



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Mid-America Regional Council

Regional Water Quality Public Education Program

Clean Water. Healthy Life.

Regional Water Quality Public Education Program Annual Report, January–December 2021

COMMITTEE HISTORY

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 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 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 18 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 to improve water quality, community health and quality of life. Each year, the Regional Water Quality Education Committee (WOEC), 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, training, and education and outreach materials.

2021 PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Name the Droplet Campaign

The "Name the Droplet" contest was re-launched in 2021 to select a name for the Water Quality Education Committee's new mascot. The water droplet features prominently in the committee's water quality education animated video series and other promotional materials. Name submissions were collected in June and July through a competitive process open to all residents of the Kansas City region. Submissions were then reviewed by a panel of committee members and a finalist was selected.

Thank you again to Josh Morkhart for our new name!

Meet Dewy the Droplet, MARC's newly-named Water Quality mascot.



Plog-a-Thon

In October 2021, MARC conducted the first ever metro-wide virtual Plog-a-thon to reduce the impact of trash and litter on regional water quality. Plogging, a Swedish term for picking up litter while running, was first introduced to the metro in 2019. In 2021, the event was adapted to a virtual format to ensure proper social distancing and to reach a broader audience.

During Plogtober 2021, individuals and groups were encouraged to clean up area parks and neighborhoods to keep litter out of our local water ways. On Sunday, October 17th, MARC organized six county-wide Plogs on regional trails to get residents outdoors after a long quarantine and engage them in a socially responsible activity that beautifies the streamside trails in your community. 118 people participated in Plogtober, collecting at least one bag-full of trash each..

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH MATERIALS

Native Plants and Rain Gardens

Continued to distribute:

- “Build Your Own Rain Garden” how-to brochure.
- “Know your Roots” brochure.
- Outdoor-rated, “Do Not Mow/Native Planting” signage for BMPs

Pet Waste

Continued to distribute:

- “Pick Up After Your Pet” brochures.
- Outdoor-rated, “Pick Up After Your Pet” signage to local municipalities.
- 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” brochure.
- “Redirect or Disconnect Your Downspout” brochure.
- “Know Your Soil” brochure.
- “Making and Using Compost” brochure.
- “Use Lawn Chemicals Wisely” brochure

Brochure Translations

Continued to:

- Use existing supply of Spanish-language brochures.
- Distribute double-sided doorhangers (in English and Spanish) as a companion outreach tool for neighbors near stormdrain marker installations.



General Stormwater Education

Continued to:

- Distribute stormdrain inlet markers for local municipalities.
- Distribute “Keep Sediment Out of Our Water”, “Know Your Watershed”, “Protect Our Streams” and “Stormdrain Stewardship” brochures.
- Make the committee’s Water Quality Education Program banner available for community events and functions.
- Distribute automotive trash bags with the “Stop Littering” imprinted message.
- Distribute Water Quality Education postcards

NEW ITEM: Water Quality Education Playing Cards

The Committee used artwork developed by the Kansas City Art Institute to develop educational playing cards, with staff developing a modified "Go Fish" game that cards could be used to play. Game cards outlined actions individuals could take to improve stream water quality, including using less fertilizer, landscaping with native plants, and picking up pet waste.



Messaging and Droplet Character



WQ Education Postcards



Branded Car Litter Bags



Stormwater Educational Playing Cards

Printed Materials by the Numbers:

Brochures	Storm Drain Markers	Portable/Car Litter Bags
1198	75	700
Playing Cards	Pet Waste Bag Dispensers	WQ Education Postcards
548	100	1200
Total		
3821		

TRAININGS

Stormwater & Resilience Webinar Series

With the delay and eventual cancellation of the 2021 KC Urban Stormwater Conference, MARC hosted four webinars to provide information on emerging trends in stormwater management and resilience around the country.

Webinar speakers represented 13 organizations, including stormwater utilities, public works, planning, and parks departments, engineering firms, regulatory entities and nonprofit organizations.

On average, 50 virtual registrants attended each session. Recordings for all sessions can be found at <https://www.marc.org/Environment/MetroGreen-Parks/Current-Projects/Green-Infrastructure-Framework>.

- "Why Riparian Restoration and How?", July 20.
- "Climate Change/Adaptation & Resilience", July 27.
- "Stormwater Funding Gaps + Policy", September 21.
- "Transportation & Conservation Planning", October 26.

Green Infrastructure Training with CDM Smith

On October 5th, MARC hosted CDM Smith for a half-day workshop on Green Infrastructure design and maintenance. This workshop covered strategies to maximize the success of green infrastructure projects and lessons learned locally and around the country, providing specific recommendations for municipalities, owners, designers, contractors, and maintenance personnel.

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:

StoneLion Puppet Theater (\$5,000)

From August 19th to October 30th, StoneLion Puppet Theater held four free water festivals focused on educating Kansas City residents about their impact on the local water system. The festivals offered insight into the adverse effects of stormwater runoff and water pollution on regional water quality and promoted policies and household-scale management practices to reduce stormwater runoff and water pollution.

Little Blue River Watershed Coalition (\$3,000)

Big Muddy Cleanup is a Missouri River Cleanup in Kansas City. In 2021, Little Blue River Watershed Coalition held two cleanups. On August 26th, Little Blue River Watershed Coalition partnered with Missouri River Relief on a Missouri River Cleanup from downtown KC east to the I-435 bridge. There were 100 volunteers from Kansas City and 50 from Columbia, MO. On October 2, 35 volunteers cleaned up the south bank of the Missouri River from the confluence with the Kansas River to the I-35 Bond Bridge.

Blue Hills Neighborhood Association (\$5,000)

The Blue Hills Neighborhood Association (BHNA) is working to create a rain garden in the Gateway Pocket Park, a green space where the community's neighborhood marker is located. The rain garden will serve as an example and educational tool for the residents within the Blue Hills neighborhood—encouraging them to create rain gardens in their yards to help capture and control storm water runoff.

Boys Grow (\$3,335)

Boys Grow's Flow Down project was a two-part educational program provided to 40 youth at Boys Grow during the Summer of 2021. The program focused on mitigating stormwater runoff and water pollution at work and at home and led to the successful installation of a diversity of water delivery and irrigation methods.



StoneLion Puppet Theater

FUNDING

In January 2021, MARC submitted a program funding request to local governments for \$147,500. During the course of the year, 15 local governments supported the program. Participating governments are listed below.

PARTICIPATING GOVERNMENTS

Clay County, Missouri	Mission, Kansas**
Excelsior Springs, Missouri	Mission Hills, Kansas**
Fairway, Kansas**	North Kansas City, Missouri
Gardner, Kansas**	Olathe, Kansas**
Gladstone, Missouri	Overland Park, Kansas***
Independence, Missouri	Platte County, Missouri
Jackson County, Missouri	Prairie Village, Kansas**
Johnson County, Kansas *	Raymore, Missouri
Kansas City, Missouri	Raytown, Missouri
Leawood, Kansas**	Roeland Park, Kansas**
Lenexa, Kansas **	Shawnee, Kansas**
Lee's Summit, Missouri	Westwood, Kansas**
Liberty, Missouri	Westwood Hills, Kansas**
Merriam, Kansas**	Unified Government of Wyandotte County /Kansas City, Kansas***

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

*** (Cities covered by Johnson County contribution)*

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

WQEC COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

Meghan Woolbright,
Assistant City Administrator
Mission Hills, Kansas

Hobie Crane,
Planning & Zoning Engineer
Platte County, Missouri

MARC STAFF

Tom Jacobs, Director of Environmental
Programming

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CONTACT

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www.marc.org/water