



Stormwater Education Subgroup

Mon, September 28th, 2020 -- 2:00 – 3:00 pm

In attendance: Eliana Brown, Illinois Extension; Kate Gardiner, Illinois Extension; Layne Knoche, Illinois Extension; Christine Davis, Illinois EPA; Trevor Sample, Illinois EPA; Mary Mitros, DuPage County; Tyler Carpenter, Greater Egypt Regional Planning Commission; Lisa Merrifield, Illinois Extension; Lisa Krause, Illinois Department of Natural Resources Coastal Management Program

Summary

Welcome and Member Updates

Eliana welcomed everyone to the meeting and encouraged members to share updates. Tyler Carpenter shared Greater Egypt's efforts in watershed planning and virtual outreach. Lisa Merrifield shared her involvement in two grant proposals. Lisa Krause shared a Coastal Programs project related to Lake County-Lake Michigan stormwater management. Kate Gardiner shared that she is putting together a toolkit of educational resources related to the Illinois NLRs. Eliana Brown shared that she is working on grants to site green infrastructure and to distribute stormwater education to the East Central Illinois area.

DuPage County Stormwater Outreach Program - Mary Mitros, DuPage County

The public needs to be involved and you can involve them by knowing your audience, developing your necessary tools, getting the word out, and using communication as a two-way street.

First, know your audience, which can include technical experts, interested folks, and the general public. The general public values water quality, health, money, ordinances, tie, and social norms.

Second, develop your necessary tools. DuPage County uses tools like publications, media, and social forces. Publications span a variety of resources, like brochures, informational one sheets, monthly e-newsletters, flooding guidebooks, and annual reports. Media could be public service announcements, flood control facility videos, project features, training videos, outreach videos, virtual tours, e-learning, recorded webinars, and created GIFs and infographics. For social forces, they use the handle @LoveBlueLiveGreen on their Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube accounts and use surveys, hashtags, and apps.

Third, get the word out. Public outreach is important for reaching stormwater management goals in DuPage County. They offer webinars, develop video content, and create interactive content like online training, e-learning, virtual events, and a citizen reporter app.

Mary provided some closing advice for accomplishing this, saying she works on programs seasonally to help break up work; the first draft will never be the final draft, but it's okay to start distributing; use the resources available to you – no need to recreate the wheel; hand-holding may be required, technology can be hard; and just do it!

Subgroup planning

Meet again next month to look at the Stormwater Resources Repository.

Next steps

Meet again to further discuss the Stormwater Resources Repository. Send Kate any stormwater-related resources for the Illinois NLRS Explorer.

Meeting Minutes

Welcome and Member Updates

Eliana welcomed everyone to the meeting and encouraged members to share updates.

Tyler Carpenter: They are involved with watershed planning and bought two Enviroscape models last year with the idea to present at schools with the models. It looks like they will have to do something a little different – either prerecord a video or do it virtually. Also finished a workbook that's on their website too, which they will have printed in about a month. Going out with a water resources survey for the greater Carbondale area with best management practices to get input on the nine different communities on how stormwater impacts them. They want to get a feel for residents' familiarity with watersheds and their functions. Hope to get enough responses so that it can direct how they apply for grants. Working on the Rainscaping workshop for next July with Jackson County Extension. It was a success last year and they hope to have another successful workshop next year.

Lisa Merrifield: We are submitting a grant proposal to look at a Green Infrastructure inventory with NCSA on Wednesday and will hopefully know if it gets funded within the next month or so. Another one I haven't talked about with this group is a group of faculty members that came together to talk about climate resilience. They want to do applied research that can be used to address community concerns and challenges, so having your voices at the table could help them. The first one was Chicago-focused so this second one will be focused more on medium to small sized communities.

Lisa Krause: We are working on a couple different projects, but one I'll mention today is related to Lake County Lake Michigan stormwater management. Part of what the program is working on is a strategy to restore ravine habitat. While people seem to be interested in the topic, a question that keeps popping up is how to motivate people to act, especially when the communities have ravines on private property.

