

Public Education Plan

Regional PEP

The updated Public Education Plan (PEP) was approved by MDEQ in February 2013. The purpose of the PEP is to promote, publicize, and facilitate education for the purpose of encouraging the public to reduce the discharge of pollutants in stormwater to the maximum extent practicable. This section provides a report of public education activities implemented between August 1, 2017, and July 31, 2018.

Public Engagement Committee

LGRW Public Engagement Committee was formed in 1999 to begin development and implementation of the PEP. Since that time the committee has met on a regular basis to discuss and plan activities scheduled for implementation in the PEP and the LGR Watershed Management Plan. In addition to MS4 communities, the 2017-2018 Public Engagement Committee consisted of the following community partners:

Table 3. Non-MS4 Partner Organizations	
Agency	Representative
MDEQ	Amanda St. Amour
GVMC – West Michigan Clean Air Coalition	Andrea Faber
Ottawa Co. Conservation District	Benjamin Jordan
Boy Scouts of America	Bridget Knight
GVMC	Eileen Boekestein
Trout Unlimited	Jamie Vaughan
Groundswell, GVSU	Joanna Allerhand
Groundswell, GVSU	Kymerly Pawelka
Kent County Resource Recovery	Megan Kretz
MDEQ	Michelle Storey
WMEAC	Jessica VanderArk
WMEAC	Kyle Hart
GVMC/GVSU	Carlos Calderon
The Right Place	Rick Chapla
GVMC	Rachel Frantz
Grand Rapids Public Museum	Stephanie Ogren
Grand Rapids Public Museum	Erin Koren
GVMC	Wendy Ogilvie
Kent County Health Department	Brendan Earl
Kent Conservation District	Jessie Schulte
Citizen Labs	Allen Clark
GVMC	Cara Decker

During this reporting period, the Committee reorganized to set priority topics and create a functional meeting schedule. Instead of holding meetings once every two months, the committee meets in January, February and May. During the summer months, meetings are not held because communities are busy attending and hosting outreach events. The group reconvenes in September to review their summer activities, and begin to plan for the next year. Meetings are then held in October and November. Goals for each meeting are as follows:

January: Distribute PEP materials and discuss distribution

February: Pick up orders, Plan for the year's events

May: Ongoing business, Committee updates

September: Review event year, Ongoing business

October: Ongoing business, Discuss changes for next year

November: Finalize orders for next year

During the October Committee meeting, the group chooses which PEP topics to focus on for the next year. Information regarding all topics covered in the PEP may be discussed and promoted by communities throughout the year, as described in detail in the remainder of this section of the report. The committee decided that if more energy is focused on a few key topics each year, then education regarding those specific topics can be thoroughly explored. Educational materials and give-aways are then designed around the key topics. While each year focuses on a particular set of topics, all six education categories will still be addressed in detail at least once during each reporting period.

Additional information regarding the Public Education Committee is available at: <https://www.lgrow.org/ms4information>. Materials, training opportunities, and other resources are available via this webpage.

PEP Implementation

This section describes the public education activities implemented by the Permittees from August 1, 2017 through July 31, 2018. The following report describes activities which meet the requirements of the 2013 approved PEP. Target audiences, messages, and delivery mechanisms are described for each Public Education Topic.

Public Education Topic 1 - Personal Watershed Stewardship

PEP Objective 1: Educate the public about their responsibility and stewardship in their watershed.

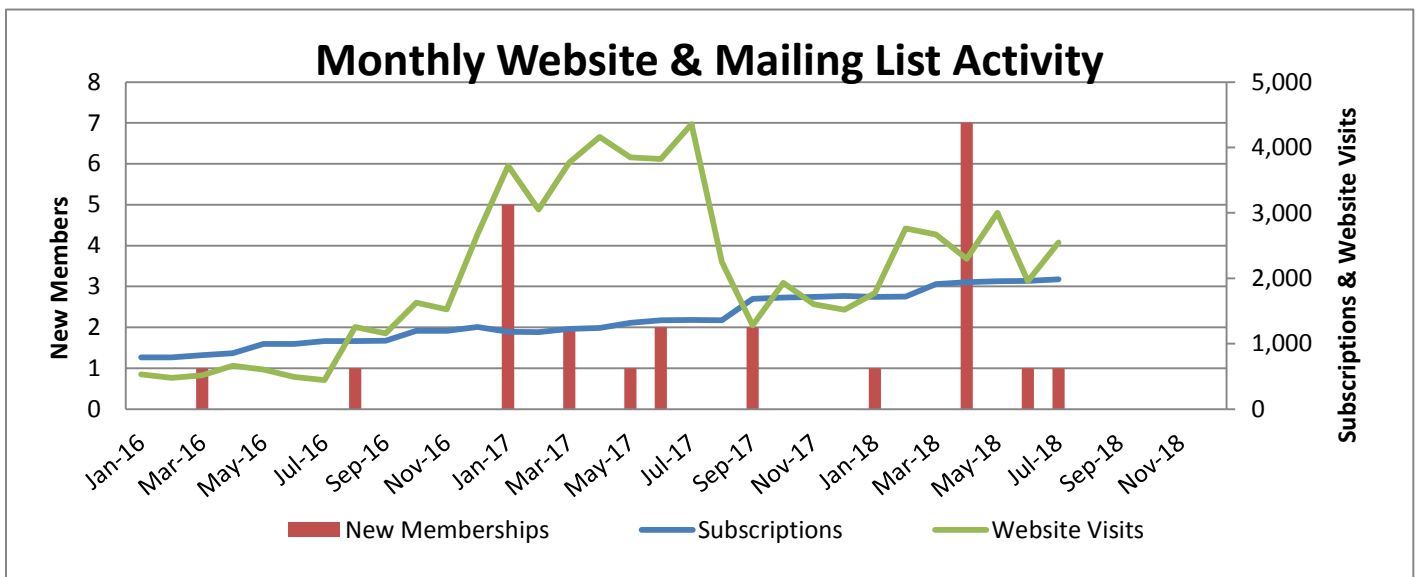
Target Audience: Residents, visitors, and public employees

Content of Message: 1) A watershed is an area of land draining to a common point. You live in the LGRW, you impact the watershed. 2) Learn more about the LGROW by visiting LGROW.org. 3) Reasons for protecting the watershed. 4) Ways individual can affect the watershed through their activities.

Delivery Method:

- Permittees' websites link to LGROW's website, www.lgrow.org. The watershed website provides information on non-point source (NPS) pollution, local watershed issues, water science education, and watershed management. A major website update was launched at the beginning of the 2017-2018 reporting period and was accessed by an average of 758 unique visitors each month. The website logged 9,090 unique visitors over the entire reporting period.
- LGROW also sends out a seasonal email newsletter with information about the watershed, upcoming educational events, and stormwater educational articles. Newsletter subscriptions and website traffic by month are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Page Visits to LGROW.org by Month



- LGROW worked to promote participation through its Facebook page with a regular posting schedule including watershed project highlights, upcoming events, and volunteer opportunities. Throughout the reporting period, LGROW Facebook posts have reached 107,622 people. As of the end of the reporting period, the Facebook page reached 935 Likes (this number has increased from the last reporting period). Facebook user engagement has shown consistent growth over the reporting period with the average number of Likes, Shares, and Comments. LGROW promoted its Facebook page three times during the reporting period using paid promotions, which increased its audience significantly. Facebook activity is displayed by month in Figure 4.

