

STORM WATER EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL & MCLEAN COUNTY 2025 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.

2025 TOTAL REACH: 383,921 INTERACTIONS

DIRECT (PROGRAMS, EVENTS, PHONE INQUIRIES): 2,415

MEDIA (NEWSPAPER, RADIO, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB): 381,506

3RD GRADE CLEAN WATER CLASSROOM PROGRAMS

- EAC provided clean water education programs to 30 third grade classrooms in **Bloomington**, presenting to 631 students at 11 schools.
 - Prairieland Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 71 Students)
 - Cedar Ridge Elementary School (3 Classroom, 57 Students)
 - Irving Elementary School (2 Classrooms, 48 Students)
 - Corpus Christi School (2 Classrooms, 37 Students)
 - Bent Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 47 Students)
 - Stevenson Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 52 Students)
 - Trinity Lutheran School (2 Classrooms, 41 Students)
 - Washington Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 76 Students)
 - Northpoint Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 79 Students)
 - Fox Creek Elementary School (2 Classrooms, 51 Students)
 - Sheridan Elementary School (4 Classrooms, 72 Students)
- EAC provided clean water education programs to 24 third grade classrooms in **Normal**, presenting to 508 students at 8 schools.
 - Calvary Christian School (1 Classroom, 13 Students)



A drawing from a third-grade student after attending the EAC's Clean Water Program

- Oakdale Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 71 Students)
- Grove Elementary School (4 Classrooms, 83 Students)
- Fairview Elementary School (2 Classrooms, 55 Students)
- Epiphany Catholic School (2 Classrooms, 30 Students)
- Parkside Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 69 Students)
- Sugar Creek Elementary School (2 Classrooms, 44 Students)
- Colene Hoose Elementary School (3 Classrooms, 64 Students) & (4 Classes, 79 Students)¹
- EAC provided clean water education programs to 4 third grade classrooms in **McLean County**, presenting to 80 students at 1 school.
 - Tri Valley Elementary School (4 Classrooms, 80 Students)

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS – COMMUNITY-WIDE

- Gave a clean water presentation for a homeschool group of 13 junior high students. In this presentation stormwater pollution and where our drinking water comes from was discussed.
- Held a booth at Home, Lawn, and Garden Day. Fifty-one participants stopped by to discuss rain harvesting, composting, and the Yard Smart program. One lucky participant took home a rain barrel which was raffled off.
- Discussed what rain barrels are, how they work, and how to properly install and maintain one with 10 students at Thomas Metcalf School.
- Promoted the Ecology Action Center's programs, volunteering, and internship opportunities with six Illinois Wesleyan University Students at their Internship Fair.
- Gave a presentation to 30 Normal Rotary Club about the EAC's Clean Water programming.
- Met with 16 Illinois State University students involved in the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) and SustainableState, two environmental clubs at the university. The presentation included an overview of the EAC and its program areas and how students can get involved with volunteering and internships such as storm drain stenciling and Sugar Creek Stewards.
- Attended the Employee Wellness Fair for City of Bloomington, BNWRD and McLean County. Talked to 81 people about EAC topics including storm drain stenciling and Sugar Creek Stewards.
- Discussed EAC volunteer opportunities with 54 folks who attended the Bloomington Housing Association's Job and Resource Fair.
- Attended the History Reads Book Club at Bloomington Public Library and gave insight to 9 attendees regarding the novel, *Living Downstream*, by Sandra Steingraber. Discussed the novel's connection to McLean County and the Yard Smart Program.

¹ EAC staff went to Colene Hoose Elementary School twice in 2025. Once in the spring and once in the fall. Traditionally, the EAC's clean water programs are given in the spring, but a fall program was requested by the teacher as it fit better with her curriculum schedule.

