

# STORM WATER EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL & MCLEAN COUNTY

## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



THE ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING TASKS AS PART OF THE STORM WATER EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM AGREEMENT OF DECEMBER 1, 2022.

### 2024 TOTAL REACH: 277,402 INTERACTIONS

DIRECT (PROGRAMS, EVENTS, PHONE INQUIRIES): 1,955

MEDIA (NEWSPAPER, RADIO, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB): 275,447

### 3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE CLEAN WATER CLASSROOM PROGRAMS

- EAC provided clean water education programs to 25 third grade classrooms in Bloomington, presenting to 534 students at 10 schools.
  - Sheridan Elementary School (3 classrooms, 49 students)
  - Sugar Creek Elementary School (2 classrooms, 34 students)
  - Bent Elementary School (3 classrooms, 66 students)
  - Stevenson Elementary School (3 classrooms, 62 students)
  - Cedar Ridge Elementary School (3 classrooms, 83 students)
  - Irving Elementary School (3 classrooms, 62 students)
  - Pepper Ridge Elementary School (2 classrooms, 54 students)
  - Fox Creek Elementary School (2 classroom, 40 students)
  - Trinity Lutheran Elementary School (2 classrooms, 48 students)
  - Corpus Christi Catholic School (2 classrooms, 36 students)
- EAC provided clean water education programs to 22 third grade classrooms in Normal, presenting to 481 students at 10 schools.
  - Grove Elementary School (2 classrooms, 46 students)
  - Northpoint Elementary School (3 classrooms, 68 students)
  - Thomas Metcalf School (2 classrooms, 48 students)
  - Oakdale Elementary School (3 classrooms, 59 students)
  - Grove Elementary School (2 classrooms, 47 students)
  - Calvary Christian Academy (1 classroom, 19 students)
  - Collen Hoose Elementary School (3 classrooms, 65 students)



- Prairieland Elementary School (2 classroom, 46 students)
- Fairview Elementary School (2 classrooms, 38 students)
- Thomas Metcalf School (2 classrooms, 45 students)<sup>1</sup>
- EAC provided clean water education programs to 6 third grade classrooms in McLean County, presenting to 112 students at 2 schools.
  - Hudson Elementary School (2 classrooms, 31 students)
  - TriValley Elementary School (4 classrooms, 84 students)

## EDUCATIONAL EVENTS – COMMUNITY-WIDE

- Held an information table at the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener's Home, Lawn, and Garden Day. Talked to 51 attendees about rain barrels and the Yard Smart program.
- Presented at the Home, Lawn, and Garden Day about environmentally friendly gardening practices in the Yard Smart Program to 63 people.
- Talked to 24 families about stormwater pollution, the water cycle, and where residents get their water from at the Normal Public Library.
- Talked to 21 K-3rd graders at Mulberry School about storm water pollution.
- Taught a Yard Smart: Environmentally Friendly Gardening class for 9 Heartland Community College Continuing Ed students about how to incorporate Yard Smart techniques into lawn and gardening care practices.
- Talked to 18 Children's Discovery Museum attendees about storm drains and storm water pollution.
- Talked to 20 people at the Glorious Garden Fest about the Yard Smart Program.
- Taught 22 students at the Little Jewels Learning Center, Corpus Christi location, about stormwater pollution.
- Discussed EAC programs such as our rain barrel workshops and Sugar Creek Stewards volunteer opportunities, with 170 people at the Bloomington Pride Fest.
- Met 106 students at the Festival ISU event and shared information about upcoming stenciling events.
- Gave a presentation about rain water harvesting for 25 people at the Activity Resource Center.
- Shared information about the Yard Smart program at 14 Nature Trail Days attendees.
- Tabled at the Master Naturalists Annual Conference. Shared information about the EAC's Yard Smart program with 53 conference attendees.
- Talked to 24 Illinois Wesleyan Students about potential internships and volunteer opportunities, including trash pickup dates, the Sugar Creek Stewards program, and upcoming stenciling workdays.
- Staff gave a presentation updating 30 MCRPC members on EAC programs including the clean water program.

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<sup>1</sup> EAC staff went to Thomas Metcalf school twice in 2024. Once in the spring and once in the fall. Traditionally, EAC clean water programs are given in the spring, but a fall program was given for observational purposes for an EAC collaboration with Illinois State University.

- 5 Baby Fold employees listened to a presentation about the benefits of having a Yard Smart yard.
- Discussed the benefits of having a Yard Smart Yard with 11 Baby Fold employees at their wellness fair.
- A presentation was given to 12 residents at the Bloomington Public Library detailing to them how they can reduce their water usage in the kitchen.
- Talked to 18 elementary students about rain barrels at the Carlock Garden Club.