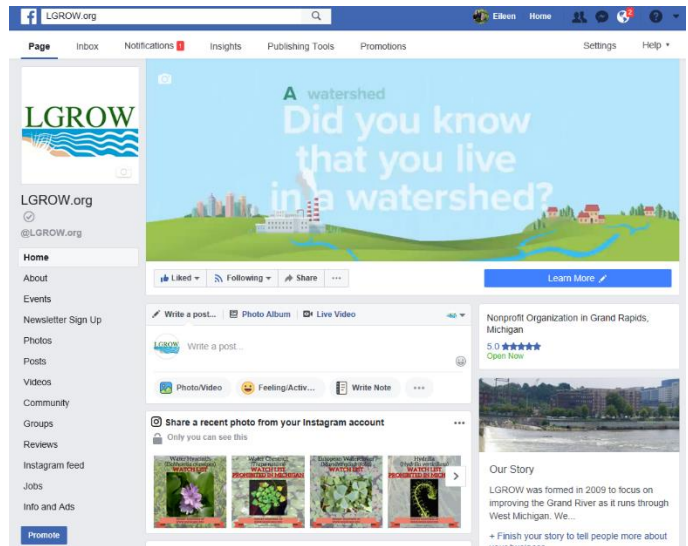
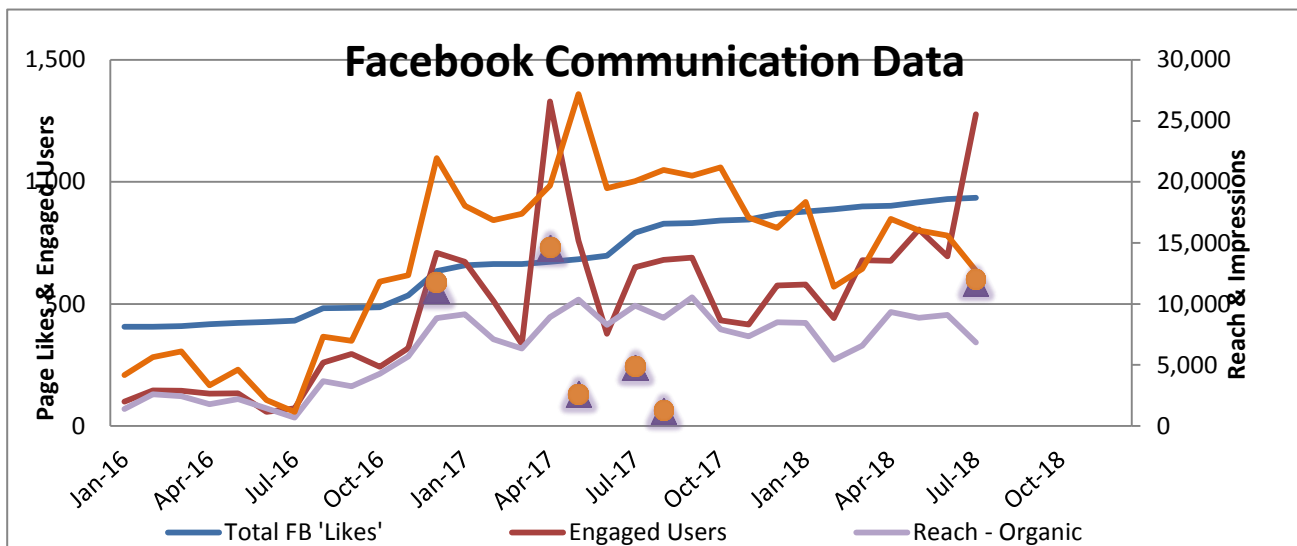


Figure 2 Facebook Communication Data by Month



- Permittees distributed LGROW, stormwater, and watershed education materials listed below to residents in the LGRW at multiple events, and venues. Materials were distributed according to

the type of event and the target audiences in attendance. Listed below are the number and type of educational materials ordered by permittees to distribute throughout the reporting period:

- 2000 LGROW Lip Balms
- 1500 "Report Illicit Discharge" fridge magnets
- 1000 Rainbow Trout "Only rain in the drain" stress balls
- 1500 "Keep your Lakes Great and your River Grand" dry bags
- 700 "Keep your Lakes Great and your River Grand" magic scarves
- 1200 "Report Illicit Discharge" coasters
- 500 Car Wash pledges and shammies
- 500 Pet Waste pledges and dispensers
- 1000 Paint by number Watershed Maps

Other public education materials ordered during previous permit cycles were also distributed by permittees, including:

- Keep Your Lakes Great and Your Rivers Grand Magnets
- Keep Your Lakes Great and Your Rivers Grand vinyl stickers
- Watershed Temporary Tattoos
- Troutie Coloring Books
- Reusable Water Bottles
- Reusable Tote Bags
- LGROW Brochures
- Landscaping for Water Quality booklets
- LGROW Gardening Gloves
- LGROW Pens
- LGROW Custom Baseballs



Ottawa County Water Resources Commissioner
Lower Grand River Watershed
2017-2018 MS4 Progress Report

- Many Permittees displayed lamppost banners when first purchased in 2012 to advertise the presence of the Grand River, Rogue River, and Plaster Creek Watersheds. The banners featured the LGROW logo and the message "Yours to Protect." In early 2018, 4 communities ordered additional banners for display, including new banners for Buck Creek and the Thornapple River.



Banners on display in Spring Lake

- Through cooperation of staff in permitted MS4 communities, Public Engagement Committee participants, GVMC staff, and other members of LGROW, about 50 events around the watershed had representation from the Lower Grand River. Event participation by community is detailed in Table 4. Community-specific event activities are detailed in each Permittees' PEP questionnaire. Events attended by more than one MS4, or that were coordinated through LGROW, are discussed in the section following Table 4, and in the Delivery Method section of corresponding objectives.

Table 4 LGROW and MS4 Participant Events		
MS4 Community	Event/ Activity	Date
Cascade Charter Township	LGROW Spring Forum Host	5/11/2018
Ferrysburg, City of	LGROW Focus Group	12/18/2017
Forest Hills Public Schools	Classroom Programming through Groundswell	Ongoing
Georgetown Charter Township	Jenison Public Schools Collaboration	Ongoing
	Ottawa County Water Quality Forum	11/30/2017
Grand Haven, City of	Earth Day Festival	4/21/2018
	LGROW Focus Group	12/18/2017
	Robinson Elementary	3/21/2018
	Coast Guard Festival	7/28 - 8/5/2017
	Salmon Festival	9/16/2017
Grand Rapids, City of	Home Show	3/1-4/2018
	Mayors Grand River Cleanup	9/9/2017
	Ottawa County Water Quality Forum	11/30/2017
	Grand River Water Festival	6/23/2018
	Dia del Nino	4/28/2018
	Canoemobile	5/7-5/11/2018
	Presentation to Museum School	10/11/2017
	Water Resource Recovery Facility Tours	Ongoing
	Rainbarrel Workshop	7/29/2018
	WhiteCaps Game	7/26/2018
	Grand River Spring Forum	5/11/2018
Grand Rapids Charter Township	Partner with FHPS	Ongoing
Grandville, City of	Buck Creek Cleanup	8/5/2017
	Mayors Grand River Cleanup	9/9/2017
	Michigan Week Community Event	5/16/2018
Hudsonville, City of	Ottawa County Water Quality Forum	11/30/2017
Kent County Drain Commissioner	Grand River Spring Forum	5/11/2018
Kent County Road Commission	Facility Tours	Ongoing
Kentwood, City of	Touch A Truck/DPW Behind the Scenes (with Kent Co DPW)	5/16/2018
	Buck Creek Cleanup	8/5/2017
	LGROW Focus Group	12/18/2017
	Grand River Spring Forum	5/11/2018

Table 4 LGROW and MS4 Participant Events		
MS4 Community	Event/ Activity	Date
Ottawa County Administration and Water Resources Commissioner	Ottawa County Water Quality Forum	11/30/2017
	Grand River Spring Forum	5/11/2018
Ottawa County Road Commission	Partner with Georgetown Township & Jenison Public Schools	Ongoing
Plainfield Charter Township	Grand River Spring Forum	5/11/2018
Sparta, Village of	Nash Creek Cleanup-Planting	4/18//2018
	Village Hazardous Waste Collection	4/19/2018
	Partnership with Sparta Schools	Ongoing
Spring Lake, Village of	Mill Point Park River Cleanup	5/12/2018
	LGROW Focus Group	12/18/2017
Walker, City of	Grand River Spring Forum	5/11/2018
	Indian Mill Creek Cleanup	6/2/2018
	KDL Reading Carnival	6/12/2018
Wyoming, City of	Buck Creek Cleanup	8/5/2017
	Partnership with Godwin and Wyoming Schools	Ongoing
	City Cleanup	4/21/2018
	Facility Tours	Ongoing
	Grand River Spring Forum	5/11/2018

➤ The Quiet Water Symposium promotes non-motorized outdoor recreation and a shared concern for our Great Lakes environment. The 23rd Annual Symposium was held on March 3rd, 2018. LGROW hosted a booth with several watershed displays and distributed information and giveaways focused on watershed awareness and the development of a Water Trail throughout the Grand River. Although this event takes place outside the LGRW, many of the attendees travel through the Lower Grand during their excursions. The Symposium also presents a valuable opportunity to partner with our upstream watershed, the Middle Grand River



Organization of Watersheds (MGROW), who is actively involved in public outreach through their own MS4 program.