Kate Gardiner: We are putting together a toolkit for educational resources related to the Illinois NLRS. It will be housed on the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant website. We are still gathering resources, so if you have any you'd like to include, please share them. I will be sending out an email to all the working groups with this request as well.

Eliana Brown: There is a grant I'm working on with Margaret Schneeman and Mary Pat Maguire, who have been collaborating with soil scientists and an engineering professor on devising a toolkit to help municipalities and local government to site GI. So rather than being opportunistic with site choice, you choose the sites based on the land and where the GI can best succeed. An additional grant she is working on is taking the toolkit and distributing it out in the East Central Illinois area through Rainscaping and some of the other existing Extension programs.

DuPage County Stormwater Outreach Program - Mary Mitros, DuPage County

First, to have a successful stormwater outreach program, the public needs to be involved. Begin by knowing your audience, developing your necessary tools, getting the word out, and using communication as a two-way street.

First, know your audience. Stormwater outreach audiences can include technical experts (like municipalities, park districts, forest preserve district, elected officials, DuPage County departments, state agencies, etc.), interested folks (like businesses, non-profit environmental groups, educated institutions, citizen stewards, etc.), and the general public. The general public values water quality, health, money, ordinances, tie, and social norms. When asked where water from storm sewers drains, only about 45% of people surveyed said it went into the local streams and rivers. Language they knew about included native plants and stormwater runoff, less familiar with watershed, best management practices, and green infrastructure. Instead of saying non-point source pollution, they say polluted water or other similar terms.

Second, develop your necessary tools. Tools include publications, media, and social forces. Their publications span a variety of outreach resources, like brochures, informational one sheets, monthly e-newsletters, flooding guidebooks, and annual reports. Since the pandemic started, they have grown their e-newsletter by about 15% and it has proven to be an important source of information. DuPage County uses media tools like public service announcements, flood control facility videos, project features, training videos, outreach videos, virtual tours, e-learning, recorded webinars, and created GIFs and infographics. They have also adapted several videos from other agencies and use drones to capture footage. They partner with SCARCE and they use a water quality flag, Enviroscape, and other activities, and are transitioning into both recorded and live e-learning. For social forces, they use the handle @LoveBlueLiveGreen on their Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube accounts and use surveys, hashtags, and apps. Since the pandemic, they have grown their social media followers by 30%.

Third, get the word out. Public outreach is important for reaching stormwater management goals in DuPage County. They offer a variety of webinars, develop video content, and create interactive content. Their video content is comprised of 25 videos spanning virtual tours, technical training videos, and residential outreach videos. Interactive content includes online training portal, e-learning, virtual events, and a citizen reporter app. For social media, they post videos, infographics, and GIFs. She showed an example infographic on protecting water quality in the winter. They steered away from public events and more towards virtual outreach.

Mary provided some closing notes, saying she works on programs seasonally to help break up work; the first draft will never be the final draft, but it's okay to start distributing; use the resources available to you – no need to recreate the wheel; hand-holding may be required, technology can be hard; and just do it!

Questions/Discussion:

Kate Gardiner: You mentioned you increased your social media followers by 30% since the pandemic started, that's great! Do you have any advice for how to increase social media reach?

Mary Mitros: Yeah, it's hard to do! A lot of our growth had to do with capturing people through the webinars and e-newsletter. Every newsletter has the social media links and using the infographics helps because people share them and then we get more followers that way. Using the visual tools and videos helps too.

Tyler Carpenter: It seems like you guys are killing it. Down here in southern Illinois, we have a beginner MS4. Could you share how do you get funding for various programs?

Mary Mitros: We are funded partly by county property tax and partly by external grants. We get funding for the outreach as part of the DuPage County Stormwater Management department.

Chris Davis: We'll address items on a case-by-case basis, but everyone should do their best to meet their permit goals. We will work with people to come up with another plan of attack if necessary.

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