- Talked to 35 adults and students about water pollution and how much water there is on the earth at the Jacob's Well Creation Care Summer Camp.
- Presented for 25 University of Illinois Extension Watershed Steward Students about volunteer opportunities with the Ecology Action Center such as Sugar Creek Stewards.
- Read the picture book *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom for 20 students at Le Petite Academy. After reading and discussing water pollution, students promised to become water protectors in their own community.
- Attended the Glorious Garden Festival and promoted the Yard Smart program to 13 people.
- Promoted the Yard Smart program to 25 Garden Club members at the Action Resource Center.
- Presented on the importance of being Yard Smart for one attendee at Wendell Niepagen's Garden Gathering Series.
- Twenty-six community members learned about the Yard Smart program at the Bloomington Public Library's grand opening of the Prairie on the Patio.
- Discussed EAC programs including clean water volunteer opportunities with 84 ISU students at Festival ISU.
- The EAC held their first annual Volunteer Appreciation Event. Thirty-one volunteers enjoyed food, games, and company. Awards were given to twelve outstanding individuals. Twelve EAC board Members volunteered at the event, grilling, assisting with decorating, handing out food, and greeting.
- Met with 10 Thomas Metcalf's 6th graders in regards to their Makers Space class. The classroom focuses on finding solutions to issues in McLean County. During this time students asked questions about the EAC and formulated plans on how to solve environmental issues in the community including the issue of water quantity and quality.
- Staff attended the Illinois Wesleyan University Internship Fair and shared internship opportunities, such as our water quality monitoring internship, to 13 students.
- Talked to 26 people about Yard Smart practices and pollinator friendly gardening at the Master Naturalist's Pollinator Palooza.
- Four residents learned about the pros and cons of different fall leaf management techniques at the Bloomington Public Library's new Patio.
- An EAC staff member was a panelist on Illinois State University's 'Success Looks Like Me' presentation focusing on Women in Sustainability. Fifteen students attended.
- EAC staff presented to two Bloomington Public Library patrons about chloride pollution and what they can do to reduce it locally.
- Volunteer opportunities including mCLEAN Up Crew and Sugar Creek Stewards was promoted to 13 people at the YICU non-profit fair.
- The EAC presented to 20 residents about EAC programs including work done in pollution prevention at the All about Normal, Partners Week meeting.
- Thirty-six attendees learned about rain barrels and other clean water EAC programs at the Chamber of Commerce Non-profit Showcase.

SUGAR CREEK STEWARDS

The Sugar Creek Stewards project is designed to raise awareness about Sugar Creek as an important community storm water system and improve the beneficial functions of stream buffers along the creek. The Ecology Action Center coordinates volunteers at designated sites to improve the function and aesthetics of stream buffers through invasive species control and removal and simultaneously increasing beneficial native vegetation.

- Bloomington
 - In January, seven volunteers removed brush from Ewing II Park.
 - In March, 16 volunteers continued to remove brush and bush honeysuckle from Ewing II Park.
 - In May, 10 volunteers removed brush from Ewing II Park.
 - The July workday was cancelled due to hazardous weather.
 - In October, 12 volunteers removed brush from Ewing II Park.
 - In November, 18 volunteers removed invasive plants from Ewing II Park.
- Normal
 - In February, 31 volunteers aided in invasive plant removal at Fairview Park.
 - In April, 15 volunteers continued to remove brush and bush honeysuckle from Fairview Park.
 - In June, five volunteers aided in invasive plant removal at Fairview Park.
 - In August, four volunteers removed various invasive plants from Fairview Park.
 - In September, 22 volunteers removed brush and bush honey suckle from Fairview Park.
 - In December, nine volunteers removed brush from Fairview Park.
- Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District
 - Due to the nature of this site, no volunteer workdays were performed. However, the EAC's steward's coordinator continued management of this site through spring seedings, weeding, and other maintenance items.



A group of Sugar Creek Stewards Volunteers after a workday at Ewing II Park.

MCLEAN UP CREW VOLUNTEERING

The mCLEAN up crew volunteer workdays remove litter from McLean County to reduce pollution. The Ecology Action Center coordinates volunteers at locations throughout the community to collect and properly dispose of waste, leaving areas better than they found them.

