

STORM WATER EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL & MCLEAN COUNTY

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



THE ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING TASKS AS PART OF THE STORM WATER EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM AGREEMENT OF FEBRUARY 1, 2019.

2021 TOTAL REACH: 151,133 INTERACTIONS

DIRECT (PROGRAMS, EVENTS, PHONE INQUIRIES): 2,092

MEDIA (NEWSPAPER, RADIO, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB): 149,041

3RD GRADE CLEAN WATER CLASSROOM PROGRAMS

- EAC provided clean water education programs to 21 third grade classrooms in Bloomington, presenting to 451 students at 10 schools.
 - Cedar Ridge Elementary; 1 class, 30 students
 - Benjamin Elementary; 1 class, 32 students
 - Washington Elementary; 1 class, 22 students
 - Pepper Ridge Elementary; 2 classes, 37 students
 - Corpus Christi School; 2 classes, 43 students
 - Stevenson Elementary; 1 class, 25 students
 - Sheridan and Bent Schools online combined class, 22 students
 - Sheridan Elementary; 2 classes, 46 students
 - Trinity Lutheran School; 2 classes, 39 students
 - Washington Elementary; 2 classes, 42 students
 - Sheridan Elementary School; 3 classes, 52 students
 - Washington Elementary School; 3 classes, 61 students
- EAC provided clean water education programs to 6 third grade classrooms in Normal, presenting to 112 students at 5 schools.
 - Sugar Creek Elementary School; 1 class, 16 students
 - Oakdale Elementary; 1 class, 17 students
 - Thomas Metcalf School; 2 classes, 44 students
 - Calvary Christian Academy; 1 class, 16 students
 - Grove Elementary; 1 class, 19 students
- EAC provided clean water education programs to 5 third grade classrooms in McLean County, presenting to 98 students at 3 schools.
 - Hudson Elementary School; 2 classes, 33 students

- Tri-Valley Elementary; 2 classes, 46 students
- Heyworth Elementary; 1 class, 19 students

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS – COMMUNITY-WIDE

- Led a “Nature Walk” on March 13 with 6 sessions for 71 total youth and parents and on April 10 with 4 sessions for 28 youth and parents. Offered in partnership with the Children’s Discovery Museum, the hour-long program the EAC and museum staff accompany registrants on a walk down the Constitution Trail between Uptown and Hidden Creek Nature Sanctuary to discover what unfolds along the trail each month and learn about the local environment and how to support it while we watch the seasons change. Interpretations of observed nature lead to discussions of reducing storm water pollution.
- Presented to a class of ISU future K-12 educators on the EAC’s clean water third grade education programs with 24 students participating.
- Presented the Clean Water Program at Mulberry School including reading “Over and Under the Pond” and an Enviroscape demonstration with 24 students participating.
- Presented on watersheds to 3 fifth grade classes from Sheridan Elementary and Stevenson Elementary reaching 54 students.
- Presented on clean water programming and storm drain stenciling opportunities to the Youth Conservation Conference at Miller Park Zoo with 13 students participating.
- Coordinated Constitution Trail and Creek Clean-Up day with volunteers gathering at the Chateau, Tipton Trails, and the Habitat ReStore to clean along the trail and parts of Sugar creek. A total of 22 volunteers removed a half ton of garbage.
- Held a special Zoom event featuring Dr. Sandra Steingraber who spoke to attendees about the fossil-fuel free future, farming, fracking, climate & justice with 114 attendees.
- EAC held a special Earth Day Live event online featuring information on multiple topic areas including clean water with 662 viewers.
- Provided an information booth at the David Davis Mansion Glorious Garden Festival to promote the Yard Smart program and rain barrel workshops. Spoke with 114 booth visitors.
- Provided an information booth at the ISU Horticulture Center’s Autumnal Festival to promote the Yard Smart program and rain barrel workshops. Spoke with 32 booth visitors.
- Spoke with 23 individuals at the Ecology Action Center’s information booth at the McLean County Chamber Non-profit Showcase promoting Sugar Creek Stewards, Storm Drain Stenciling, and annual creek clean-up volunteer opportunities.
- Presented to Chris Miller’s Sustainability and Renewable Energy class at Heartland Community College promoting Sugar Creek Stewards, Storm Drain Stenciling, and annual creek clean-up volunteer opportunities to 8 students.
- Lent trash grabbers to a 4H group of 20 youth and adults to perform trail and creek clean-up at Ewing Park in Bloomington.
- Ecology Action Center hosted weekly Facebook Live EAQs chats on varying topics (reach numbers reflected in Facebook numbers in later section).

- In March, we discussed storm water runoff pollution and prevention, the Sugar Creek Stewards Program, and Yard Smart strategies to reduce stormwater runoff pollution.
- In April, we promoted the Constitution Trail and Sugar Creek clean-up event.
- In May, we promoted storm drain stenciling volunteer opportunities and rain barrel workshops.
- In June, we promoted rain barrel workshops, the upcoming Yard Smart Garden Walk, and storm drain stenciling opportunities.
- In July, an episode featured a guest from the ParkLands Foundation, discussing the importance of land conservation in the Mackinaw River Watershed.
- In September, we discussed Sugar Creek Stewards volunteer opportunities.
- In October, we talked about proper leaf management, reminding viewers to use leaves for mulch, let them lie, add them to compost piles, or rake them to the curb, but not into the street to prevent storm water runoff pollution.

