



# 2014 Annual Report



Above: A Lake Elmo area Girl Scout troop pulls weeds during a raingarden maintenance workshop.

## Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:

Brown's Creek Watershed • Carnelian-Marine-St. Croix Watershed •  
Comfort Lake-Forest Lake Watershed • Cottage Grove •  
Dellwood • Forest Lake • Lake Elmo • Middle St. Croix Watershed •  
Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed • Rice Creek Watershed • Stillwater •  
South Washington Watershed • Valley Branch Watershed • Willernie •  
West Lakeland • Woodbury • Washington Conservation District • Washington County

**East Metro Water Resource Education Program  
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## **About the East Metro Water Resource Education Program**

**Background:** The East Metro Water Resource Education Program (EMWREP) is a partnership that was formed in 2006 to develop and implement a comprehensive water resource education and outreach program for the east metro area of St. Paul, MN. Current EMWREP partners include Brown's Creek, Carnelian-Marine-St Croix, Comfort-Lake Forest Lake, Rice Creek, Ramsey-Washington Metro, South Washington, and Valley Branch Watershed Districts, Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization, the cities of Cottage Grove, Dellwood, Forest Lake, Lake Elmo, Stillwater, Willernie, and Woodbury, West Lakeland Township, Washington County and the Washington Conservation District.

**Purpose:** The purpose of the shared education program is to provide education about the impacts of non-point source pollution on local lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands and groundwater resources and to engage people in projects that will help to protect and improve water quality in the region. In addition to educating the public, EMWREP also provides training for city, county and watershed staff and local elected officials.

**Partnership Structure:** EMWREP is guided by a steering committee comprised of representatives from each of the 18 partner organizations. The committee generally meets twice a year to provide recommendations on the program budget and activities. During 2013, EMWREP staff included Angie Hong, full-time education specialist and coordinator for the program, Jenn Radtke, half-time education assistant, and Wendy Griffin, a Washington Conservation District natural resource specialist who provided 170 hours of support for rural education activities. The EMWREP coordinator sends a quarterly e-newsletter to all partners' staff, council members and board members, and communicates one-on-one with individual partners on projects throughout the year. The EMWREP education plan is revised every two to three years to accommodate changing priorities and new target audiences. In addition, the EMWREP coordinator prepares an annual report on program activities and provides outreach data and statistics for partners' MS4 Permit reports. All EMWREP reports, plans, and education updates are available on-line at [www.mnwcd.org/emwrep](http://www.mnwcd.org/emwrep).

**Coordination with Other Regional Education Efforts:** One of the major benefits of the EMWREP program is that it has helped to strengthen relationships between Washington Conservation District, Washington County and the eight watershed management organizations and eight cities that constitute the partnership, which has resulted in better coordination and less overlap in the management of local water resources. By promoting partner's BMP programs, EMWREP has helped to increase the total number of water quality improvement projects implemented and to target these projects in priority areas.

EMWREP has also played a central role in the coordination and development of two regional education programs, Blue Thumb and WaterShed Partners. Blue Thumb is a partnership of more than 70 public and private entities in the Upper Midwest, developed to promote the use of native plantings, raingardens and shoreline plantings to conserve water resources and reduce runoff pollution. WaterShed Partners, which manages the Clean Water Minnesota media campaign, is a collaborative of more than 70 non-profit and public entities in the Twin Cities metro area that work together to educate the public about stormwater pollution. Additionally, EMWREP frequently partners with organizations within the St. Croix River Basin for educational events and activities.

**Accolades:** In 2012, the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts recognized EMWREP as the Watershed Program of the Year.

## 2014 Executive Summary

**General Education Campaign:** During 2014, EMWREP continued to use a variety of strategies to educate the general public about stormwater pollution and other issues affecting the quality of surface and groundwater resources, and to inform them about partner programs and activities. Major strategies include more than 100 articles per year in local newspapers and community newsletters, ample use of social media, direct mailings to specific audiences, and participation in more than 15 community events.

Though the impact of these larger public education and awareness raising efforts is often hard to measure directly, we know they greatly improve the success of our targeted outreach activities and are usually the initial gateway through which people learn about EMWREP partner organizations and engage at a higher level by attending a workshop, participating in a watershed planning process, or installing a clean water project on their property.