- Normal

- Nine Boy Scouts picked up 10 bags of trash, vinyl siding, drain tiles, and a rusted barbeque around Raab Road in Normal.
- Eighteen volunteers picked up 185 bags of trash by Sugar Creek near the AutoZone on South Center as part of a partnership with Home Sweet Home Ministries.
- Eight volunteers picked up 113 bags of trash completing the cleanup at Sugar Creek near the Autozone on South Center.
- Two volunteers cleaned up the Constitution trail in Normal between South Madison and South Allin Street. Six bags of trash were collected.
- Thirteen SustainableState volunteers collected four bags of trash from People's Park in Normal.
- Seven For a Better Tomorrow volunteers collected six bags of trash near Normal Public Works.



SustainableState volunteers collecting trash in Uptown Normal as part of the mCLEAN Up Crew.

- Bloomington

- Three volunteers picked up 10 bags of trash, one tv set, one couch, cushions and pillows, and landscaping fabric near Morris Ave in Bloomington.
- Two volunteers picked up 10 bags (200 pounds) of trash, Styrofoam, and metal near the Quality Inn and Suites in Bloomington as part of the Bring It Back to Normal ISU volunteer day.
- Twenty-six community members picked up 26 bags of trash (520 pounds), 4 tires, and one tent from behind the Chateau in Bloomington as part of the Earth Day Clean Up
- 16 volunteers worked 102 hours over 12 shifts and collected one ton of recyclables at the McLean County Fair.
- Six volunteers picked up 11 bags of waste from Bloomington Heights Road in Bloomington, totaling around 220 pounds of trash removed.
- Thirteen bags of trash (260 pounds) along constitution trail near center and main street overpass were removed by 7 volunteers.