The inaugural Ripple event occurred on May 4 and had 50 attendees. Ripple had 27 booths and activities from local government and organizations including the City of Bloomington, McLean County, the Town of Normal, ParkLands Foundation, the Nature Conservancy, University of Illinois Extension, and NAACP. These organizations educated residents on local initiatives working to keep waterways clean. Ripple additionally had storytelling from Brian Fox Ellis and music from Twang. The Ecology Action Center had many booths giving information about a variety of program including the Yard Smart program and the wildlife monitoring program. Twenty-two attendees discussed the Yard Smart program with EAC staff.

## SUGAR CREEK STEWARDS

- In November, 18 volunteers cleared invasive plant species out of Ewing Park II in Bloomington.
- Normal
  - In February, sixteen volunteers worked at Fairview Park in Normal removing and treating invasive plants such as honeysuckle.
  - In May, four volunteers worked at Fairview Park in Normal removing excess brush in partnership with the Ripple event.
  - In August, 4 volunteers worked to remove brush from Fairview Park in Normal.
  - In October, 11 volunteers worked to remove brush from Fairview Park in Normal.
  - In December, 15 volunteers worked at Fairview Park in Normal to remove invasive plant species.
- Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District
  - In November, 6 volunteers put down seed and plugs at the new BNWRD Stewards site located on Main Street in Normal, near Monical's Pizza.



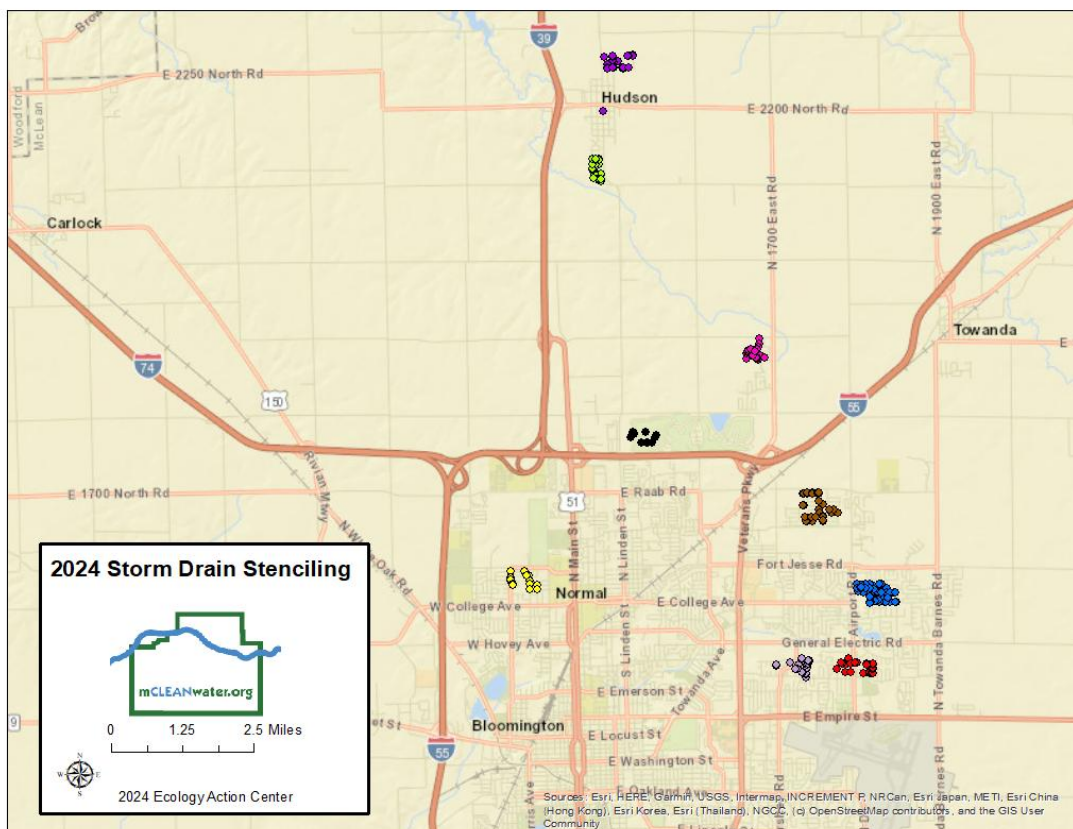
## STORM DRAIN STENCILING

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.

- Bloomington
  - Four volunteers stenciled 33 storm drains and handed out 181 door hangers in the neighborhood between Clearwater Park and North Hershey Road.



