

# Water



UW-Extension **Natural Resources Education Program**

## WATER OUTREACH REPORT FOR 2016

### 1 TMDL education and outreach

Efforts to improve water quality in Wisconsin's impaired waters focus on the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) tool, which sets the daily limits of pollutants allowed into a waterbody without compromising water quality. Natural Resource Educators (NREs) have facilitated many educational and collaborative initiatives that engage agricultural producers, civil planners and other residents to protect many of the state's TMDL-designated impaired waters and their tributaries:

- **We led six Healthy Soil-Healthy Water Initiative workshops and training events.** The initiative's goal is to highlight the connection between soil health and clean water. Through these events we have engaged hundreds of producers and residents in the **Wisconsin River and Rock River watersheds**.
- **We helped form and strengthen farmer-led watershed councils**, including the **Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council**, the **Dodge County Farmer-to-Farmer Soil Health Workgroup** and the **Hay River Farmer-Led Watershed Group**. With the assistance of NRE staff, these watershed councils are leading local efforts to reduce nonpoint source water pollution and improve water quality. Two were formed as a direct result of the Healthy Soil-Healthy Water initiative.
- **We continued to encourage cover crops and other soil conservation practices** like no-till, through dozens of **producer field days, demonstration farms, workshops and training events**. The efforts, supported by NREs, have seen tens of thousands of new acres planted with cover crops in the **Lower Fox River, Wisconsin River and Red Cedar River watersheds**.
- **We organized water quality educational efforts**, including nearly a dozen trainings for UW-Extension, lake associations and municipal employees. We led trainings for land and water conservation departments on developing civic infrastructure that improves water quality in the **St. Croix and Red Cedar River watersheds**.
- **We expanded water quality monitoring**. Significantly, the Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership, facilitated by the regional NREs, began a **\$600,000 project** to expand water quality monitoring, update water quality models and continue outreach and sociological survey work in the **Red Cedar River watershed** focused on landowners and producers. Local, county, state and federal dollars support the partnership.
- **We published an array of educational and outreach materials**, including newsletters, factsheets and management plans, many in collaboration with local water quality associations in the **Wisconsin River, Rock River, St. Croix River, Eau Claire River, Red Cedar River and Fox River watersheds**.
- **We connected farmers in the Lower Fox River watershed to the Lower Fox Demo Farms Network**, which spreads messages on cover crops, no-till practices, and nutrient management. An annual farmer roundtable provides Demo Farms updates and provides a forum for mutual learning and conversation among farmers. NREs facilitate these efforts and connect our UW-Extension agricultural specialists to the region.

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## ② Education and outreach supporting nutrient reduction in water resources and DNR policy initiatives and priorities

In addition to coordinating water quality improvements in Wisconsin's impaired waterways, Natural Resource Educators are leading education and outreach efforts across the state aimed at engaging schoolchildren, producers, volunteers and lakeshore property owners in safeguarding Wisconsin's surface and groundwater:

- **A team, including UW-Extension, received a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) 5-year grant** to work on the **Lafayette County Agricultural Enterprise Area Water Quality Improvement Project**. This project will address concerns of **soil erosion and water quality degradation within the Pecatonica River watershed** by improving water quality and soil health through the installation of conservation practices. Our role will be to assess water quality monitoring needs and how volunteers can fulfill those needs; recruit and train water quality monitoring volunteers; and manage and interpret volunteer-collected water quality data.
- **Extension staff, in partnership with Green County Land Conservation Department, brought *Groundwater Jeopardy!* to 185 elementary school students in Monroe.** The interactive presentation teaches groundwater basics, water conservation and protection of drinking water and groundwater. The presentation and *Groundwater Jeopardy!* game were also shared with additional educators statewide.
- **Extension staff also engaged 150 5th graders from Iowa County schools** in building an “edible aquifer” during the Iowa County Youth Conservation Field Day. This activity stressed the **connection between groundwater and drinking water** and how and why we need to protect groundwater.
- **We coordinated a local team to host the February Rice Lake Confined Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) workshop** attended by **45 participants**. We also coordinated production and delivery of the **2017 CAFO compliance calendar**.
- **We collaborated with local lake organizations to plan and host the 2016 Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference** in Spooner, which drew **more than 200 attendees**.
- **We continued to support a long-term effort to increase collaboration amongst local governments and organizations around the Lake Winnebago System.** The steering team, comprised of state and local government representatives, has secured financial commitments from the three counties surrounding Lake Winnebago and is moving ahead with comprehensive lake management planning.

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