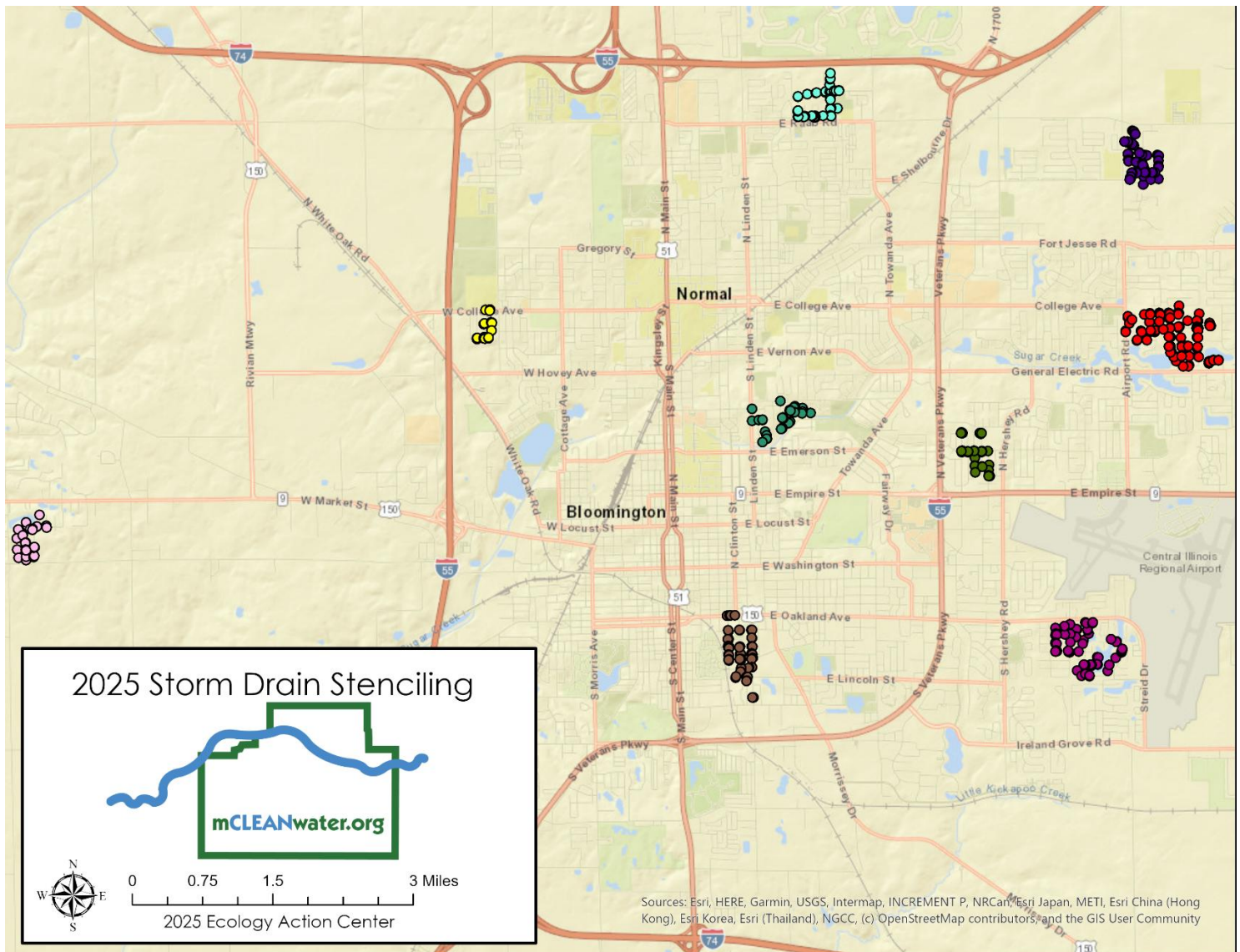
- McLean County

- Twenty-seven volunteers picked up 38 bags of trash (760 pounds) at the Illinois State University Farm in Lexington.
- Five community members completed the Illinois State University Farm clean up picking up 6 bags of trash (120 pounds).
- Ten volunteers picked up 8 bags (160 pounds) of trash at the ISU Farm's compost facility.

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
 - 19 volunteers from a United Methodist Church Camp stenciled 118 storm drains and distributed 261 door hangers in the neighborhood east of Tipton Park
 - Thirteen Boy Scouts and community members stenciled 40 storm drains and handed out 287 door hangers in the neighborhood west of Stevenson Elementary School.
 - 12 volunteers stenciled 64 drains and handed out 150 door hangers in neighborhoods adjacent to Emerson Park in Bloomington.
- Normal
 - One volunteer stenciled 48 drains in the neighborhood east of Grove Elementary School.
 - Three volunteers stenciled 43 inlets and hung 158 door hangers near Carden Park.
 - Two volunteers completed 78 door hangers and stenciled 36 Inlets in the neighborhood south of Parkside Elementary School.
 - Eleven volunteers stenciled 68 drains and handed out 232 door hangers around Old Farmers Road neighborhoods.
 - Six volunteers stenciled 40 drains and handed out 140 door hangers in neighborhoods between Linden and Ewing II Park.
- McLean County
 - One volunteer stenciled 31 Drains and handed out 24 door hangers in a Twin Grove neighborhood, west of Bloomington.



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 nine rain barrel workshops for 40 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 held on Saturday, July 19 with 33 attendees. The walk visited four homes in Bloomington and Normal with two homes in environmental justice areas. All of the yards featured wide usage of native plants in the landscaping and spaces for wildlife. The walk showed off different stages of going Yard Smart with areas that had been worked on for over 20 years to areas that were in year three of the process to be more sustainable. The garden walk started and ended at One Normal Plaza with lunch from Green Top Grocery and a presentation from the State Climatologist on planting with climate change in mind. Unfortunately, due to heavy storms and safety concerns the walk was cancelled after visiting the second home.