SUGAR CREEK STEWARDS

Sugar Creek Stewards is designed to raise awareness about Sugar Creek as an important community storm water system and ecosystem. The EAC works with volunteers at designated sites to improve the overall health and aesthetics of Sugar Creek through invasive species control and removal, allowing native species to thrive.

- Bloomington
 - In February, 3 volunteers helped clear honeysuckle and other woody brush at Ewing Park.
 - In March, 10 participants helped seed previously cleared areas with native shade tolerant seed at Ewing Park.
 - In April, 7 volunteers removed honeysuckle from the east side of the creek bridge at Ewing Park.
 - In June, 2 volunteers removed honeysuckle from Ewing Park.
 - In August, 4 volunteers removed honeysuckle and spread native plant seed at Ewing Park
 - In October, 2 volunteers helped remove honeysuckle, spread native plant seed, and plant 20 serviceberry trees at Ewing Park II in Bloomington.
 - In December, 3 volunteers worked to remove invasive plants and spread native shade-tolerant plant seed at Ewing Park II in Bloomington.

- Normal



- In January, 4 volunteers helped remove honeysuckle and other woody plants on the west side of the creek at Fairview Park.
- In May, 4 volunteers worked in the rain spreading native plant seeds and removing honeysuckle at Fairview Park.
- In July, 5 volunteers removed invasive plants from the prairie on the east side of the creek and seeded with native seeds at Fairview Park.
- In September, 4 volunteers helped remove invasive species and spread native plant seed along the creek through the main part of Fairview Park.
- In November, workday 2 volunteers helped remove invasive plants and spread native plant seed along the creek just west of the playground at Fairview Park in Normal.

STORM DRAIN STENCILING

The Ecology Action Center welcomes groups of volunteers to participate in storm drain stenciling in the community. Volunteers spray stencils next to storm drains that say "Drains to Stream, Keep it Clean", marking every stenciled drain with a GPS tracker, and distributing door hangers in the neighborhood that educate residents on what storm water pollution is and ways households can reduce their contributions to it.

- Held a stenciling workday in Normal with SLiCE, a volunteer organization at Heartland Community College, where five volunteers distributed 175 flyers to homes and stenciled 60 storm drains.
- Held a stenciling workday in Bloomington, west of Miller Park with the Youth Conservation Conference. Thirteen volunteers, distributed flyers to 87 homes, stenciled 20 storm drains
- Held a stenciling workday held in Normal in the neighborhood around Advocate BroMenn hospital with a group of eight high-school volunteers. Volunteers distributed door hangers to 75 homes, and stenciled 35 storm drains.



YARD SMART PROGRAM

The Ecology Action Center promotes gardening and lawn care practices that reduce storm water runoff and the need for chemical fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides. In the spring and summer the EAC offers rain barrel workshops and hosts an annual Yard Smart Garden Walk. Extensive time went into re-creating

these events and educational programs to comply with COVID-19 social distancing and “stay-at-home” restrictions.

- Rain Barrels
 - The EAC offered 8 rain barrel workshops to 21 participants where we provide rain barrel best practices and participants take home custom built 55 gallon rain barrels.
 - The EAC also sold 19 ready-to-use rain barrels through the EAC online store.
- Yard Smart Garden Walk

The EAC held its annual Yard Smart Garden Walk on July 10. After a year of holding the event online, the event resumed in-person participation and had a record 97 attendees. This year's event coincided with the EAC's 50th Anniversary.