- 30 families from For a Better Tomorrow stenciled 106 storm drains and hung 316 door hangers.
- The Smart family and their friends (6 people total) stenciled 42 storm drains and handed out 149 door hangers near Suburban East Park in Bloomington.
- Normal
  - Seven volunteers stenciled 30 inlets between Ziebarth Road and Northtown Road in Normal. Volunteers handed out 300 door hangers.
  - Twelve volunteers for Illinois State University stenciled between Gregory Street and West College Ave. Volunteers handed out 170 door hangers and stenciled 22 inlets.
  - Seven A.L.A.S. students from Illinois State University stenciled 20 storm drains and put door hangers on 139 doors around the Ironwood neighborhood.
  - Nine Halo Solar employees stenciled 62 storm drains and handed out 196 door hangers in the neighborhood south of Grove Elementary School.
- McLean County
  - Nine volunteers from Paul Mitchell Beauty School stenciled 23 inlets, handing out 156 door hangers in Hudson, IL from South McLean Street to East South Street.
  - Four members of the Sunrise Rotary stenciled 33 storm drains and hung 150 door hangers in Hudson, IL.



## 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.

- Rain Barrels
  - The EAC hosted 9 rain barrel workshops for 24 people where attendants took home a rain barrel made from a repurposed 55-gallon drum at the conclusion of the workshop.
- Yard Smart Garden Walk
  - The annual Yard Smart Garden Walk was not held in 2024 due to changes in staffing. The EAC expects to hold a walk in 2025.

## COMMUNITY-WIDE OUTREACH EFFORTS

- Social Media
  - Weekly Facebook, Instagram, and Bluesky #WatershedWednesday and #WildlifeWednesday posts educated the public about clean water issues and animal sightings recorded for the Normal Creek Wildlife Project. These posts reached 102,844 people.
  - Ran Facebook ads about proper leaf management. Reached 1,816 people.
- EAC Newsletter
  - Produced a first quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to stopping household water leaks. Mailed to 273 households in March.
  - Sent the February EAC Action News email newsletter to 1,889 email addresses to educate residents on proper medication disposal to prevent water pollution.
  - Sent the February of the EAC Action email newsletter to 1,748 people with articles discussing upcoming volunteer events, rain barrel workshops, and the Ripple clean water event.
  - Produced a second quarter EAC member newsletter featuring articles related to PFAs. Mailed to 253 households.
  - Sent the August EAC Action News email newsletter to 1,866 email addresses to inform recipients about upcoming storm drain stenciling dates.
  - Sent the October issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter to 1,922 people. The issue included articles about proper leaf management.
  - The November issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter was sent to 1,909 people and included articles about rain barrel winterization and overwintering gardens.
- Radio Promotions
  - Interviewed with Todd Wineburner on WJBC about rain water harvesting and Fix a Leak Week reaching approximately 1,000 listeners.
  - Interviewed with Todd Wineburner on WJBC about the Earth Day Creek Clean Up and the upcoming Ripple event. Reached 1,000 listeners.

- Was interviewed about proper leaf management techniques by WMBD and WYZZ.
- Interviewed about proper leaf management techniques by WJBC. Reached 1,000 listeners.
- Ran advertisement with WJBC and WGLT reminding residents to curb their leaves, let them lie where they fall, or compost them to prevent stormwater runoff pollution. Reaching 5,700 listeners.
- Print Ads
  - Sent a flyer with information on how to be salt smart to reduce water pollution to 18,455 Unit 5 and District 87 families.
  - Sent a flyer promoting Fix a Leak Week with information on ways to check and fix household leaks to 18,492 Unit 5 and District 87 families.
  - Sent postcards to 221 Lake Bloomington residents reminding them to complete their annual septic system maintenance.
  - Ran two ads in the Pantagraph reaching around 43,000 print subscribers promoting the Ripple event.
  - Sent a flyer advertising the Ripple event to 13,364 District 87 and Unit 5 families.
  - Sent a flyer advertising storm drain stenciling volunteer dates to 17,969 District 87 and Unit 5 families.
  - 16,825 Unit 5 and District 87 families received a flyer detailing proper leaf management techniques.
  - A quarter-page ad ran in the Pantagraph in November reminding residents to not rake leaves into the road, and thus into storm drains but instead curb their leaves to prevent stormwater runoff. Sent to 21,500 print subscribers.
- Websites [ecologyactioncenter.org](http://ecologyactioncenter.org) and [mCLEANwater.org](http://mCLEANwater.org)
  - The EAC promoted clean water issues and strategies for water protection through its resource-rich websites, receiving 12,261 visits.
- Answered 58 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.