➤ LGROW hosted a table at the Blandford Nature Center Earth Day event on April 21, 2018. This was a public event designed to connect residents of the Grand Rapids metro area with their local community conservation resources, information on new and upcoming projects, and highlight volunteer opportunities to get involved. LGROW hosted a table with information on the watershed, the LGROW Rainscaping program pilot in Indian Mill Creek Watershed, and stormwater educational materials focusing on pet waste and car wash pledges.



➤ The 15th Annual Grand River Forum on May 11, 2018, was put on by LGROW at the Wisner Center in Cascade Township. The event offered 111 attendees a regional perspective on emerging issues and accomplishments from around the Watershed. This year's keynote speaker, Al Steinman, from GVSU's Annis Water Resources Institute, spoke about Integrated Water Management. Next, Scott Conners (City of Walker Engineer and LGROW Board Chair) moderated a Panel Discussion that focused on the new post-construction control stormwater requirements. Panelists included Carrie Rivette, Wastewater/Stormwater

WELCOME TO THE
 LOWER GRAND RIVER ORGANIZATION OF WATERSHEDS'
 15th ANNUAL

Grand River Spring Forum

CASCADE TOWNSHIP LIBRARY
 WISNER CENTER
 MAY 11, 2018
 8:30 am - 11:30 am

Agenda

8:00-8:30	Registration
8:30-8:45	Welcome and Introduction
8:45-9:05	Keynote Address
9:05-9:35	Panel Discussion
9:35-9:55	Passing of the Paddle
9:55-10:10	Break
10:15-11:15	*Shed Talks
11:15-11:25	Questions and Evaluations
11:25-11:30	Closing and Next Steps
12:00 PM	Boxed Lunch and Kayak Trip *Must be preregistered to attend Ending at Thornapple Brewing Co.



Superintendent of the City of Grand Rapids, Teresa Siedel, Director of the Water Resources Division of MDEQ, and Jeff Gritter, Project Manager at Vriesman and Korhorn Civil Engineers. The LGROW Chair, who was previously Scott Conners from the City of Walker, changed hands to Carrie Rivette from the City of Grand Rapids. This change was commemorated with a 'Passing of the Paddle' ceremony.

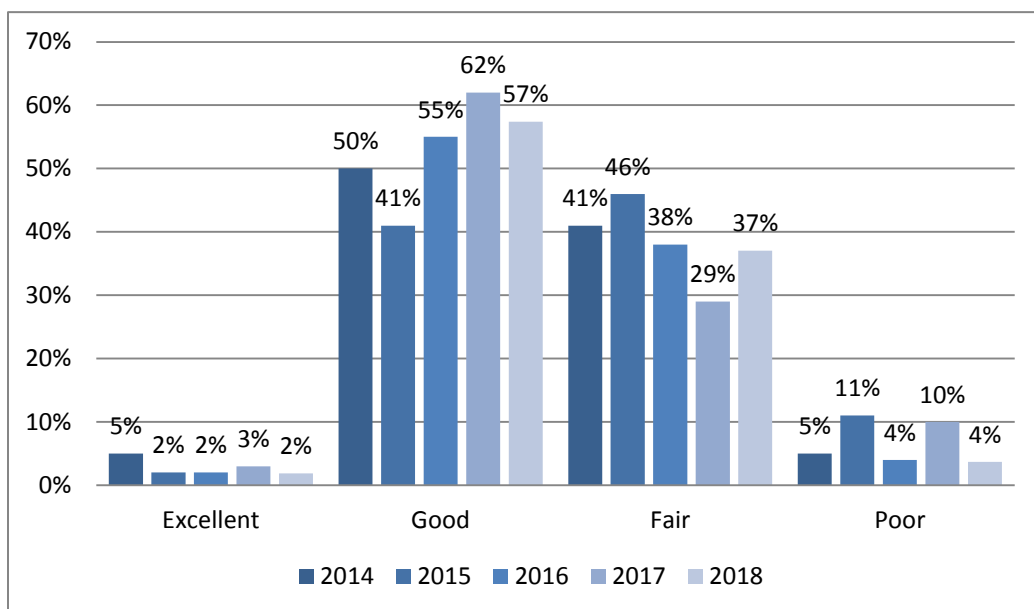
The remainder of the forum focused on emerging watershed issues. Presentations were given by Jessie Schulte (Kent County Conservation District) and Rob Petit (ECT) on the Regional Conservation Partnership Program; Brenda Perry (Facilitator, Kent Innovation High School), Joe Phillips (Design Lab Instructor, Kent Career Tech Center) and their students on place-based environmental education curriculum they used in their classrooms; Wes Landon (Native Edge, LLC.) and Julie Parks (Executive Director of Workforce Training, Grand Rapids Community College) on the Rainscaping Program; Natalie Henley (West Michigan Environmental Action Council) on the Grand River Water Trail; LGROW Committee Chairs gave updates for each committee; and LGROW Staff discussed the pre-forum survey results.

Each forum participant completed surveys after both registering and attending the event. A



selection of the questions from each survey is asked annually to determine if there is a measurable change in people's attitudes toward and perception of the river. Figure 5 shows an increase in respondents identifying water quality in the Grand River as "Fair" rather than "Poor" from 2017 to 2018.

Figure 4. 2017 Survey Results: How would you rate the water quality in the Grand River?



- LGROW sponsored the Grand River Water Festival on June 23, 2018, at Riverside Park, which was attended by approximately 3,000 people. The festival is a free-of-charge, day-long, music driven, environmental festival featuring traditional folk, country, bluegrass, Cajun, blues, and world beat music performed by Michigan musicians. Visitors to the LGROW booth identified their



location in the watershed by referencing maps, and Major Runoff, the Stormwater Mascot, engaged with children and adults. Volunteers at the LGROW booth helped children of all ages create paintings of nature scenes using native soils to the watershed, similar to artists who create field drawings using natural materials they find in the environment. The LGROW booth's educational materials focused on how

homeowners can reduce stormwater runoff from their properties by installing green infrastructure practices through the LGROW Rainscaping program.

- LGROW hosted a concourse table at a WhiteCaps game on Thursday, June 26, 2018. GVMC staff and volunteers from the City of Grand Rapids (a MS4 permitted community) helped run a booth. Volunteers handed out LGROW baseballs, LGROW brochures, Pet Waste Pledges with pet waste bag dispensers, and Car Wash Pledges with shammies. Volunteers discussed the importance of watershed protection with attendees of the game.



