

**West Metro Education and Outreach Plan
West Metro Water Alliance
July 2021**

The West Metro Water Alliance is a collaboration of four Watershed Management Organizations (WMOs) in Hennepin County, Minnesota jointly providing common education and outreach programming to residents, property owners, and businesses in western Hennepin County about the water resources in the watersheds and positive actions that can be taken to protect and improve them. Other WMOs, cities, and agencies and organizations in the county also participate on an ad hoc basis.

History

In 2006 the Shingle Creek and West Mississippi Watershed Management Commission's Education and Public Outreach Committee (EPOC) invited the Education Committee of the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission to partner in developing joint education and outreach activities. The Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission soon joined, and the Three Rivers Park District, the Freshwater Society, and Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services sat in on meetings as well.

In 2010 this partnership formalized and took the name West Metro Water Alliance (WMWA). This partnership grew from a recognition that the individual organizations have many common education and public outreach goals and messages that could be more efficiently and effectively addressed and delivered collaboratively and on a wider scale. The partnership first developed a West Metro Education and Outreach Plan (Plan) in 2010 as a way to define those common goals and set forth a plan for implementing those common activities. In 2015 the partnership revised the Plan to reflect updated education and outreach priorities and to recognize the revised education and outreach requirements of the State of Minnesota General Stormwater Permit reissued in 2013. This Plan was revised in 2021 to reflect the most recent needs and priorities of the partners and the revised requirements of the General Stormwater Permit reissued in 2020.

It is understood that each WMO and community may have additional localized goals for their education programming. For example, implementation of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan may require targeted messages to specific audiences. Activities targeted to the urbanized areas of the county are likely to have a different emphasis than activities targeted to developing or agricultural areas. The Plan also serves as a guide for each of the partners to refine their own individual education and outreach plans and activities.

The West Metro Education and Outreach Plan is intended to serve as a framework to accommodate activities common to most or all WMOs and communities in the county as well as unique local activities.

Purpose, Goals, Target Audiences, and Objectives

This section identifies the vision, mission, and goals set forth collectively by the WMWA. It also identifies the target audiences, and the objectives for learning for each of these target audiences.

Vision:

The West Metro Water Alliance (WMWA) is a collaborative group working to create education and outreach opportunities to protect and improve water resources.

Mission:

The mission of the WMWA is to protect and improve water resources through education and outreach by:

- Jointly identifying and implementing education and outreach strategies to promote consistency of messages.
- Pooling resources to undertake activities in the most cost-effective manner.
- Promoting interagency cooperation and collaboration.

Goal:

The actions in this West Metro Education and Outreach Plan are intended to help the WMOs and member cities to meet their education and outreach needs as set forth in their Watershed and Surface Water Management Plans, Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) studies, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's General Stormwater Permit.

Equity Statement:

WMWA acknowledges the past intrinsic gaps in water and natural resources outreach and education to underserved and minority communities and will work to incorporate principles of environmental justice where possible into our outreach efforts.

Target Audiences:

Target audiences are individuals or groups to whom education is being directed. The Plan has identified the following target audiences and general educational goals for each. Often more than one target audience will benefit from an educational activity.

1. Single family homeowners and renters
 - a. Have general understanding of watersheds and water resources
 - b. Understand the connection between behavior and water quality
 - c. Understand the connection between climate, water quality, and water quantity
 - d. Adopt sensible practices that protect water resources
 - e. Support protection and restoration efforts
2. Commercial, industrial, institutional, and multifamily property owners and managers
 - a. Maintain their properties and best management practices (BMPs) in water-friendly ways
3. Government: elected and appointed officials, staff, board and commission members
 - a. Have general understanding of watersheds and water resources
 - b. Understanding the connection between climate, water quality, and water quantity
 - c. Establish and maintain up-to-date ordinances, rules, and practices
 - d. Understand public opinions and needs regarding water resources
4. Educators and students
 - a. Have general understanding of watersheds and water resources
 - b. Understand the connection between behavior and water quality

Joint Education and Outreach Activities

Activity 1. Facilitate Online Information Availability and Sharing

Description:

Provide a convenient, “one-stop” online location for water quality/quantity information and resources. The WMWA website will provide informational, educational, and training materials; links to individual watershed management organization websites; links to other organizations such as Blue Thumb and Watershed Partners; and the latest news and information about water resources in Hennepin County.

Target Audience:

Government employees and officials, watershed commissions/boards and staff, City Councils and staff, general public, educators, students

Education Goals:

1. Deliver a consistent message
2. Create an efficient and cost-effective means for distribution of messages and resources

Proposed Activities:

1. Develop and curate content and links to off-site content.
2. Periodically query key members of the target audiences to solicit ideas for content.
3. Periodically inform the target audience of the website and content.

