

CHAPTER EIGHT: EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION STRATEGY & TOOLS

LAKE MICHIGAN WATERSHED-BASED PLAN

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COMMON ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CHAPTER 8

BMP – Best Management Practices

CMAP – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

HOA – Homeowners Association

IDNR – Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Illinois EPA – Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

ILMA – Illinois Lakes Management Association

LCHD – Lake County Health Department

MWRD – Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of
Greater Chicago

NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service

PSA- Public Service Announcement

SMC – Lake County Stormwater Management
Commission

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 COMMUNICATION STRATEGY 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 communication 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 goals and objectives for the Lake Michigan Watershed Planning Area.

8.1 WATERSHED INFORMATION AND EDUCATION NEEDS

Community engagement, outreach, and education are essential components of the Lake Michigan Watershed-Based Plan. The education and communication 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 **Error! Reference source not found.** for a Work-In-Progress sign);
- Provide engaged stakeholders the knowledge and skills they need to become watershed stewards and implement the watershed action plan;
- Leverage public and private partnerships to implement action items.

8.2 RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS

Development of an education and communication program begins by defining the education and communication goal and objectives. During the June 2019 Lake Michigan watershed planning meeting, stakeholders discussed and approved the following goal and objectives related to education and communication.

WATERSHED EDUCATION & COMMUNICATION GOAL: Watershed stakeholders (residents, property owners, students, non-profit organizations and public agencies) have adequate knowledge, skills, resources, motivation and stewardship opportunities to implement the watershed plan and associated programs.

OUTCOME: *Stakeholders have adequate information, knowledge and opportunity to implement the watershed plan.*

OBJECTIVES:

- a) Conduct a watershed outreach campaign to inform and engage the public about watershed issues and solutions, landowner responsibilities and opportunities, available resources and the benefits of implementing the watershed plan recommendations.
- b) Educate local government officials and agencies, consultants and contractors working in the watershed, landscapers and nurseries, property managers and landowners on road salt alternatives and application BMPs to minimize the use or impact of road salt by public and private snow removal providers.

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- c) Educate local government officials and agencies, consultants and contractors working in the watershed, landscapers and nurseries, and landowners on best practices related to Lake Michigan shoreline and bluff maintenance/management and ravine management.
- d) Educate property owners and caretakers through outreach programs such as Conservation@Home or Rain Ready on ways to improve the quality and quantity of water leaving their property, protect their property from flooding, protect rare or high-quality natural resources that might exist on their property, and contribute to resilient ecosystems.
- e) Utilize trainings, workshops, public meetings, personal site visits, newsletters, websites, media, campaigns, and stakeholder word of mouth to provide watershed stakeholders opportunities to participate in watershed programs and projects.
- f) Facilitate and engage the public, schools and youth groups (students), and homeowner associations to volunteer for stream, beach and natural area stewardship and maintenance.

Additionally, stakeholders felt that the education and communication strategy should also include an objective related to the impact of impervious surfaces in the Lake Michigan watershed. Therefore, an additional objective of the strategy is to:

- g) Educate the watershed's local government officials, agencies, consultants, contractors, and landowners on the impact of impervious surfaces and best methods and resources for reducing impacts via green infrastructure and other best management practices.

8.3 TARGET AUDIENCES

The audiences for specific education and communication activities and topics include public and private organizations, watershed residents and landowners, the general public, and professionals within the watershed community. These audiences have a wide range of understanding of watershed issues and needs for further education and communication. Education and communication 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 communication 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 communication strategy. These officials and agencies develop policies and regulations and manage the land and projects within the watershed. They will 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
- Public works agencies
- Transportation agencies (including Highway Commissioners)

8.3.2 RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

Numerous residents and landowners in the Lake Michigan watershed have participated in one or more watershed plan meetings or subwatershed committee meetings. The target audience includes the following groups or residents:

- All residents and 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, Ravine and Lakeshore Landowners

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

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

8.3.3 SCHOOLS AND YOUTH GROUPS

Communication and education programs and messages are targeted towards students in schools and youth groups which are needed in 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 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
- Colleges and universities
- Youth groups (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts)

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8.3.4 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 should adopt a variety of best development standards and comply with regulations, codes, and ordinances to protect watershed resources.

8.3.5 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 communicate messages to their clients to motivate BMP adoption for watershed improvements. The target audience of consultants and contractors includes:

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

8.3.6 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 pollutants such as chloride and phosphorus. Communities can support education by maintaining registries for lawn care, nurseries, and winter maintenance providers.

- Landscapers and property managers/caretakers
- Lawn & garden centers

8.4 PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations that will be responsible for implementing the watershed plan recommendations can assist in education and communication and can also be one of the targeted audiences. Each partner 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 Lake Michigan watershed education and communication strategy. See Table 8-1 below for a list of potential partner organization for implementing the watershed plan recommendations.

