

Chapter VII

Information and Education Strategy

This chapter describes the information and education strategy developed by the CAC and natural resource professionals recruited to assist in the preparation of the Walworth County LWRMP update. Using existing and new information and education strategies is a vital component of the LWRMP. The LWRMP 5-year work plan presents solution-based information and educational outreach programming and includes a listing of a variety of planned activities and actions. The following information and educational program goals were identified:

- Increase appreciation of the value of Walworth County's natural resources, including ground water, by residents, businesses, visitors, and elected officials. Increase awareness and support for county, state and federal conservation programs that protect, enhance and restore Walworth County's natural resources.
- Increase preparation and use of resource management plans by farmers/operators to achieve compliance with the State agricultural Performance Standards and Agricultural Prohibitions.
- Increase use of urban runoff pollution prevention practices and sound land use planning.
- Increase public engagement and actions to protect and restore Walworth County lakes, streams, wetlands and other ecologically important areas.
- Increase use of riparian buffers.
- Prevention of the introduction and spread of invasive species.
- Increase public appreciation of Walworth County's prime farmlands.

The CAC preferred LURM staff to engage Walworth County residents, businesses, youth, or visitors by doing the following: update web site with local conservation concerns, activities, and important events; use quarterly newsletters or news articles, including the County Administrator feature in local newspapers; contact landowners on a one-to-one basis; network with local organizations; sponsor workshops on specific conservation issues for targeted audience; inform various municipalities and planning commissions about conservation efforts and learn their needs; work with County Board.

Events or activities determined by the CAC most likely to lure public participation were: workshops on lakeshore buffers; workshops on invasive species; workshops on private well management; field trips to view lakeshore buffers, agricultural conservation practices, urban storm water practices, prairies; and wetlands restoration projects, and; special activities to engage youth.

Information and Educational Programming Goals and Plan

1. Gain a greater understanding on the economic and environmental value of protection prime farmlands in Walworth County

Audience

- Landowners/ operators
- Farm Bureau & Farm Organizations
- Cooperatives
- Ag-consultants
- Governmental officials & staff

Barriers to Overcome

- Urban sprawl in neighboring counties
- Definition of Prime Farmland
- Lack of political support for the farm community
- Profitable farming programs

Activities

- News release & newsletters
- Quarterly newsletters
- Workshops
- Display at the Dairy Breakfast
- Provide local governmental officials with information
- Offer federal & state incentives to protect farmland
- Website postings

2. Develop awareness and need for the implement conservation plans and nutrient and animal waste management plans on farm parcels.

Audience

- Landowners/ operators
- Farm Bureau & Farm Organizations
- Cooperatives
- Ag-consultants

Barriers to Overcome

- Lack of knowledge about the economic advantage for conservation planning
- Lack of knowledge about the regulatory requirements
- Need to understand the value of smart nutrient use
- Landowner acceptance of change in farming practices
- High rent
- Farm production and profits

Activities

- One-on-one contacts
- Quarterly newsletters

Workshops
Display at the Dairy Breakfast
Farm tours
Distribute information to absentee landowner

3. Use urban best management practices (BMP) to protect and restore Walworth County lakes, streams, wetlands and other ecologically important areas.

Audience

Riparian landowners/ rural and residential
Conservation organizations
Public officials
Consultants
Contractors
Developers

Barrier to Overcome

Environmental value of best management practices not understood
Little economic incentive to establish and maintain best management practices
Local property taxes don't encourage the use & maintenance of BMPs
Lack of landowner awareness
Trained landscapers and engineering consultants
Regulations not understood

Activities

Prepare and distribute facts sheets to landowners & promote cost share programs
News releases
Postings on Walworth County Web Site
Quarterly Newsletters
One-on-one contacts to targeted landowners
Promote CREP initiative for buffers
Display information at Dairy Breakfast
Tours
One-on-one contacts
Workshops

3. Develop a greater understanding of ways to protection of Walworth County's environmental resources.

Audience

Local government officials/ staff and planning commissions
Consultants, developers & contractors
Urban residents
Teachers
Lake residents
Conservation organizations

Garden clubs
Landscape firms & planners

Barrier to Overcome

Pollution prevention not understood nor is it a goal in land use plans
Assumption that any & all development is either good or bad
No incentives to develop in ways that are environmentally friendly
Lack of knowledge on ways to prevent pollution around the home
Lack of conservation designs for new development plans

Activities

Host local workshops on pollution prevention
Meet one-on-one with municipalities to inform and educate
Newsletter articles
Newspaper articles
Presentations at meetings & other organizations
Share homeowner packets with Realtors & Developers
Continue to support Lake Protection Program/ Aquatic Invasive Species Program
Provide technical support for lakeshore landscaping techniques
Web-site postings
Tours

4. Gain a greater understanding and support for the implementation of the adopted:

Walworth County's Park and Open Space Plan; Southeastern Regional Natural Areas & Critical Habitat Protection Plan; and the Multi-Jurisdictional Comprehensive Plan for Walworth County-2035; SEWRPC Planning Report No. 52, A Regional Water Supply Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin . (SEWRPC)

Audience

Conservation organizations & Conservancy Groups
Youth
Local government officials and staff
General Public
Farmers/ landowners

Barriers to Overcome

Lack of public & political support to acquire parks
Lack of economic incentives to protect groundwater
Little understanding of groundwater resources in general
Lack of knowledge about private well supply & quality
Lack of knowledge on Smart Growth Plan

Activities

News releases
Newsletter & newspaper articles
Tours & Workshops (field sites & in house)
Display at Dairy Breakfast & special events

Presentations with special interest groups & schools
Distribution of prepared materials
Web-site postings
Develop and distribute information on Water Conservation

5. Gain a greater understanding of the value controlling invasive non-native aquatic and terrestrial species and protecting and enhancing Walworth County native landscapes, including wetlands.

Audience

Landowners of wetlands, woodlands and shorelands
Conservation organizations
Youth
Government officials and staff
Landscapers
Consultants

Barrier to Overcome

Little economic incentive to protect & restore native landscapes
Local property taxes don't encourage protection & enhancement of native landscapes
Lack of wetland protection & enhancement success stories
Invasive plants are everywhere, control cost are high.
Lack of public outreach and engagement
Lack of knowledge of State Invasive Species regulations

Activities

News releases
Preparation and distribution of printed material
Press releases
Tours of sites local native communities and restoration projects
Workshops
Display at Dairy Breakfast & other public events
One-on-one contacts
Website postings
Distribute information at County Tree and Shrub pick -up day
School presentations

Evaluation of Information and Education Program

A summary of the information and educational programming implemented will be prepared annually. Formative evaluations will be built into the program activities where feasible. Types of formative evaluation may include questionnaires after events; direct mail surveys; one-on-one interviews; observation from staff; assessments of event attendance; etc. The use of the formative evaluations will be used to modify activities and make them more effective. Of course, the best evaluation is whether or not the Walworth County LWRMP goals have been achieved.