

Chapter 9 – Education & Outreach Plan

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



Education and public awareness is essential to effective water resources management. Public education will raise awareness about the environmental impacts of daily activities and build support for watershed planning and projects. This Plan includes the framework for a detailed education and awareness program specifically designed to:

- Raise public awareness of water issues and needs to foster support for solutions
- Educate the public and other identified target groups in order to increase awareness and encourage behavioral changes
- Coordinate with other public as well as private entities to maximize the visibility of the Indian Creek Watershed Management Authority and its messages

One of the highest ranked implementation strategies in the Plan is to “develop a collaborative communication & education plan between all ICWMA members using existing materials.” This section will outline how the education and public awareness program can be organized as both a watershed-wide program managed by the ICWMA and education activities undertaken by member local governments.

An Education & Outreach Subcommittee of the ICWMA will be established to coordinate the education messages, materials and methods used among ICWMA Members. A variety of resources including State agencies, the Iowa Storm Water Education Program (ISWEP), and the County Conservation Boards (CCB) have already created educational tools such as mass media content, brochures/factsheets and presentation materials. Coordinating education and outreach efforts will have many benefits including reducing duplication of effort, improving cost effectiveness by sharing costs, and expanding the size and scale of education efforts to include mass media such as television and radio advertising.

The goal of the ICWMA Education & Outreach Subcommittee will be to develop a watershed level public education program that raises awareness of local water resource protection issues. An informed public will be more likely to support local activities as well as change behaviors that will lead to the long-term protection of our water resources. Involving the public in local watershed protection efforts is crucial because it promotes broader public support, helps create an ethic of stewardship and community service and enables the public to make informed choices about water resources management.

The following education strategies were identified as priorities for the first 5-year phase of the Plan and will guide the efforts of the Education & Outreach Subcommittee in the near term.

- partner with ISWEP to hold workshops (with CEUs) for developers, builders, engineers, and inspectors about infiltration practices and Low Impact Development (LID)
- develop a collaborative communication & education plan between all ICWMA members using existing materials (such as the CCB watershed PSAs)
- organize events to connect urban residents with the creek such as storm drain labeling, installing watershed signs, or festivals in parks with access to the creeks, etc
- partner with city & county planning departments to provide trainings, tours or lunch-n-learns to Planning & Zoning Committees, city staff, and other decision makers on stormwater management practices
- communicate the importance of proper management of pet wastes to residents
- communicate with landowners about the Nutrient Reduction Strategy (NRS) recommended practices & foster general understanding about the NRS through workshops, demonstration videos, and implementation of more example projects in the watershed
- communicate the results of water quality monitoring to educate about actual vs. perceived sources of pollution in the watershed
- develop an annual State of Indian Creek report to highlight activities, water quality, steps toward progress

- communicate the comparison of repeated flood recovery costs to pro-active flood mitigation practices to policy makers and the general public
- promote BMPs installed within the watershed as models through signage and/or inclusion in the self-guided podcast tour
- establish user friendly comment submittal system on ICWMA website to communicate issues with the trails and stream conditions
- organize Rainscaping workshops and urban BMP tours for homeowners, policy makers, or other interested stakeholders to communicate the purpose and attractiveness of BMPs

The ICWMA Education & Outreach Subcommittee will consider the following program framework as a starting point to building a watershed level public awareness and education program.

9.1 Program Elements

The watershed level public awareness and education program should include both public education and outreach and public participation and involvement activities defined as:

Education and outreach activities are designed to distribute education materials and messages, and perform outreach to inform citizens and target audiences.

Public participation and involvement activities provide opportunities for citizens to participate in programs and become active in implementing watershed protection programs.

Table 9-1. Example Activities

Education / Outreach Programs	Public Involvement / Participation Programs
Bill inserts or newsletters	Creek water quality monitoring program
Brochures at local government facilities	Watershed festival
Website with watershed education information	Creek clean-up events
Speakers bureau presentations	Storm drain stenciling events
Event displays and/or kiosks	Watershed citizen advisory group
Press releases	Rainscaping workshops
School classroom education	Agriculture stakeholder group

9.2 Watershed Public Education Messages

The ICWMA Education & Outreach Subcommittee will consider incorporating these central messages for the watershed level education and public awareness program as well as incorporating the Social Assessment recommendations (see Chapter 6).

- Everything we do, where we work, live or play can impact our water resources
- We are all part of the solution to stormwater pollution / we are in this together
- Clean water for drinking, recreation and economic benefits need to be protected for future generations
- Watershed stewardship: It is the responsibility of everyone to protect our water resources
- We all live downstream

9.3 Education Focus for Target Audiences

The ICWMA Education & Outreach Subcommittee will tailor the messages for the target audiences identified in the Lunch & Learn events as summarized below.