Measurable Goals:

1. Record number of “hits” on the website; the number of times content is used/published. Develop strategy for measurement.
2. Increase in knowledge and adoption of practices as measured in periodic surveys

Responsible Party(ies):

1. Partners – supply content for website
2. Coordinator – develop or identify existing content as requested, solicit content from partners, periodically query target audiences for content ideas and requests
3. Contracted staff – update website as needed

Timeframe:

Ongoing activity at www.westmetrowateralliance.org

Activity 2. Provide Coordinated Communication and Information Sharing

Description:

Provide targeted messaging and outreach regarding key environmental issues. Coordinate and, where appropriate, jointly prepare communications and information pieces such as articles, brochures, newsletters, graphics, photographs, handbooks, etc. Disseminate information developed by WMWA, cities, Hennepin County, and others using the web site, social media, and other media. Work with local and regional media to undertake coordinated information campaigns on general water resources issues.

Target Audience:

All target audiences

Education Goals:

1. Prioritize water issues and develop and implement educational materials focused on those issues.
2. Increase awareness of general water quality/quantity issues.
3. Increase awareness of the connection between climate, water quality, and water quantity
4. Provide stakeholders with the information and tools necessary to make a difference.

Proposed Activities:

1. In consultation with partners, annually identify high priority issue(s) of focus.
2. Develop a communications plan for each priority issue that identifies specific implementation actions for each relevant target audience, including measurable goals and responsible parties.
3. Develop materials, signs, displays, etc., conveying desired messages and make available to targeted audiences.
4. Assign a person to serve as “coordinator” for each communication plan, responsible for tracking and reporting activities.
5. Annually evaluate the extent to which the communications plans were implemented, and the measurable goals attained.
6. Periodically work with cities and Hennepin County to evaluate current knowledge regarding topics of relevance.
7. Maintain an up-to-date general media and communications plan.

Measurable Goals:

Number of pieces distributed, number of hits on website referred from outreach materials and social media, number of requests for copies of materials

Responsible Party(ies):

Coordinator- track communications plan implementation

All partners including financial support, editorial skills, graphic design skills, printing

Timeframe:

Annual, ongoing activity

Activity 3. Watershed PREP (Protection, Restoration, Education and Preservation)

Description:

Support and promote Watershed PREP (Protection, Restoration, Education and Preservation) activities providing classroom watershed education to K-12 students and education and outreach at school and community events.

Target Audience:

Educators and students, and all other targeted audiences

Education Goals:

1. Increase student and educator understanding of watersheds, water quality, the hydrologic cycle, the impacts of climate on water, and stormwater issues in their neighborhoods.
2. Increase general public understanding of watersheds, water quality, and stormwater issues in their cities and neighborhoods.

Proposed Activities:

1. Continue to work with school districts and individual schools and teachers to provide structured fourth-grade classroom lessons on watershed-relevant topics.
2. Promote PREP to other WMOs and organizations and share lesson plans and materials to broaden its reach.
3. Expand Watershed PREP activities to other activities such as family nights and outreach activities.
4. Provide education booth staffing and other assistance to member cities, lake associations, and other groups to deliver information on priority issues.
5. Document outcomes of ongoing programs.

Measurable Goals:

1. Number of students served
2. Favorable comments from teachers
3. Community members receiving targeted information at events

Responsible Party(ies):

Contracted educators – solicit school district approval and classroom teacher interest, coordinate and deliver lessons

Staff-assist with grant writing, and matching funding identification

Timeframe:

Ongoing activity continued as funding is available

Activity 4. Pursue and Obtain Funding for Joint Education and Outreach Activities

Description:

Investigate options and pursue funding from foundations, grant agencies, and other sources to supplement WMO and city funding for education and outreach activities.

Target Audience:

WMOs and cities

Education Goals:

1. Obtain funding to undertake and expand activities
2. Raise awareness of the WMWA with funding agencies and sources

Proposed Activities:

1. Identify fiscal agent(s)
2. Identify funding options and funding goals
3. Identify matching funding sources and amounts
4. Develop packet of information for funding sources describing WMWA and its partners, the organization's goals and activities, and education and outreach strategies
5. Write and submit grant proposals
6. Document outcomes of previous programs.

Measurable Goals:

1. Number of applications successfully made
2. Grant and matching funds raised

Responsible Party(ies):

Staff-appropriate individuals, other partners for research, grant writing, and matching funding identification

Timeframe:

Ongoing activity continued as funding opportunities are available