

# CHAPTER EIGHT: EDUCATION & OUTREACH STRATEGY & TOOLS

## NORTH BRANCH CHICAGO RIVER WATERSHED-BASED PLAN

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**COMMON ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CHAPTER 8**

BMP – Best Management Practices  
CLC – College of Lake County  
CMAP – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning  
CRS – Community Rating System  
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency  
FOCR – Friends of the Chicago River  
FPDCC – Forest Preserve District of Cook County  
HOA – Homeowners Association  
IDNR – Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Illinois EPA – Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
ILMA – Illinois Lakes Management Association  
LA – Lake Associations  
LCFPD – Lake County Forest Preserve District  
LCHD – Lake County Health Department  
LCTV – Lake County Television  
LFOLA – Lake Forest Open Lands Association  
LID – Low Impact Development  
MWRD – Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago  
NBCR Planning Area – North Branch Chicago River Watershed Planning Area  
NBWW – North Branch Chicago River Watershed Workgroup  
NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service  
PB&D – Planning Building & Development  
PSA- Public Service Announcement  
SMC – Lake County Stormwater Management Commission  
SWALCO - Solid Waste Agency of Lake County  
SWANCC – Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County  
SWCDs –Soil & Water Conservation Districts (McHenry-Lake & North Cook)  
USEPA – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
USGS – United States Geological Survey  
WWTPs – Wastewater Treatment Plants (including publicly owned treatment works)  
YCC – Youth Conservation Corps

## 8 EDUCATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

This chapter provides a strategy for all watershed stakeholders for information, education, and public involvement to address watershed topics and issues. The education and outreach strategy provides messaging and motivation for each target audience (Section 8.3) to help achieve watershed goals and objectives in order to ultimately realize the vision for the North Branch Chicago River (NBCR) watershed. The Vision is restated below.

### **WATERSHED VISION:**

*Success in restoring the watershed and improving the health of the river will depend on how well stakeholders interact with the river and manage their activities that affect the watershed. The North Branch Chicago River Watershed-Based Plan also includes a significant public education and outreach component to reach watershed residents and communities. Watershed awareness is the first step in changing behavioral patterns that degrade the river. In addition to bringing watershed awareness to residents, communities will also work together on a cooperative basis and combine their resources with county, state, federal and private cost-share funds to complete a number of the recommended watershed improvement projects and programs. The bottom line is residents and communities of the watershed will have to work together to successfully protect and restore the North Branch - sharing the costs and the benefits of watershed improvements.... **WE ALL LIVE "DOWNSTREAM"***

### 8.1 WATERSHED INFORMATION AND EDUCATION NEEDS

Community engagement, education and outreach are essential components of the North Branch Chicago River Watershed-Based Plan. The education and outreach strategy is designed to:

- Raise public awareness about watershed issues and foster support for solutions;
- Educate stakeholders, the public, and other identified target audiences to increase awareness and encourage behavioral changes (see Figure 8-1);
- Provide engaged stakeholders the knowledge and skills they need to become watershed stewards and implement the watershed-based plan;
- Leverage public and private partnerships to implement action items.



**Figure 8-1: August 10, 2016 Annual North Branch Chicago River watershed planning meeting at the Chicago Botanic Gardens.**

### 8.2 RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS

Development of an education and outreach program begins by defining education and outreach goals and objectives. Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC) proposed revisions to the 2008 NBCR watershed-based plan education and outreach strategy (Building Blocks, and Appendix N Sample Education & Participation Plan). During the February 13, 2019 North Branch Chicago River Watershed Workgroup (NBWW) General Membership meeting, stakeholders discussed and provided additional input to the proposed revisions. Following the stakeholder input at the February 13, 2019 meeting, the revisions were discussed and modified again at the May 13, 2019 NBWW General Membership meeting and

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incorporated into the 2020 update to the watershed-based plan.

**EDUCATION & OUTREACH GOAL:** Develop a public information and education program within the watershed.

### OBJECTIVES & INDICATORS:

1. Develop and implement a primary and secondary school-based river curriculum.

**INDICATOR:** Number of schools participating.

2. Provide public information and education program for community leaders, elected officials, businesses and homeowners.

#### INDICATOR(S):

- a) Number of attendees at NBWW general membership meetings (per year).
- b) Number of subscribers to NBWW website (per year).

## 8.3 TARGET AUDIENCES

The audiences for specific education and outreach activities and topics include organizations, watershed residents, general public, and professionals within watershed communities. These audiences have a wide range of understanding of watershed issues and needs for further education and outreach. Education and outreach aim to be responsive to existing partners, attract stakeholders that have not previously participated in watershed improvement activities, and align messages with audience knowledge levels and motivations. Education and outreach partners include the entities listed and discussed below.

