



Education Updates

January 2008

Stormwater U Strikes Again: Local Planners Work Together to Protect Water Resources through Comprehensive Planning at December's Workshop

Our December comprehensive planning workshop for city planners and planning commission members was a great success with 45 participants attending and another 10-15 representatives from local watersheds and state agencies present as well. The workshop began with a short presentation from the Metropolitan Council, which outlined the general requirements for city's comprehensive plans, and one from WCD manager Jay Riggs, who talked about the importance of creating plans that can meet multiple objectives.

After the introductory presentations, the planners worked together in small groups to develop lists of local water resource issues in their communities and to link these issues to specific components in the comprehensive plan. From these lists, each group was able to develop two to three policy statements to include in their community's comp plan. Based on evaluations from the participants, the workshop achieved its goals of helping the planners to develop policy statements for their comp plans and recognizing the connections between water resources and other comp plan elements, such as transportation and parks.

Cities and Watersheds Invited to Continue Discussions at the Water Consortium Meeting on Feb. 6, 2-4pm

At the workshop in December we stressed the importance of incorporating water resource protection into all aspects of the comprehensive plan and we developed a number of good policy statements for local communities. We realize, however, that many questions were still left unanswered. We are inviting local planners and planning commission members to continue discussions on protecting water resources, using the Washington Water Consortium as a forum.

At the upcoming meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 6, from 2-4pm at the Washington County Government Building, we will ask cities to share their reflections on last month's workshop, suggest topics for further discussion and advise the WCD, Washington County and local watershed organizations on how we can continue to work together. At the February forum meeting, we will determine time and date, location, and topics for the 2008 Water Consortium meetings.

Public Works Forum to Discuss Pond Maintenance Administrative Concerns: Tue., March 18, 8am-12pm at the Stillwater Library

EMWREP will be partnering with Ramsey Washington Watershed District to host this working session for public works street superintendents and MS4 coordinators. Topics to be discussed include pond maintenance goals and policies, system inventory data collection and assessment, types of tracking systems and coordinating administrative and field work. At this working session we will also identify topics for discussion at future meetings. The cost for attending this session will be \$30. Registration information to follow.

Talking about Lakeshore Living

On Thursday, Dec. 27, a group of six homeowners living along Forest Lake met with myself and Great River Greening intern Ellie Rogers to discuss lakeshore landscaping. The purpose of the focus group session was to find out how people feel about shorelines planted with native plants versus shorelines landscaped with rock walls, rip rap, beach or turf grass.

During the discussion, the homeowners listed ease of access to the water, tidy appearance and ability to resist ice heaves as advantages of rip rap, beach or turf grass. Rock walls, they noted, were more difficult to maintain and were often ruined by ice heaves. The advantages of native plants that they mentioned were a more natural looking yard, ability to control runoff and beauty.

We showed the group two different pictures of lakeshore yards planted with native species, one with a “wilder” look and one designed to look more like a lake side garden, The majority of the group liked the tidier look for the native plants and agreed that they would like to have something similar on their properties. The “wilder” yard was less popular, although one woman commented that on a different lake where less of the lots were developed that wilder look would be fine.

A common theme throughout the discussion was a desire for their lakeshore property to be attractive. The group seemed very open to the possibility of landscaping with native plants, but worried mostly about not knowing how to do it right. Although they all said that a financial incentive would help, they were more interested in finding resources on lakeshore landscaping and advice from experts on how to landscape their yards. Interestingly, many of the group members commented that government sponsored lakeshore restoration projects often place little importance in the aesthetic appearance of their plantings. In contrast, the Forest Lake homeowners expressed an interest in native plantings that would provide water quality benefits and be attractive.

Ellie plans to use the findings from this focus group study to create a survey, which will be sent out to homeowners along Forest Lake later this spring.



The lakeshore homeowners were somewhat concerned with the “wild” look of this native planting, although some thought it would work for a less developed lake.



The group preferred the appearance of this native planting, although some wondered if it would provide any water quality benefits.

Members of the East Metro Water Resource Education Program:

Brown's Creek Watershed District • City of Cottage Grove • City of Dellwood • City of Forest Lake • City of Lake Elmo • City of Stillwater • City of Willernie • Lower St. Croix Watershed Management Organization • Middle St. Croix Watershed Management Organization • South Washington Watershed District • Valley Branch Watershed District • Washington Conservation District • Washington County