In 2014, EMWREP also conducted the following special education projects:

- 1) Held a series of three focus groups with representatives from homeowners' associations (HOAs), property management companies, and lawn care companies.
- 2) Developed an e-newsletter for area congregations and new educational resources for this audience; and
- 3) Created a Clean Water Geocaching Trail to highlight partner projects.

**Blue Thumb Program:** The Blue Thumb – Planting for Clean Water program ([www.BlueThumb.org](http://www.BlueThumb.org)) was developed by the Rice Creek Watershed District in 2006 and EMWREP has been a key member since then. During 2014, the Blue Thumb partnership included more than 70 public and private entities - nurseries, landscaping companies, watershed agencies, cities, non-profits and citizen groups.

EMWREP uses Blue Thumb tools and resources, such as the website and print materials, to conduct public education and enhance outreach efforts. Last year, EMWREP:

- 1) Conducted four raingarden design workshops, one shoreline planting workshop, and two raingarden maintenance workshops;
- 2) Coordinated neighborhood gatherings in Bayport, Lake Elmo, Stillwater, Forest Lake, and Wyoming;
- 3) Supported targeted outreach efforts in Stillwater and North St. Paul / Maplewood;
- 4) Helped to promote watershed best management practices (BMP) programs; and
- 5) Contributed to the new Washington County BMP database.

EMWREP education continues to amplify the impact of partner BMP clean water programs. Out of 961 voluntary urban BMPs built in Washington County between 2007 and 2013, 115 (12%) came from people who attended Blue Thumb workshops hosted by EMWREP. Furthermore, of the 362 people who attended workshops between 2007 and 2013, 106 (29%) went on to install BMP projects on their land. In 2014, BMP program staff reported:

- 233 site visits
- 33 new projects installed; 34 projects from previous years completed
- 68.75 pounds of phosphorus (P) captured by all projects installed in 2014
- 58,122 pounds of total suspended solids (TSS) captured by all projects in 2014

**Rural Outreach:** During 2014, EMWREP offered several programs specifically designed to engage rural property owners. These included a workshop for horse owners, a cover crop field seminar, and support for nitrates well water testing in southern Washington County. In addition, EMWREP also provided outreach support for targeted implementation efforts, including Washington Conservation District's Turf to Prairie and Top50P! projects.

**Blue Biz:** The Blue Biz program consists of a website ([www.cleanwaterMN.org/businesses](http://www.cleanwaterMN.org/businesses)) and outreach materials that partners can use to engage commercial property owners in BMP projects.

**Stormwater U:** In 2014, EMWREP coordinated with Minnesota Extension, the University of Minnesota Erosion and Stormwater Management Certification Programs, and the Minnesota Erosion Control Association (MECA) to provide professional training and workshops for local government staff and consultants, as well as builders, developers and contractors, including:

- 1) Innovation in Stormwater Best Management Practices;
- 2) Erosion and Sediment Control Inspections and Enforcement; and
- 3) P8 Modeling

During 2014, EMWREP also developed a series of ten 10-minute PowerPoint presentations for partners to use during monthly staff meetings. The presentations cover training topics included under Minimum Control Measure 6 of the MS4 permit.

**NEMO:** The Northland NEMO program (Non-point Education for Municipal Officials) provides local elected officials and decision makers with resources and information to make informed decisions about land use and water quality in their communities. Northland NEMO is hosted by the University of Minnesota Extension and EMWREP is a partner organization.

During 2014, EMWREP collaborated with several other partners to hold the fifth annual *Workshop on the Water* for St. Croix Basin communities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Nearly 120 people attended. EMWREP also provided support for a grant project to help communities in Washington County adopt Minimal Impact Design Standards, including conducting a special workshop for city attorneys. In addition, EMWREP staff presented to the Oakdale Environmental Commission and helped to coordinate Washington County Water Consortium activities.

**MS4 Toolkit:** EMWREP developed the MS4 Toolkit ([www.cleanwatermn.org/MS4toolkit](http://www.cleanwatermn.org/MS4toolkit)) several years ago with a grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The toolkit includes educational materials that partners can use to meet the six minimum control measures in the MS4 permit, such as brochures, posters, slide shows, training videos and more. In addition to the on-line materials, training videos for parks and public works staff and pop-up banners for community events are available partners to borrow. The Metro WaterShed Partners MS4 work group is currently discussing strategies for updating the MS4 Toolkit and website.