### 8.3.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES

Continued support from local governments and public landowners will be critical to implementing the education and outreach strategy. These officials and agencies develop policies and regulations and manage land and projects within the watershed. They need to commit to projects on public lands and communicate with and motivate residents to participate in watershed improvements. The local government target audience includes:

- Municipalities
- Townships
- County agencies
- Elected officials and policy makers
- Drainage districts
- Park districts & forest preserve districts



**Figure 8-2: Stakeholders participating in a North Branch Chicago River Watershed Planning Meeting (May 11, 2016).**

- Public works agencies
- Transportation agencies (Highway Commissioners)

### **8.3.2 RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES**

Numerous residents and businesses in the NBCR watershed have participated in one or more NBWW general membership meetings (see [Figure 8-2](#)). The target audience includes the following:

- All residents and landowners (see section 8.3.2.1 for riparian and lakeshore landowners)
- Not-for-profit and environmental interest groups
- Businesses and institutions (i.e., golf courses, shopping centers, churches and chambers of commerce)

#### *8.3.2.1 Riparian and Lakeshore Landowners*

Riparian landowners may have a disproportionate impact on stream and wetland areas and often have a vested interest in improving watershed conditions to protect their property, comply with regulations, or enhance property values. Riparian areas are critical locations because they contribute to watershed problems or hold the key to solutions. Therefore, the riparian and lakeshore property owners should be targeted for special attention in the education and outreach strategy. The target audience includes the following groups of riparian and lakeshore landowners:

- Homeowner and lake associations (HOAs/LAs)
- Single family residences
- Commercial and multifamily residential properties
- Owners of undeveloped land
- Railroads
- Utility companies located in floodplains or along streams, lakes, and wetlands
- Forest preserves
- Golf courses

### **8.3.3 NORTH BRANCH CHICAGO RIVER WATERSHED WORKGROUP**

The NBWW's goals include support of the North Branch Watershed Planning Committee and the North Branch Watershed Consortium through fostering stakeholder forums at general membership meetings, as well as, providing education and outreach targeted at achieving attainment of water quality standards and designated uses for the watershed.

### **8.3.4 SCHOOLS AND YOUTH GROUPS**

Education and outreach programs and messages are targeted towards students in schools and youth groups which are needed to set a foundation in order to achieve long-term sustainable improvements. Youth involvement in activities, such as stream clean-ups and habitat restoration days or even smaller tasks such as not littering and responsible recycling, is an effective way to engage groups in learning about and acting to improve watershed conditions. The student target audience includes the following schools and youth groups:

- Primary and secondary schools
- College of Lake County (CLC)

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- Youth groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts)

### **8.3.5 DEVELOPERS & HOMEBUILDERS**

The land development process has the potential to adversely affect watershed conditions, but development interests can be balanced with watershed goals if identified prior to or early in the design and development process. Developers and homebuilders need to adopt a variety of best development standards and comply with regulations, codes, and ordinances to protect watershed resources.

### **8.3.6 CONSULTANTS AND CONTRACTORS WORKING IN THE WATERSHED**

Several engineering, environmental and other consultants have participated in stakeholder meetings and provided their expertise towards the watershed planning process. The watershed-based plan will provide consultants and contractors with resources to share with their clients and support for prioritization of future projects. Consultants and contractors can deliver outreach and education messages to their clients to motivate BMP adoption for watershed improvements. The target audience of consultants and contractors is:

- Engineering, landscape architectural, and environmental consulting firms
- Restoration contractors
- Legal counsel
- Insurance companies
- Winter maintenance product/equipment suppliers
- Winter maintenance (snow removal) contractors

### **8.3.7 LANDSCAPERS & NURSERIES**

Landscapers, lawn and garden centers, nurseries, hardware stores, large retail establishments, and snow removal contractors can make a huge impact by learning and following watershed-friendly lawn care and winter maintenance practices, especially by reducing their use of pesticides, herbicides and chemicals such as chloride and phosphorus. Local government entities can support education by maintaining registries for lawn care, nurseries, and winter maintenance providers. The target audience of landscapers and nurseries is:

- Lawn & garden centers

## **8.4 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS**

Organizations that will be responsible for implementing the watershed plan recommendations can assist in education and outreach and can also be one of the targeted audiences. Each partner organization should couple plan implementation efforts with parallel efforts to inform and educate. Several educational programs are currently being implemented by other organizations that watershed stakeholders may take advantage of for the NBCR watershed education and outreach strategy. See Table 8-1 below for a list of potential partner organizations to engage and implement the watershed plan recommendations.