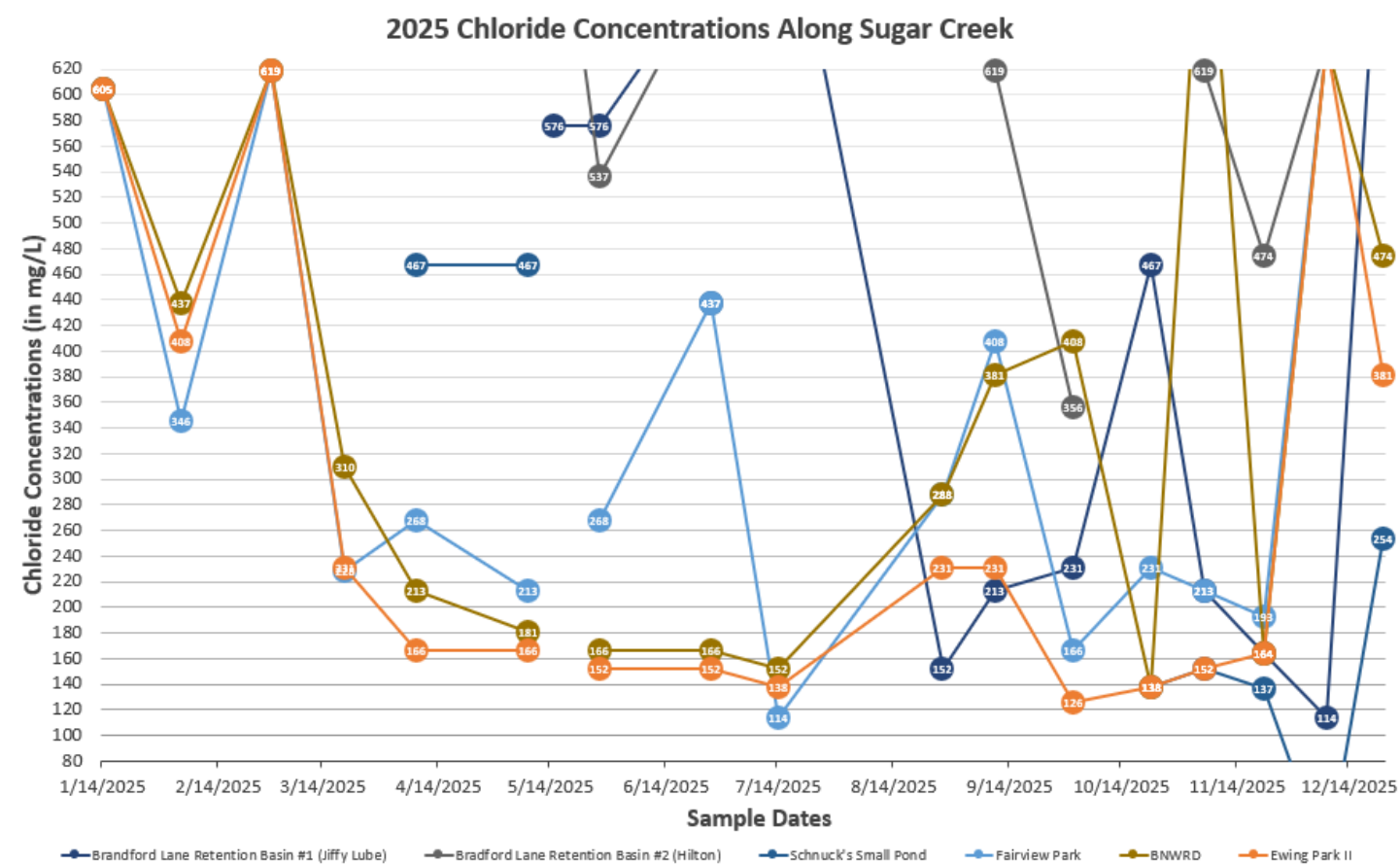


SODIUM CHLORIDE MONITORING

The Chloride Monitoring Project, conducted in partnership with Illinois Riverwatch and the Izaak Walton League of America, assesses sodium chloride levels at six locations along Sugar Creek to identify actionable steps for preserving water quality in the local ecosystem. The water quality standard in Illinois for chloride concentrations (Title 35, Subtitle C, Chapter I, Section 302.208 of the Illinois code) states that the concentrations should not be greater than 500 mg/L in freshwater environments.

Data shows that chloride levels typically spike from late fall to winter, a trend attributed to road salt usage for de-icing. However, elevated levels persisted into spring and summer at several sites, including Bradford Lane Retention Basin #1, Bradford Lane Retention Basin #2, and Schnucks Small Pond. Downstream of these areas, Fairview Park additionally experienced occasional spikes. Over the year, multiple samples exceeded the 500 mg/L threshold, with several readings falling within the 300–619+ mg/L range. The test

strips used had a maximum detection of 619 mg/L. Of the 18 days tested, eight of them contained one or more samples which were at or greater than 619 mg/L.