- LGROW worked with students from schools throughout the watershed to educate about the connections between land use and water quality. LGROW led activities for 465 students from the City of Grand Rapids and Plainfield Township focused on macroinvertebrate sampling and runoff vs. infiltration at the annual Canoemobile event at Riverside Park in Grand Rapids. LGROW also worked directly with Jenison Public Schools and Forest Hills Public Schools to teach 99 students at Bauerwood

Elementary and 90 at Northern Trails 5/6 about the Grand River Watershed and the ultimate discharge location of stormwater systems, as well as personal actions that can protect water quality. These activities resulted in students marking 50 catch basins on Northern Trails' campus and 100 catch basins in the neighborhood surrounding Bauerwood. LGROW also assisted schools with their existing educational activities surrounding watersheds and nonpoint source pollution. LGROW led an activity connecting land use and habitat with macroinvertebrates and water quality at a Water Field Day for 525 students in Godfrey Lee schools in Wyoming, helped 25 students stencil 9 catch basins and complete rain garden/riparian maintenance near Buck Creek in Grandville, and assisted a teacher at Pinewood Elementary in Kentwood Public Schools with her annual Buck Creek education day for 120 students. Additionally, 40 students from Kenowa Hills High School participated



Students marking catch basins at Northern Trails 5/6 in Forest Hills

in the spring Indian Mill Creek Cleanup. LGROW also participates as a member of the Groundswell advisory council, which supports schools in the Lower Grand River Watershed as they implement place-based education and stewardship projects in the watershed. Groundswell reaches approximately 500 students annually through its programs focused on the Lower Grand River Watershed, including supporting projects at 3 schools in the nested jurisdiction of Kentwood Public Schools and at 5 schools in the permitted district of Forest Hills Public Schools.

- The 'Find My Watershed Tool' was improved during this reporting period and can be accessed via LGROW's homepage, or at: https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1WuQZRA612p4X1t_9i4qNYIP_830_ZIi-&ll=42.99923233465322%2C-85.46882900000003&z=9. An advertisement was created through National CineMedia, LLC regarding this tool. The 30-second advertisement is also available for viewing on LGROW's website. The advertisement ran for 8 weeks as a digital media campaign, targeted online to people who were in the Lower Grand River Watershed. About 79% of people that the advertisement was delivered to watched the entire commercial. Industry average is around 60%. The commercial was shown 120,419 times.

- Seasonal Watershed 'Tip' fliers were distributed to communities. These fliers focused on positive actions that Department of Public Works employees and citizens alike could take to improve the water quality in the watershed. Tips focused on different actions that were relevant to that respective season.



Fall Seasonal Tips Flier

Public Education Topic 2 - Ultimate Stormwater Discharge Location and Potential Impacts

PEP Objective 2: Education on the location of residential stormwater system catch basins, where the system discharges, and impacts from pollutants.

Target Audience: Landscapers/lawn care companies, auto repair shops, commercial power washers, carpet/floor cleaning companies, commercial operations, industries, residents, and local businesses

Content of Message: 1) Storm drains connect to your local lakes and streams, not a water treatment plant. 2) Prevent pollution from entering your storm drains and protect the health of your family, your community, and the Grand River. 3) Education on the impacts of stormwater pollutants. 4) Education on the stormwater system and receiving water bodies in a person's or company's neighborhood.



Storm drain markers

This topic was chosen as one of two key topics by the Public Education Committee to focus on during this reporting period.

Delivery Method:

- Permittees installed the plastic storm drain markers designed by the Public Engagement Committee. The drain markers carry the messages “Keep your Lakes Great and your Rivers Grand.” Some Permittees also engaged with community partners to do storm drain stenciling events which are detailed in the PEP Questionnaire. This image was also used on several giveaways including vinyl stickers and magnets. In total, 150 drain markers were installed and 9 storm drains stenciled with the message “No Dumping: Drains to Waterway” in the watershed.
- Permittees utilized a variety of stormwater displays including the drop toss game, the watershed pushpin map, the LGROW banners on non-point source pollution, Car Wash and Pet Waste Pledge posters, and the “Grand River Yours To Protect” informational poster board at a variety of events and locations throughout the Watershed. The PEP Questionnaire included in this report details when and where these displays were used by individual Permittees.
- An advertisement explaining that storm drains lead directly to rivers, lakes and streams was printed on the back of all household hazardous waste collection flyers printed for Kent County MS4 communities.
- Troutie Stress Balls were provided for communities to distribute. The fish shaped stress balls had the message: ‘Only rain in the drain, it leads directly to my home!’ This give-away allowed people to easily make the connection between storm drains and water quality as it relates to aquatic habitat.



Household Hazardous Waste flyer advertisement

Public Education Topic 3 - Public Reporting of Illicit Discharges

PEP Objective 3: Encourage public reporting of the presence of illicit discharges or improper disposal into the stormwater system.

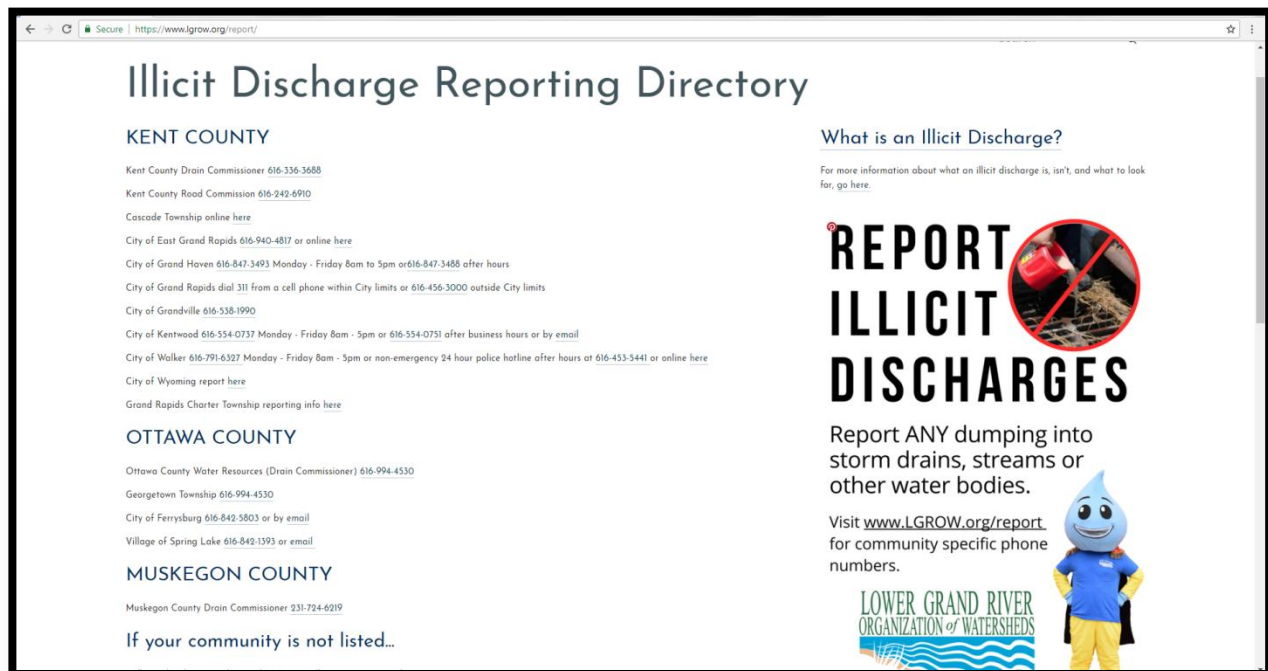
Ottawa County Water Resources Commissioner
Lower Grand River Watershed
2017-2018 MS4 Progress Report

Target Audience: Residents, public employees, businesses, construction activities, industries, and septic system owners/haulers.

Content of Message: 1) How to identify illicit discharges. 2) How to report illicit discharges. 3) Water quality impacts from illicit discharges. 4) Consequences/penalties associated with illicit discharges and improper waste disposal. 5) Proper septic system care and maintenance. 6) How to recognize system failure. 7) Impacts failing systems have on water quality. 8) Where to go for assistance.

The Public Reporting of Illicit Discharges was selected by the Public Education Committee as one of two key topics to focus on for this reporting period. It was important that communities focused on this topic because IDEP outfall screening occurred for many municipalities in the watershed during the summer of 2018.

Delivery Method:



- A reporting website for MS4 communities across the Lower Grand River Watershed was created in order to offer a Reporting Directory for DPW employees or citizens seeking information about how to report illicit discharges. This website can be found at: <https://www.lgrow.org/report/>. Communities were encouraged to share this information on their municipal webpages, and on social media.