**Table 8-1 Partner Organizations**

Watershed Residents & Landowners	IDNR	Park Districts
Businesses and Institutions	Illinois EPA	Schools
CLC	ILMA	SWALCO & SWANCC
CMAP	Lake County (including PB&D)	SMC
Cook County	LCHD	Townships
Drainage Districts	LFOLA	Transportation Departments
Environmental Interest Groups	Master Gardeners	USEPA
FEMA	Municipalities (including Public Works Depts.)	USGS
Forest Preserve Districts	MWRD	Watershed Planning Committees
FOCR	NBWW	WWTPs
HOAs/LAs	NRCS / SWCDs	YCC

## 8.5 GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The following list provides general guidance for implementing the education and outreach strategy. More detailed recommendations for addressing specific watershed issues are included in Table 8-3.

- Use words that the general public can understand, and which speak to their existing values and priorities.
  - Include basic watershed science education (e.g., biology, the water cycle, and stream ecology) as it may be needed for the audiences that have little knowledge about rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands or watersheds.
  - Identify and provide for different levels of understanding and the needs of various audience groups. When interacting with a group, start by stressing the aspects of the project most applicable to them. For example, when interacting with homeowners, focus on items such as rain gardens, lawn care, pollution prevention and restoration, and management of riparian buffers. Develop a similarly targeted menu of topics and look for opportunities to “cross train” target audiences.
  - Inform the audience about actions they can take and behaviors they can change to help address watershed problems and issues.
- Develop multiple messages and update existing messages as needed; use one broad message for the general public and a series of more specifically targeted messages for specific audiences (e.g., landowners, business owners, and municipalities).



**Figure 8-3: NBWW Frequently Asked Questions Factsheet was distributed to potential members in 2018 to provide education on the purpose of forming a workgroup.**

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- Keep the message simple and straightforward with only two or three take-home points at a time, use graphics and photos to illustrate the message, and repeat it frequently. Keep messages positive. See **Figure 8-3**.
- Emphasize the connections between the watershed stakeholder issues and watershed issues. For example, connect the message to storms, streams, lakes, the North Branch Chicago River, land management, the urban landscape, and streets.
- Coordinate the education and outreach strategy with partner organizations to combine efforts, achieve economies of scale, tap into one another’s networks, share costs, and ensure consistent messages.
- Use websites and other social media, as well as public places, such as libraries and village halls, to post and promote your message.
  - All materials and messages should promote the local watershed groups, with contact information and information on how to get involved.
  - Develop materials and messages that anyone can use.

### 8.6 MESSAGE FORMATS AND DELIVERY MECHANISMS

Numerous existing programs, tools, and materials are available that can be used or customized to accelerate education and outreach efforts. See Table 8-2 below for examples of education and outreach through print, electronic, visual and personal contact communication efforts.

**Table 8-2: Examples of Education & Outreach Mechanisms**

PRINT	ELECTRONIC	VISUALS	PERSONAL CONTACT
Brochures	Social Media	Displays/Exhibits	Demonstrations
Fact sheets	Websites Story maps	Signage	Field Trips
Newsletters	E-News/emails	Posters/ Bulletin boards	Watershed Tours
News releases	Videos/local cable channel	Presentations	Presentations (meetings, events, workshops, classes, seminars, trainings, open houses etc....)
Manuals or plans; Technical resources	Public Service Announcements (PSA)		Interviews
Inserts/utility bills	Bulletin boards		Surveys
Flyers	Surveys		Targeted/one-on-one discussions and technical assistance
Direct mail			
Feature articles			
Media kit			
Curriculums			

### 8.7 EVALUATING PLAN OUTREACH

Watershed plan evaluation provides a feedback mechanism for ongoing improvement of an outreach effort



and for assessing whether the effort is successful support for further activities and funding. It also builds support for further funding. The entity or persons responsible for implementing the education and information campaign should customize the following ideas.

For a number of these evaluation strategies, collect baseline information or survey current knowledge before the outreach activities begin and check periodically throughout the outreach campaign to help measure progress and effectiveness. Evaluations conducted early in the effort will help determine which programs are working and which ones are not. Based on this information, money and time can be saved by focusing on the programs that work and discarding those that do not. Indicators to evaluate, monitor, and provide a timeframe for each watershed goal are listed in **Chapter 7 & Appendix L Evaluation Scorecards**.