STORM DRAIN FILTER PROGRAM

In 2024, the EAC purchased three filters with funds awarded through the Council of the Great Lakes Region Stormwater Filtration System Grant. These filters monitor pollutants entering the stormwater system and in turn, help better direct waste reduction and anti-littering efforts and will contribute to the existing stormwater education programs. As of 2025, three filter locations have been installed. One is in Uptown Normal, one is on Main Street in Downtown Bloomington, and the third is on West Market in Bloomington. Collections were made at each of the locations from the first quarter through the third. No collections were made in the fourth quarter due to weather. Ongoing sorting, categorizing, and reporting was conducted each quarter.



EAC staff installing the Litta Trap in Downtown Bloomington.

A total of eight filter collection events took place in 2025. The total weight of debris collected was 55.2 pounds. The top three macro-debris items retrieved are plastics/food wrappers, fragments plastic and other with other waste items being straws, hair ties, etc.

COMMUNITY-WIDE OUTREACH EFFORTS

- Social Media
 - Weekly Facebook, Instagram, and Bluesky #WatershedWednesday posts educated the public about clean water issues. These posts reached 207,245 people.
 - Ran ads on Facebook promoting proper fall leaf management techniques. Ad numbers are included in the reach above.
- EAC Newsletter
 - Sent the January issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter to 2,272 people. The issue included articles about proper winter management techniques.
 - The February issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter was sent to 2,272 people and included articles about fixing leaks in homes and business, the Yard Smart program, and reminding folks that the EAC gives free presentations.
 - The April issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter was sent to 2,271 people and included articles about Yard Smart, proper mowing, and volunteering.
 - The May issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter was sent to 2,272 people. The issue included articles about identifying spring ephemerals.
 - Sent the June print members newsletter to 268 people. The issue included articles promoting the Yard Smart Garden Walk and the harmful impacts pesticides can have on human health
 - The July issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter was sent to 2,290 people and included an article about tips for gardening in a drought.
 - The August issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter was sent to 2,055 people. The issue included an article about what storm drains are and how they can be pollution pathways.
 - Sent the September print members newsletter to 264 people. The issue included an article explaining new legislation related to native gardening in HOAs.
 - The October issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter was sent to 2,301 people and included an article about the pros and cons of fall leaf management.
 - The November issue of the EAC Action News email newsletter was sent to 2,304 people and included an article about winter garden upkeep with pollinators in mind.
 - Sent the December print members newsletter to 248 members and included an article about AI data centers water usage.

- Radio Promotions
 - EAC staff were interviewed about proper road salt usage by WJBC reaching approximately 1,000 listeners.
 - Promoted the Yard Smart Garden Walk on WJBC, reaching an estimated 1,000 listeners.
 - Ran an ad on WBNQ for the Yard Smart Garden Walk reaching approximately 4,200 people.
 - An estimated 1,000 WJBC listeners learned about proper fall leaf management during an EAC interview.
 - Advertised about proper fall leaf management on WJBC reaching an estimated 8,100 people.
 - Advertised on WGLT promoting proper fall leaf management reaching an estimated 3,000 listeners with digital marketing totaling 10,000 impressions.
- Print Ads
 - A flyer promoting the summer storm drain stenciling dates was sent to 16,451 Unit 5 and District 87 families.
 - Mailed 216 post cards to Lake Bloomington residents reminding them to preform proper septic system maintenance.
 - Advertised in the Pantagraph about EAC programs, like that of the clean water program, to celebrate Earth Day. The ad reached an estimated 21,000 readers and the digital portion of the ad had 10,423 impressions.
 - Advertised in the Pantagraph promoting the Yard Smart Garden Walk. The digital portion of the ad generated 10,510 impressions and reached an estimated 21,000 readers.
 - Advertised in the Pantagraph about proper fall leaf management reaching approximately 21,000 readers and 10,506 digital impressions.
- Websites ecologyactioncenter.org and mCLEANwater.org
 - The EAC promoted clean water issues and strategies for water protection through its resource-rich websites, receiving 13,748 visits.
- Answered 47 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.