental Intern

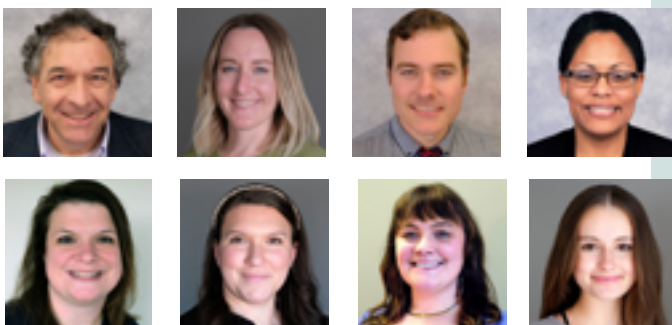


Contact Us

600 Broadway Blvd, Suite 200
Kansas City, MO 64105

ph. 816-474-4240

To learn more about the MARC Water
Quality Education Committee, email
Natalie Unruh at nunruh@marc.org



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