## **8.8 WATERSHED INFORMATION AND EDUCATION RESOURCES**

Watershed education and outreach is not new, there are many resources already available that include effective education and outreach messages, delivery techniques, watershed management planning, media relations, and strategies to assist with developing an outreach campaign. Although larger educational activities, such as training workshops and demonstration projects, may require public or private grant sources, many of SMC's Stormwater Best Practices (<http://www.lakecountyl.gov/2261/Stormwater-Best-Practices>) can be established into partner work activities, projects, and education programs.

Table 8-3 provides educational messages, outreach vehicles and methods, target audiences, and partner leads to implement the NBCR watershed education and outreach strategy. It is important to note that Table 8-3 is based on North Branch Chicago River Watershed-Based Plan Chapter 2 Watershed Issues, Opportunities, Goals & Objectives. The vehicles and methods, partner leads, and messages columns listed below are not comprehensive, but are noted most effective means of disseminating education and outreach topics to that target audience. This table (and Chapter 8) were created to act as an education and outreach strategy and roadmap for watershed stakeholders and to help guide partner leads (identified below) for their own education and outreach strategies and activities. Although partner leads are identified below, there could be other appropriate partner and support leads not listed.

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**Table 8-3: Educational Topics, Messages & Partners**

Target Audience (Section 8.3)	Watershed Goals	Vehicle/ Method	Partner Leads	Messages (Topics/Actions)
8.3.1 Local Government Officials & Agencies	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Emails, newsletters, websites, social media, targeted/one-on-one discussions and technical assistance, manuals or plans, technical resources	NBWW (and members), watershed planning committee, Illinois EPA, MWRD, CMAP, FOCR	Encourage participation in the NBWW
				Financial and economic benefits of water quality improvement and flood mitigation efforts
8.3.2 Residents & Businesses	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Social media, brochures, newsletters, factsheets, inserts/utility bills, education signage at demonstration sites	SMC, MWRD, CMAP, FOCR	Financial and economic benefits of water quality improvement and flood mitigation efforts
		Social media, brochures, newsletters, factsheets	Local governments, forest preserve districts, FOFR, LFOA	Participate in environmental stewardship and river-based recreational opportunities
8.3.3 North Branch Chicago River Watershed Workgroup	1, 4, 5	Presentations (meetings), newsletters, targeted/one-on-one discussions (interjurisdictional coordination), technical assistance	NBWW members and consultants, SMC, MWRD, FOFR	Utilize monitoring data for water quality improvement project implementation
		Emails, newsletters, websites, targeted/one-on-one discussions	NBWW, SMC	Financial and economic incentives for MS4 community participation
		Presentations (meetings), brochures, newsletters, websites, field trips, demonstrations and watershed tours	Illinois EPA, USEPA, SMC, NBWW members	Adoption and implementation of the NBCR watershed-based plan
8.3.4 Schools and Youth Groups	1, 3, 4, 5	Social media, emails, newsletters, inserts/utility bills, education signage at demonstration sites, targeted/one-on-one discussions	Schools, MWRD, CMAP, FOFR, LFOA, LCFPD, SMC, local governments	Participate in environmental stewardship and river-based recreational opportunities
		Emails, factsheets, social media, field trips, demonstrations and trainings, targeted/one-on-one discussions	Forest preserve districts, park districts, local governments	Encourage school-based river curricula
8.3.5 Developers & Homebuilders	1, 2, 4, 5	Manuals or plans, technical assistance and resources, development planning and permitting process	Counties, municipalities, townships, SMC, MWRD	Design and implement green infrastructure beyond current development requirements

Target Audience (Section 8.3)	Watershed Goals	Vehicle/ Method	Partner Leads	Messages (Topics/Actions)
8.3.6 Consultants and Contractors Working in the Watershed	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	Presentations (meetings), emails, newsletters, websites, targeted/one-on-one discussions	NBWW, watershed planning committee, Illinois EPA, SMC, MWRD	Advocate for water quality improvement projects Participation in NBWW membership and/or public meeting forums
		Manuals or plans, technical assistance and resources	SMC, MWRD, CMAP, FOCR	Implement NBCR watershed-based plan action recommendations
8.3.7 Landscapers & Nurseries	1, 3, 4, 5	Brochures, newsletters, social media, websites, education signage at demonstration sites, targeted/one-on-one discussions	Master Gardeners, forest preserve districts, park districts, SMC, MWRD, CMAP, FOCR, LFOLA	Promote native vegetation Take advantage of local native restoration trainings, workshops and demonstrations