Table 8-1: Partner Organizations

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS	
Watershed Residents & Landowners	Municipalities (including Public Works Depts.)
Businesses and Institutions	MWRD
CMAP	NRCS/SWCDs
Cook County	Openlands
Environmental Interest Groups	Park Districts
Forest Preserve Districts	Schools and Colleges/Universities
HOAs	SMC
IDNR	Townships
Illinois EPA	Transportation Departments
ILMA	USEPA
Kenosha County	USGS
Lake County (including Planning, Bldg. & Development)	Watershed Planning Committee
LCHD	WWTPs
LFOLA	YCC
Master Gardeners, Garden Clubs	Youth Groups

8.5 GUIDANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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

- Use words that the general public can understand and speak to their existing values and priorities.
 - Basic watershed science education (e.g., biology, the water cycle, and stream ecology) may be needed when the audience has little knowledge about streams, ravines, wetlands, Lake Michigan or watersheds.
 - Identify and provide for different levels of understanding and the needs of various audience groups. When interacting with a group, stress the dimensions of the project that apply most 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 areas/ravines. 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).
 - 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.

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- Emphasize the connections between the message and watershed stakeholder issues. For example, connect the message to Lake Michigan, beaches, ravines, storms, streams, land management, the urban landscape, and streets.
- Coordinate the education and communication 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 communication efforts. See Table 8-2 below for examples of education and communication through print, electronic, visual and personal contact communication efforts.

Table 8-2: Examples of Education & Outreach Efforts

PRINT	ELECTRONIC	VISUALS	PERSONAL CONTACT
Brochures	Social Media	Displays/Exhibits	Demonstrations, field trips, watershed tours
Fact sheets	Websites/Interactive Maps	Signage	Presentations (meetings, seminars, etc...)
Newsletters	E-News/Emails	Posters/ Bulletin boards	Interviews
News releases	Videos/local cable channel	Presentations	Surveys
Manuals or plans; Technical resources	Public Service Announcements (PSA)		Targeted/one-on-one discussions and technical assistance
Inserts/Utility bills	Bulletin Boards		
Flyers	Surveys		
Direct mail			
Feature articles			
Media kit			
Curricula			

8.7 EVALUATING PLAN OUTREACH

Watershed plan evaluation provides a feedback mechanism for ongoing improvement of a communication 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 activities begin and check periodically throughout the 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 M 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 Lake Michigan watershed education and communication strategy. It is important to note that it is based on the Lake Michigan Watershed-Based Plan issues, opportunities, goals, and objectives (see Chapter 2). 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, 6	Emails, newsletters, websites, social media, targeted/one-on-one discussions and technical assistance, manuals or plans, technical resources	Watershed Planning Committee, CMAP, Forest Preserve Districts, SMC, MWRD, IDNR, Illinois EPA	Adoption and implementation of the Lake Michigan Watershed-Based Plan
				Road salt application BMPs and alternatives
				Impact of impervious surfaces and benefits of green infrastructure
				Implement best practices related to the management/maintenance of ravines and Lake Michigan shoreline and bluffs
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, Counties, Municipalities	Economic/Quality of Life benefits of water quality improvement and flood mitigation
		Social media, brochures, newsletters, factsheets, demonstrations and trainings	SMC, MWRD, Counties, Municipalities, LFOA, Openlands, Environmental Interest Groups	Role and Responsibility of landowners and best management practices related to runoff reduction; shoreline, bluff, ravine, and riparian management; and protection from flooding
		Targeted/one-on-one discussions and technical assistance, specific outreach programs (e.g. Conservation@Home, RainReady), social media, brochures, newsletters, factsheets	LFOA, Openlands, Environmental Interest Groups	Have a beneficial impact on runoff quantity/quality, protect property from flooding, protect natural resources
		Social media, brochures, newsletters, factsheets	Municipalities, Counties, Forest Preserve Districts, LFOA, Openlands, Environmental Interest Groups	Participate in stream, beach, and natural area stewardship and maintenance opportunities

TARGET AUDIENCE (SECTION 8.3)	WATERSHED GOALS	VEHICLE/ METHOD	PARTNER LEADS	MESSAGES (TOPICS/ACTIONS)
8.3.3 Schools and Youth Groups	1, 3, 4, 5	Social media, emails, newsletters, education signage at demonstration sites, targeted/one-on-one discussions	Schools, MWRD, CMAP, LFOA, Openlands, Forest Preserve Districts, Environmental Interest Groups	Participate in stream, beach, and natural area stewardship and maintenance opportunities
8.3.4 Developers & Homebuilders	2, 3, 4	Manuals or plans, technical assistance and resources, development planning and permitting process	Counties, Municipalities, SMC, MWRD	Implement designs that reduce impervious areas and include green infrastructure and BMPs to reduce runoff beyond current development requirements
8.3.5 Consultants and Contractors Working in the Watershed	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Presentations (meetings), emails, newsletters, websites, targeted/one-on-one discussions	Watershed Planning Committee, Illinois EPA, SMC, MWRD, Municipalities	Advocate for and implement best practices related to the management/maintenance of ravines and Lake Michigan shoreline and bluffs, reducing impervious surface, and green infrastructure and BMPs to reduce runoff Participation in Watershed Planning Committee and/or public meeting forums Road salt application BMPs and alternatives
		Manuals or plans, technical assistance and resources	SMC, MWRD, CMAP, Openlands, LFOA, Environmental Interest Groups, Municipalities	Implement watershed-based plan action recommendations
8.3.6 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, LFOA, Openlands, Environmental Interest Groups	Best practices related to shoreline, bluff, and stream/ravine maintenance and management Road salt application BMPs and alternatives