Information was also added to the LGROW website to inform the public about what an illicit discharge is.

- Illicit discharge magnets and coasters were created in conjunction with the reporting website to promote use of the website and to raise awareness for DPW employees and citizens, encouraging them to report illicit discharges.
- A newsletter article titled, 'Reduce and Report Pollution Entering the Grand River' was published for all MS4s to distribute to their employees or citizens. This article highlighted the reporting webpage, and gave advice on how to reduce stormwater pollution.



Coasters

- Permittees made information about how to report illicit discharges available to residents and staff through a variety of channels. Some communities promote the Citizens Reporting form developed previously by LGROW, while others use an online reporting form. The method each community used to distribute this information is detailed in PEP Questionnaires.
- Permittees distributed the article *"How you as an Employee Can Help Reduce Pollution Entering the Grand River"* to their employees. This article encourages employees to report stormwater discharges to their community's stormwater coordinator.
- Permittees distributed copies of USEPA's *"Do your Part- Be Septic Smart!"* brochure to their residents. This brochure describes what a septic system is, how it works, and how to maintain it. LGROW participated in SepticSmart week September 18-22, 2017 by publishing a blog post and daily social media posts about proper septic maintenance.



Public Education Topic 4 - Personal Actions that can Impact the Watershed

PEP Objective 4: Education on the need to minimize the amount of residential or non-commercial wastes washed into the storm sewer system.

Target Audience: Residents, schools, non-profit groups conducting carwash fundraisers, public employees, visitors, recreational users, riparian landowners

Content of Message: 1) BMPs for car, pavement, power washing. 2) Preferred cleaning materials and practices, "phosphate free as important as biodegradable". 3) BMPs for pesticide use, fertilizer use and their disposal. 4) BMPs for proper management of grass clippings, leaf litter, and animal wastes. 5) BMPs for residential deicer use. 6) BMPs for native vegetation on residential properties as an alternative to turf grass. 7) Effects of residential wastes on our waterbodies. 8) Education on low impact development techniques.



Delivery Method:

- Permittees distributed the brochure "*Make your Household the Solution to Water Pollution*". The Public Engagement Committee contracted with the Hispanic Center of West Michigan to produce a Spanish translation of this brochure for communities as well.
- Several communities hosted rain barrel events or rain garden work days as detailed in their PEP Questionnaires.
- Permittees collected pet waste pledges from dog owners in exchange for a free pet waste bag dispenser to hook to the pet's leash. The pledges also provide information on dog parks in the Watershed and discuss the connection between picking up pet waste and protecting stormwater. This brochure was adapted, with permission, from a similar program in Portland, Oregon. In this reporting period, 127 new pet waste pledges were collected from around the watershed.
- Permittees collected car wash pledges from residents in exchange for a free shammy to use for home car washes. The pledge provides the following information about car washes: *There's no problem with washing your car, it just matters how and where you choose to wash it. The average homeowner uses 116 gallons of water to wash a car. If you wash your car in your driveway, all that water, along with the soap, grease, brake dust, oil, and dirt that you wash off your car flows directly into the nearest storm drain. From there, it's just a short trip to the Grand River and eventually Lake Michigan.* In addition, residents keep a portion of the pledge that provides other environmental friendly car care tips. In this reporting period, 52 new car wash pledges were collected from around the watershed.



- LGROW developed a flyer describing proper procedure for draining residential swimming pools in the fall. This was distributed publicly online via www.lgrow.org and made available for customization by MS4 communities. The flyer can be downloaded at <https://www.lgrow.org/ms4information>.

Public Education Topic 5 - Waste Management Assistance

PEP Objective 5: Education on proper disposal of household hazard waste (HHW), travel trailer/boating sanitary wastes, chemicals, motor vehicle fluids, and unused medications.

Target Audience: Residents, visitors, and public employees

Content of Message: 1) Protect your family's health: dispose of unwanted paints, solvents, and cleaners at your county collection center. 2) Recycle used oil and automotive fluids. Just one gallon of used motor oil dumped down a catch basin can contaminate one million gallons of your drinking water. 3) Education on types of HHW and available alternatives. 4) Education on disposal locations of HHW, travel trailer/boating sanitary wastes, chemicals, motor vehicle fluids and unused medications.

Delivery Method:

- Permittees and LGROW.org shared the newsletter articles "How You Can Help Reduce Pollution Entering the Grand River" and "What Can You Do to Help Protect Your Watershed?" These articles explain the watershed concept and encourage residents to dispose of pet waste, paints, motor oil, etc., in the appropriate locations, not in the storm drains.
- Permittees distributed the flyer "Make Your Household the Solution to Stormwater Pollution" in both English and Spanish, which also details the importance of proper disposal of household hazardous waste.
- Both Kent and Ottawa County communities distributed household hazardous waste flyers at events and provided information on recycling household hazardous waste via the phone and websites. Many permittees also opted to distribute these materials at their respective community events. Kent County's expanded household hazardous waste collection hours to allowed more Kent County residents to take advantage of this service.
- Many communities hosted clean up days to encourage proper disposal of unwanted materials. Details of these events, as applicable, are provided in individual PEP Questionnaires and Part 7.

Public Education Topics 6 - Management of Riparian Lands

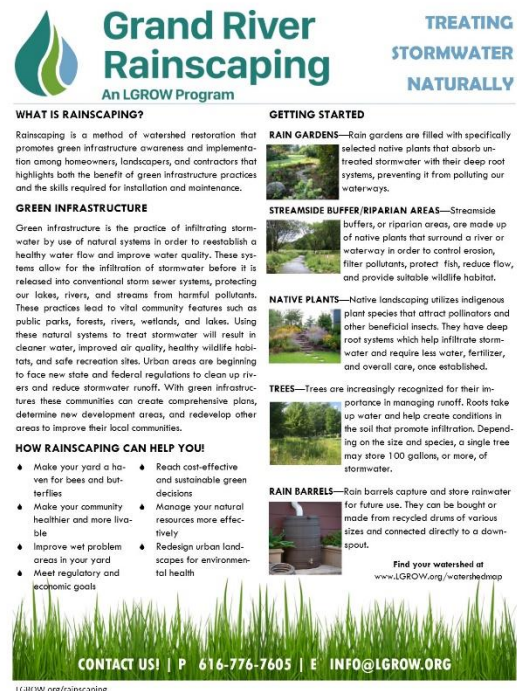
PEP Objective 6: Education concerning management of riparian lands to protect water quality.

Target Audience: Riparian landowners, construction activities, landscapers

Content of Message: 1) Importance of riparian corridors/stream buffers. 2) How to landscape for better water quality. 3) Education on shoreline stabilization techniques, stream buggers, filter strips, conservation easements, and bioengineering techniques.

Delivery Method:

- Permittees distributed the brochure "*What Every Landscaper Should Know*, to their subcontractors and facilities staff. These brochures detail BMPs for fertilizer and pesticide application, lawn care, and native plantings.
- LGROW launched and promoted its Grand River Rainscaping: Treating Stormwater Naturally program. This program aims to promote installation of green infrastructure and native landscaping practices to reduce stormwater runoff from residential properties and improve water quality. Residential site assessments were performed on 28 properties, 19 of which were in MS4 communities, and a 600 square foot demonstration rain garden was installed at West Catholic High School. Residents who have a site assessment completed receive a customized report of what green infrastructure practices are best suited to their site as well as resources for implementing those practices. The Rainscaping program is aimed at both shoreline and non-shoreline properties.



2017 Public Education Focus Group

A focus group was held on December 18, 2017 at the offices of GVMC with the purpose to determine changes in the awareness, education, and behavior of the public as a result of stormwater education efforts. The last focus group held to evaluate the PEP was in 2009 at Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber (FTC&H) in Grand Rapids to determine changes in the awareness, education, and behavior of the public as a result of stormwater education efforts in 2008 and 2009.