General Public

Basic concepts of stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution including how their actions can impact water quality.

Students / Schools

Work with Coe College to distribute their newly developed curriculum to school systems to incorporate water resource protection lesson plans into current curriculum.

Homeowners / Urban Agriculture / Golf Courses

Best practices for fertilizer and pesticide use on gardens and landscapes as well as proper disposal of grass clippings and leaves in order to protect nearby water sources. Using low impact development practices to mitigate runoff such as rain gardens, rain barrels, and permeable paving.

Builders / Developers / Design Professionals

Best management practices on proper disposal of construction materials, erosion and sedimentation control, low impact development and buffer protection.

Realtors / Floodplain Residents

Explain long term flood risk to potential home buyers.

Local Government Staff

Educate local government staff such as public works, parks and recreation, code enforcement, planning and zoning, etc. on best management practices that affect water quality.

Local Elected Officials / Governing Boards

Importance of promoting and sufficiently funding the implementation of best management practices in order to protect local water resources.

9.4 Education Program Delivery Techniques

There are a number of ways to reach target audiences in a public education effort both at a local and watershed level. Some examples of these delivery methods are outlined below.

Internet

- **Website** – An internet site or page can provide an inexpensive way to foster awareness and education of stormwater management and watershed protection issues at the community or regional level. A website can also serve as an information clearinghouse for other educational materials, and provide resources and additional links for target groups such as the general public, the development communities, and various industries.
- **Email** – Email newsletters can provide information on upcoming outreach events as well as tips on nonpoint source pollution control for targeted audiences and the general public. Email is often the least expensive way to reach a larger number of individuals and entities.

- Streaming media – Tools such as streaming audio and video, webcasts, online training workshops, and other interactive electronic media tools can provide additional opportunities for reaching target audiences.

Printed Materials

- Brochures & Fact Sheets – Brochures, fact sheets and other literature can be for general information or provide messages and tips specific to a particular topic or target group. Printed materials often complement other education and public awareness activities such as public outreach events and workshops.
- Bill Inserts – Printed materials can be designed to accompany utility bills or other correspondence to local citizens and businesses. Inserts can include brochures, newsletters, tips on best management practices and event notices. Bill inserts are an excellent way to distribute educational materials without additional postage expenses.
- CD / DVDs and DVD-ROMS are mediums for providing interactive educational material and are especially well-suited for youth and classroom education. In addition, video DVD's can be used to distribute content such as public service announcements (PSAs), video programs, and instructional/training videos.
- Posters – Wall posters provide a great deal of information quickly to the target audience at a stationary location and can be displayed at locations such as libraries, schools, and other public locations.

Mass Media

- Press Relations – Both local communities and the ICWMA can work with the media to ensure coverage of stormwater and watershed protection issues and activities. This can include both articles and event listings in general circulation newspapers, specialty papers, and regional magazines; radio and television interviews; features on radio and television news and public affairs programming; and coverage of events such as watershed fairs and creek cleanups.
- Television Public Service Announcements – Television advertising using PSAs provide an immediate impact with a visual message. Broadcast channels reach a wide audience but are high-priced. Cable television offers local communities the ability to target their citizens and even tailor advertising to specific channels and audiences.
- Radio Public Service Announcements – Radio PSAs are an alternative to television and provide a less expensive way to reach a large number of individuals with messages and nonpoint source pollution tips.
- Outdoor Advertising – Billboards and other outdoor advertising such as bus shelter ads can be a way to reach audiences through a different medium. These outdoors ads are well suited to short theme messages and specific tips on stormwater pollution prevention.
- Other Advertising – Other advertising methods that may be considered include movie theater PSAs, paid ads in newspapers and print magazines, and sponsorship of traffic and/or weather spots on radio.

Outreach and Involvement

- Workshops – Workshops and seminars are opportunities to provide more detailed information and training to citizens, businesses and public sector groups.
- Speakers Bureau – A speakers bureau provides an opportunity for government staff and other professionals to address community organizations, business groups, homeowners' associations, church groups and educational institutions on issues related to stormwater and watershed management.

- **Events** – Hosting or participation in community events provides an opportunity for the distribution of information and resources directly to target communities. In addition, topic specific events such as watershed fairs, stream cleanups and storm drain stenciling are an important way to involve citizens directly in watershed management efforts.
- **Event Display** – An event display provides a way to present information and educational messages at workshops and other events. Exhibits may be permanent or portable and can have static displays, videos, or interactive features. Portable display boards are often effective for use at events or workshops.
- **Promotional Items** – Promotional giveaways such as magnets, pencils and bumper stickers can be imprinted with pollution prevention messages and tips and distributed at community events, schools and workshops.