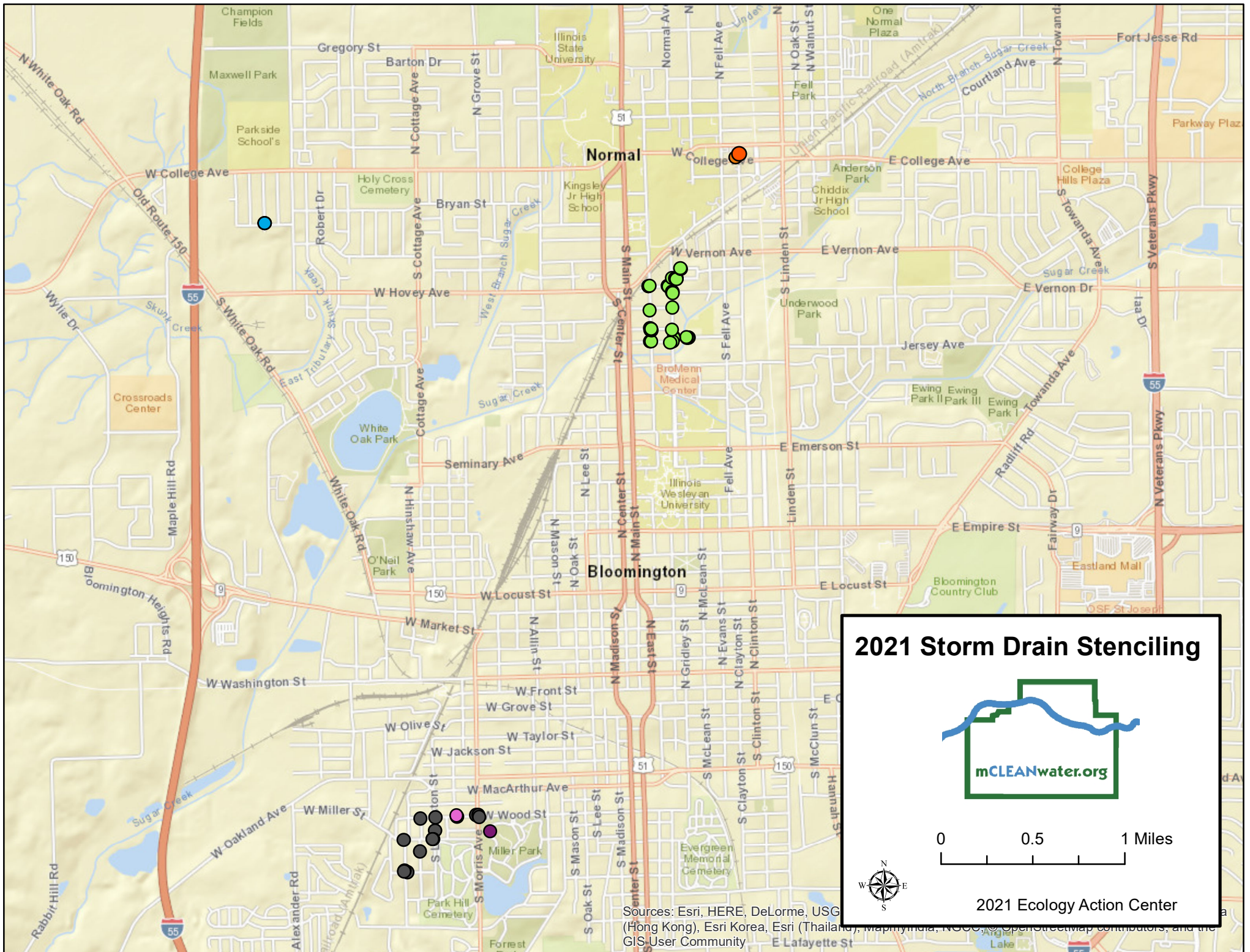
In order to accommodate the high number of attendees EAC staff split the group and toured the gardens in two smaller groups. The gardens included two homes with front and side yards turned into beautiful native plant landscapes, and a trip to the ISU Horticulture Center to learn about their prairie space. Both groups then gathered at the final garden, the home of Nancy and Joe Armstrong, long time EAC supporters and board members. Attendees found a surprise garden party complete with educational booths from multiple partner organizations, snacks, and live music. Attendees learned about the benefits of landscaping with native plants, and saw a variety of methods to incorporate native plants into a home garden.



COMMUNITY-WIDE OUTREACH EFFORTS


- Social Media
 - Weekly Facebook #WatershedWednesday posts educated the public about clean water issues reaching 51,147 people.
 - Weekly Twitter #WatershedWednesday posts educated the public about clean water issues reaching 7,649 people.
- EAC Newsletter
 - The January electronic newsletter was sent to 848 households and featured an article promoting Sugar Creek Stewards.

- The March member newsletter featured content about rain barrel workshops and rain barrel benefits. The member newsletter was mailed to 113 households.
 - The April electronic newsletter was sent to 544 households and featured an article asking for volunteers for the Constitution Trail and Sugar Creek Clean-Up event.
 - The May electronic newsletter was sent to 479 households and featured an article promoting Yard Smart gardening techniques and rain barrel workshops.
- Websites ecologyactioncenter.org and mCLEANwater.org
 - The EAC promoted clean water issues and strategies for water protection through its resource-rich websites, receiving 18,961 visits.
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- Radio Promotions
 - Radio Bloomington
 - EAC staff was interviewed by Marc Strauss on WJBC about spring rain barrel workshops and storm drain stenciling opportunities, reaching 1,000 average daily listeners.
 - In the fall, EAC ran paid promotions on WJBC, WBWN, and WBNQ reminding the 28,300 weekly listeners to curb their leaves to prevent storm water runoff pollution.
 - WGLT
 - In the fall, EAC ran underwriting messaging for a week reminding the 40,000 listeners they can curb, compost, or let leaves lie to keep them out of the storm drains.
 - Answered 69 direct inquiries from visitors, calls, emails, and social media comment and direct messages about the Yard Smart program, rain barrels, and other storm water issues.
 - Ongoing participation by EAC staff in McLean County Greenways Advisory Committee, coordinating progress updates to McLean County Greenways Plan.



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS (Hong Kong), Esri Korea, Esri (Thailand), mapbox, NCCO, OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

2021 Storm Drain Stenciling



0 0.5 1 Miles

2021 Ecology Action Center