The 2017 focus group was held with the purpose to determine changes in the awareness, education, and behavior of the public as a result of stormwater education efforts since 2009. Using the information provided from the focus group, the PEP for the LGRW communities can be edited in the future to

better serve the public. The challenges, successes, and recommendations communicated in this report will be evaluated to modify the PEP as needed. The updated PEP will result in a more effective public outreach campaign to reduce stormwater pollution and raise MS4 awareness during the next permit cycle.

Focus group participants were nominated by local units of government that maintain MS4 permits. Each participating local unit of government was asked to submit two potential participants that meet the following criteria:

1. The nominees must live in Kent or Ottawa Counties, specifically in the Lower Grand River Watershed, preferably in the community they are representing
2. The individuals do not manage or have direct involvement with your community's MS4 Permit
3. The nominees have had the potential to encounter LGROW deliverables (examples: events, educational outreach, brochures or fliers, LGROW website or Facebook page)

GVMC staff administered the 1.5 hour long focus group session on December 18, 2017. Twelve invited individuals were present, representing Kent and Ottawa Counties. Eleven of the 23 municipalities that



GVMC works with regarding MS4 permits were represented. There was a diverse demographic represented among the group.

Discussion began with introductions of everyone present and an ice breaker question. The conversation followed six dialogue questions led by GVMC. The dialogue questions were as follows:

2017 LGROW Focus Group Dialogue Questions
1. What do you know about LGROW?
2. What LGROW information have you seen, heard, or read?
3. Did the message (that you have seen, heard, or read) influence you? If so, how?
4. Have you seen any stormwater or pollution prevention messaging at your workplace? Who was the message from? (LGROW, employer, other org.)
5. How could LGROW project deliverables be improved?
6. Where and how do you get information on community activities?

This focus group ended up being a very educational experience for its participants while providing valuable feedback on LGROW outreach activities. The mixed demographic of participants and the number of MS4 communities participating provided a fairly diverse view of LGROW's reach into the watershed, and participants shared many ideas to improve LGROW messaging.

Key take-aways for LGROW from the focus group are summarized in the following table:

How LGROW messages can be improved	
New Target Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Municipal employees</i> • <i>Adults through schoolchildren</i> • <i>People living in apartment complexes</i> • <i>LEED certified building owners</i> • <i>Farmers</i>
Reworking Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Translating materials in to the language of the neighborhood</i> • <i>Address 'why' citizens need to know the message presented</i> • <i>Simplify messages</i>
Delivery Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Placement of watershed information (placement of 'Entering the Watershed' signs, more signs for GI)</i> • <i>Tours of municipalities and events at breweries</i> • <i>Word of mouth</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Presence at festivals</i>• <i>Advertising in churches in the watershed</i>
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The full 2017 Focus Group Report is attached to this Progress Report. Please reference it for further details.

2018 Stormwater Public Education Plan (PEP) Questionnaire

Reporting period of August 1, 2017 to July 31, 2018

Please complete this questionnaire to provide an evaluation of the stormwater education activities you have implemented between **August 1, 2017 and July 31, 2018**. GVMC will include this information, along with watershed-wide measures of effectiveness, in your 2017 Progress Report to MDEQ. **Please return this form to GVMC by September 7, 2018.**

Community Name: Ottawa County Water Resources

Brochures, Flyers, and Giveaways:

1. Which of the following general stormwater awareness/LGROW materials (brochure, flyers, giveaways) did you order/distribute from GVMC this year:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LGROW Brochures | <input type="checkbox"/> LGROW "magic scarf" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grand River Infographic | <input type="checkbox"/> LGROW Totebags |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Make your home the Solution to Stormwater Pollution" brochure | <input type="checkbox"/> "Keep your lakes Great and your River Grand" sticker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Do your part – be SepticSmart! brochure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Troutie coloring book |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Household hazardous waste disposal guidelines from Kent County DPW | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paint by number watershed map |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seasonal Tip Sheets (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer) | <input type="checkbox"/> Watershed hand stamp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGROW Water Bottles | <input type="checkbox"/> "Report Illicit Discharges" magnet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LGROW Chapstick | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trout stress ball with "Only rain in the drain – it leads directly to my home" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Keep your Lakes Great and your River Grand" dry bags | <input type="checkbox"/> Report Illicit Discharges beverage coaster |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

2. Have you given away all the materials (brochures, flyers, giveaways) you ordered from GVMC this year?

- Yes No

3. Where did you distribute your materials?

- Government office Library Community event Other

4. Approximately how many people did you interact with during distribution of materials? 9

5. What was the most popular giveaway from the materials distributed in your community? totebags

6. What topics are of greatest interest to members of your community?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> How to report stormwater pollution | <input type="checkbox"/> Proper use of pesticides/fertilizers/herbicides |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stormwater discharge locations/impacts | <input type="checkbox"/> Proper yard waste disposal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Native vegetation/rain gardens/riparian buffers | <input type="checkbox"/> Proper septic system maintenance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proper vehicle care/motor oil disposal | <input type="checkbox"/> Household hazardous waste management |

Illicit Discharge Reporting

7. Did you distribute illicit discharge reporting materials to your residents?

- Hard copies of "Citizens Reporting Brochures" from the IDEP – Number distributed:
- Link to LGROW's reporting page posted to your website <https://www.lgrow.org/report/>
- Report Illicit Discharge magnets – Number distributed:

Please describe any interest, comments, or discussion generated from the brochure, magnet or website <https://www.lgrow.org/report/>:

How many complaints were received from the general public regarding illicit discharges? 1

Newsletters, Banners, and Displays

8. Did you order and display new lamppost banners during this permit cycle?
- Ordered and displayed new lamppost banners at (streets):
 - Displayed lamppost banners provided in 2009-2013 at (streets): Baldwin street
 - Did not order or display lamppost banners
9. Did you distribute stormwater focused newsletter articles to your residents? Yes No
- a. Please describe any interest, comments, or discussion generated from the articles
 - b. If applicable, list the newsletter name or webpage address used to distribute stormwater information to the public:
 - c. If applicable, how many residents received your community newsletter?
 - d. If applicable, how many total website hits did you receive for your online newsletter articles or stormwater information website?
10. Did you use any of the following materials or activities at events during the reporting period?
- | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Stormwater poster board display | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Date: | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| EnviroScape interactive stormwater model | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, Date: 5-2018 | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Watershed map with pushpins | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Date: | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Stormwater mural banner and scavenger hunt | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Date: | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Major Runoff stormwater mascot | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Date: | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Interactive Corn Hole Board | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Date: | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Interactive catch basin demos | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Date: | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Events and Pledges

11. Did you host a seed bomb or native plant workshop? Yes, on: No
12. Did you distribute any additional educational materials on native plants?
 Yes (Describe): No
13. Please describe any interest, comments, or discussion generated from native plant workshops or giveaways:
14. Did your community collect pet waste pledges distributed with the public education materials?
 Yes, Number: No
15. Did your community collect car wash pledges distributed with the public education materials?
 Yes, Number: No

Please describe any interest, comments, or discussion generated from either of the pledges and associated giveaways.

16. Did you implement a storm drain awareness activity between August 1, 2017 and July 31, 2018?
- Yes: (streets) on (dates)

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Yes, we held a storm drain stenciling event on 5-9-2018 (dates) and stenciled near Bauerwood Elementary School (LGROW worked with Jenison Public Schools)

Yes, we have approximately (#) pre-marked catch basin backs/grates with the message "No dumping, drains to waterway"

Yes, we hung door knob flyers on near Bauerwood Elementary School (streets) on 5-9-2018 (dates)

Please describe any interest, comments, or discussion generated from the activities above:

Have you noticed a reduction in storm drain dumping? Yes No Describe:

17. Please describe any interest, comments, or discussion generated from these materials/activities:

18. Did you participate in any community stormwater events? (check all that apply)

Rain barrel workshop Date: Number of Attendees:

Rain garden/Green Infrastructure Workday Date: Number of attendees:

River clean up (location): Date: 9-2017 Number of Attendees:

Ottawa County Water Quality Forum – November 30, 2017

MWEA Watershed & Stormwater Seminar – December 5, 2017

MWEA Watershed Summit – March 28, 2018

Earth Day at Blandford Nature Center – April 21, 2018

15th Annual Grand River Spring Forum – May 11, 2018

Grand River Water Festival – June 24, 2018

MWEA Annual Conference – June 25-27, 2018

West Michigan WhiteCaps Concourse Table – July 26, 2018

Other: **Making the Case for Green Infrastructure** Date: August 22, 2017

Number of Attendees: 80

19. Describe any materials distributed, number of attendees, messages used at these events:

20. If applicable, please describe any other stormwater public education activities your community implemented beyond the events described above (This includes education with school groups, other community events, etc.) and submit any relevant documentation.

Additional Documentation

2017 Focus Group Report for the NPDES MS4 Public Education Plan in the Lower Grand River Watershed

December 2017

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council



Introduction

A focus group was held on December 18, 2017 as part of the compliance activities associated with the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Regulations watershed-based permit for communities in the Lower Grand River Watershed (LGRW). The focus group served as an evaluation tool for the LGRW Public Education Plan (PEP), an integral part of the NPDES Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. In 2003, twenty three entities made up of county, city, village, township, university, and local school districts collaborated under the guidance of Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) to apply for a watershed-based stormwater permits. The Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW) was officially formed as an agency of GVMC in 2009 to coordinate the implementation of the permits and provide basin-wide oversight, conduct watershed-wide initiatives, and prioritize water quality concerns.

The PEP was created for the participating communities in Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon Counties and is intended to educate the public on stormwater pollution reduction. Successful implementation of the PEP will form partnerships with agencies and organizations that have existing programs and use educational materials and strategies familiar and relevant to the area residents. LGROW is the mechanism used to promote PEP programs and materials.

The unique purpose of the public education portion of the NPDES MS4 Stormwater Regulations is to increase the awareness of watershed residents that their everyday activities can contribute pollutants to their community's water resources. Most citizens recognize the recreational and aesthetic benefits they receive from water, and also recognize that water quality degradation is a serious concern in the Great Lakes Region. Most people, however, have not made the connection that significant pollution is generated from their normal everyday actions, and not simply from large commercial and industrial sources.

The advantage of this regional watershed-based initiative is the cooperation and resource sharing that is developed between the participating communities. Implementing a successful PEP takes funding and preparation time that one community may find impossible to do alone. However, when coordination develops between many communities in the watershed, these resources can be shared, and a larger audience can be reached at a lesser cost per contributing community. Since the overall aim is to encourage pollution prevention by coordinating a regional effort, it makes sense to pool all available resources and delegate tasks to the communities that will be the most efficient at accomplishing their responsibilities.

The last focus group held to evaluate the PEP was in 2009 at Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber (FTC&H) in Grand Rapids. The purpose of the focus group was to determine changes in the awareness, education, and behavior of the public as a result of stormwater education efforts in 2008 and 2009. Results of that session were used by GVMC and the LGROW Public Engagement Committee to further enhance the goals, objectives, and deliverables of the MS4 program.

The 2017 focus group was held at the offices of GVMC with the purpose to determine changes in the awareness, education, and behavior of the public as a result of stormwater education efforts since 2009.

In this report the results of the focus group will be evaluated, and recommendations given by participants will be used to edit and update the current LGRW MS4 PEP.

Methods

Focus group participants were nominated by local units of government that maintain MS4 permits. Each participating local unit of government was asked to submit two potential participants that meet the following criteria:

1. The nominees must live in Kent or Ottawa Counties, specifically in the Lower Grand River Watershed, preferably in the community they are representing
2. The individuals do not manage or have direct involvement with your community's MS4 Permit
3. The nominees have had the potential to encounter LGROW deliverables (examples: events, educational outreach, brochures or fliers, LGROW website or Facebook page)

GVMC staff administered the 1.5 hour long focus group session on December 18, 2017. Twelve invited individuals were present, representing Kent and Ottawa Counties. Eleven of the 23 municipalities that GVMC works with regarding MS4 permits were represented. There was a diverse demographic represented among the group.

Focus Group Dialogue

All participants were asked to fill out the following questionnaire before discussion began:

Table 1 – Questionnaire
1. Name?
2. Affiliation or workplace?
3. What community (city, township, or village) do you live in?
4. What local parks do you most often go to?
5. What community do you work in?
6. What is the zip code where you live?

The results of this questionnaire indicated that all twelve participants live in the Lower Grand River Watershed and subwatersheds of the Lower Grand (Plaster Creek, Lower Rogue, Indian Mill Creek, and Spring Lake). Half of the participants worked for the municipality that they were representing for the focus group, although only one of those six work directly to manage their municipality's MS4 permit.

Discussion began with introductions of everyone present and an ice breaker question. The conversation followed six dialogue questions led by GVMC. The dialogue questions were as follows:

Table 2 – 2017 Dialogue Questions
1. What do you know about LGROW?
2. What LGROW information have you seen, heard, or read?
3. Did the message (that you have seen, heard, or read) influence you? If so, how?
4. Have you seen any stormwater or pollution prevention messaging at your workplace? Who was the message from? (LGROW, employer, other org.)
5. How could LGROW project deliverables be improved?
6. Where and how do you get information on community activities?

Question #1: What do you know about LGROW?

In all correspondence with participants prior to the focus group, the words ‘Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds’ were not used. This was in order to determine the reach of the organization. When asked what they knew about LGROW, participants could not specifically spell out what LGROW stands for, but did display knowledge of watershed concepts and understand that the organization had something to do with watershed protection. One participant identified LGROW as the Lower Grand River Association of Watersheds and correctly described it as “a watershed partner for the larger area.” Once told what LGROW stood for, participants were able to identify events and projects that LGROW partners and participates in, such as the Mayor’s Grand River Cleanup (led by the West Michigan Environmental Action Council, WMEAC), Basin Buddy program and Stormwater Oversight Commission (City of Grand Rapids), MS4 permit management (GVMC/LGROW) and pet waste pledges (LGROW).

After topics for Question #1 were exhausted, GVMC staff explained the purpose of this focus group as it relates to the MS4 permitting process and explained the history of LGROW.

Question #2: What LGROW information have you seen, heard, or read?

The purpose of this question was to learn which materials LGROW had successfully administered to the communities. Some participants mentioned school activities, rain barrel workshops, and tours/events at breweries. Others described activities that their individual communities completed as part of MS4 compliance, including displays at city hall, e-newsletters, no dumping signs on catch basins, and touch-a-truck events where the DPW conducts outreach. Representatives from Grand Haven discussed their community’s work with schools focusing on source water protection and recognized materials with LGROW’s older “Keep it Pure: Yours to Protect” messaging. One participant was familiar with the LGROW Spring Forum and encouraged others to attend.

Participants wondered if LGROW ran a Master Rain Gardener program and asked about LGROW’s connection to WMEAC and to Plaster Creek Stewards. The only LGROW-specific information that participants were able to relay was storm drain markers and pet waste signs.

Discussion for this question also raised participant concerns regarding combined sewer overflow (CSO) that reaches the Lower Grand River from upstream communities and its local effects. Participants also questioned if there would be opportunity for LGROW to do outreach concerning PFAS drinking water contamination.

All participants received re-usable LGROW tote bags that contained LGROW promotional and public outreach materials. GVMC staff also presented a power point presentation that contained pictures of other LGROW materials that were used in the past, materials that could not fit into the tote bags (ex: storm drain stencils), and pictures from events or festivals that LGROW has been present at.

Question #3: Did the message (that you have seen, heard, or read) influence you? If so, how?

The discussion regarding Question #3 didn't focus on how the stormwater messages changed behavior in participants, but instead focused on the content of messages. Participants did indicate that they had seen 'Entering the [Lower Grand River] Watershed' signs, but discussion did not cover how that information affected their behavior. Most participants agreed that placing these signs at watershed boundaries is better than only along the stream, but one participant thought the signs were not useful because people ignore them on busy streets.

Storm drain markings were discussed at length, and the general group consensus was that storm drain markers are good to have. However, the way that the storm drains are marked can affect the purpose of the marking. For example, the group seemed to be in agreement that the circular LGROW drain markers are hard to read, and therefore the message they are trying to convey (no dumping, drains to local waterway), gets lost. Also, if all drain markers are in English, and they are used in a neighborhood that isn't predominately native English speakers, the message gets lost. Excellent points were made by focus group participants asking about LGROW's outreach in different languages, and approaching citizen perspectives from different cultural point of views. If someone is from a culture where it is common practice to dump things down the storm drain, they may need different educational messages than those who understand how local stormwater infrastructure works.

Question #4: Have you seen any stormwater or pollution prevention messaging at your workplace? Who was the message from (LGROW, employer, other org.)?

One participant shared that unless you are working for a DPW directly with the stormwater permit, one would not receive official stormwater training. However, in that community, there is stormwater education provided to employees, especially if their daily job encounters stormwater management best management practices (BMPs). The general consensus from the focus group was that participants hadn't seen much information about stormwater in their workplace, or couldn't specifically recall any stormwater messaging at work.

Question #5: How could LGROW project deliverables be improved?

Participants offered helpful and realistic ways for deliverables to be achieved, how to improve messaging and improved methods of outreach. One suggestion was to connect watershed education with drinking water quality. Citizens are often more concerned with the quality of drinking water than surface water and stormwater runoff. If a connection between stormwater and drinking water can be made, citizens may become more invested in stormwater messaging.

There were many ideas about the methods used to reach people. The general consensus was that LGROW needs a broader reach and more people need to be aware of stormwater messaging. Participants mentioned that they would like to see messages on billboards, on physical print materials such as newspapers or magazines, and/or in promotional videos that offer watershed education messaging.

New audiences and topics for outreach were also suggested, including educating residents of apartment complexes on their current impacts as well as how they can manage future properties, and educating owners of LEED buildings on maintenance of their green infrastructure.

One participant mentioned that communication with local governments is crucial. For example, LGROW has been encouraging people to wash their car on their grass (or at a commercial car wash) in order to avoid runoff polluted with soap and automobile fluids entering the storm sewer system through storm drains. However, it was mentioned that it is against some city codes to park your vehicle on the lawn and residents can get ticketed.

Question #6: Where and how do you get information on community activities?

Many participants received community information from the internet. Internet and social media sites mentioned included: Facebook, Instagram, Nextdoor, municipal websites, Experience Grand Rapids website, and Eventbrite.

Other sources include community newsletter and mailers, water bill mailers, and word of mouth. It was mentioned that word of mouth is extremely important in communities where people do not have access to the internet or smart phones. Also, participants expressed that it isn't enough to tell people about the watershed or stormwater pollution prevention, you also need to tell them why they should care about information you are presenting.

Other Discussion

GVMC staff asked for other suggestions for new LGROW promotional materials and giveaways that would help promote stormwater messaging. New ideas from the focus group participants included: phone accessories such as PopSockets, water bottle stickers to get free water refills (similar to a program Art Prize has used in Grand Rapids), conducting storm drain marking events with private neighborhood associations who would not otherwise have their drains marked by a municipality, pencils for kids at schools, politicians spreading the word when they go door-to-door during campaign season, and attending farmers markets to partner with farmers who could hand out information on LGROW's behalf.

Results

This focus group ended up being a very educational experience for its participants while providing valuable feedback on LGROW outreach activities. The mixed demographic of participants and the number of MS4 communities participating provided a fairly diverse view of LGROW's reach into the watershed, and participants shared many ideas to improve LGROW messaging.

New Target Audiences

- *Municipal employees*
- *Adults through schoolchildren*
- *People living in apartment complexes*
- *LEED certified building owners*
- *Farmers*

Much of the focus group time was spent explaining to participants what LGROW does and why, instead of gaining insight on how to improve specific LGROW messages and materials. The fact that many of the participants were employees of municipalities participating in the MS4 program suggests that LGROW may need to emphasize improvement of outreach to these communities in order to extend our reach into the wider watershed community. Since these communities are meant to be assisting in spreading LGROW's stormwater messaging and materials, it is important that their employees understand LGROW's work. More stormwater messaging needs to be available to municipality employees regarding that municipality's stormwater permit and program. Focus group participants were not opposed to learning more about their municipality's program, instead they seemed genuinely interested to know more about it and seemed willing to share that information with others. LGROW needs to find a more effective way for municipalities to share stormwater program information with municipality employees.

Frequently, LGROW focuses its attention on educating school children. It was suggested that information could be given to children at school for them to take home to their parents. Adults may become more invested in the messaging if it comes to them from their children. One participant suggested that LGROW spends a lot of time educating children, and should focus on targeting its messages to adults. An effective way to reach many adults at one time would be to expand messaging to apartment complexes. After this comment was made, other participants agreed, and suggested that private home associations, or subdivisions be brought into the loop in order to reach many adults who have a vested interest in the watershed, but aren't receiving messaging from another source. Other target audiences suggested were the owners of local LEED certified buildings. It is a good idea to reach out to these owners because they may need education on how to maintain their green infrastructure (GI).

Reworking Messages

- *Translating materials in to the language of the neighborhood*
- *Address 'why' citizens need to know the message presented*
- *Simplify messages*

Participants stressed the importance of materials being available in the language of citizens that LGROW is wishing to serve. There is a large Hispanic population in West Michigan, and in order to reach those people, materials in Spanish should be available. It is also important to take into consideration cultural values because many people may not understand how their local stormwater infrastructure works. While educating people on how the storm sewer works, focus group participants also mentioned that it

is important to explain to people why LGROW messages are important and how stormwater affects their everyday life. Messages should also be simple, in order to ensure understanding and avoid confusion.

Delivery Mechanisms

- *Placement of watershed information (placement of 'Entering the Watershed' signs, more signs for GI)*
- *Tours of municipalities and events at breweries*
- *Word of mouth*
- *Presence at festivals*
- *Advertising in churches in the watershed*

There was excellent discussion by the group about ways that they would like to receive more information regarding stormwater messaging, and the places where they thought that messaging would be well received in the watershed.

'You are now entering the [Lower Grand River] Watershed' signs were deemed helpful by participants. Only one participant expressed that these signs are not helpful to citizens, because if you drive past them frequently in your neighborhood, you quickly become immune and ignore them. There was discussion about the placement of the watershed signs, and the group seemed to agree that it is helpful to have the signs placed at watershed boundaries, not directly at river or stream crossings. However, it was suggested that if signs were placed along bike or walking trails, there would be an opportunity for people to stop and read the sign and any other information provided with it. It is not practical for a driver of a car or passenger to read the whole sign while driving by. It was suggested that LGROW consider placing more signs in parks with watershed information, where interested parties will stop and read. Participants also noted that you might reach more people if you have a sign on a roadside versus a trail based on how busy that road or trail is.

Participants noticed that stormwater education is often given during facilities tours at municipalities, and that is a good place to get information to a captive audience. Also, many people have an interest in local breweries, so events or messaging promoted at breweries would also be successful.

Word of mouth is extremely helpful in communities for people who do not have internet access or smartphones. It was suggested that LGROW find a community leader and use them to spread educational messages.

Attending festivals is another mechanism that was suggested during the focus group, and advertising events or stormwater messaging in churches was also mentioned. Festivals and churches usually contain many local leaders, and this would be a great way to get active community members involved.

Key take-aways for LGROW from the focus group are summarized in the following table:

How LGROW messages can be improved	
New Target Audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Municipal employees</i> • <i>Adults through schoolchildren</i> • <i>People living in apartment complexes</i> • <i>LEED certified building owners</i> • <i>Farmers</i>
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Future Action Steps

Using the information provided from the focus group, the PEP for the LGRW communities can be edited to better serve the public. The challenges, successes, and recommendations communicated in this report will be evaluated to modify the PEP as needed. The updated PEP will result in a more effective public outreach campaign to reduce stormwater pollution and raise MS4 awareness during the next permit cycle.

Photos

