

Urban Stormwater Working Group (USWG)

Meeting Minutes

Mon, May 14: 2:00 – 3:30 pm

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Reorientation

USWG had been focused on education, tracking and legislation. The latter two had subgroups specifically addressing them. At the November NLRs Workshop, the Policy Working Group (PWG) formed a communication subgroup that created a presentation PowerPoint for partners and sent copies of the Strategy, the Biennial Report, and an accompanying letter to the Illinois state legislature.

- USWG thinks that the PWG Communication letter covers much of what the Legislation Subgroup was working to accomplish. However, there is still a need for education on a local level. Therefore, USWG decided to modify the Legislative Subgroup to be an Education Subgroup that creates a resource network for MS4s and addresses the need to educate local decision makers.
- The Education Subgroup should consider:
 - Expanding the Calumet Stormwater Collaborative (CSC) Resource Guide to be a statewide resource.
 - Adding slides to the PWG PowerPoint that specifically address stormwater and keep the target audience in mind. If the presentation is given to mayors, there needs to be a focus on why they should care, what they can do, and what the local economic and environmental benefits are. National Green Infrastructure Certification Program information can also be included.
 - Creating a mini-work plan for these initiatives.
- Email Eliana Brown to be on the Education Subgroup. An email will go out to the Tracking Subgroup to confirm interest in this subgroup.

Lawn to Lake Program

Allison Neubauer, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, gave a presentation about the Lawn to Lake Program. The Program has seven core principles on how to implement sustainable landscape practices. Most of the outreach in the past has to homeowners. They are updating their products and creating new resources. As such, they are looking for technical reviewers. Tracking nutrient reduction is not a priority at this time, but they would be interested in having this information.

- If any members are willing to provide content not represented in the online materials and/or would like to be a technical reviewer, email Allison.
- The Tracking Subgroup should consider exploring methods for tracking this program's nutrient reduction.

National Green Infrastructure Certification Program (NGICP) Training

Heidi Leuszler, Parkland College, presented information about NGICP Training. The community college is partnering with Water Environmental Federation (WEF) to offer NGICP training. The purpose of the national certification is so that everyone knows the same standards and knows the value and working vocabulary of stormwater. The training includes design, planning, and maintenance of green infrastructure. The course is designed for managers, administrative staff, and field technicians. Parkland would be the only training center in the area.

- Heidi requested help with getting the word out about the training. More information to come.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Next call: July 16 2:00 – 3:30 pm

Meeting in Chicago: September (Date TBA)

Tracking Subgroup call: June 28 2:00 – 3:00 pm

PRESENT: Steve Brendel, Reid Christianson, Jeff Edstrom, Danielle Gallet, Leslie Heath, Holly Hudson, Sally McConkey, Allison Neubauer, Bob Newport, Trevor Sample, John Sloan, Amy Walkenbach, Eliana Brown, Lisa Merrifield, Kate Gardiner

- Reorientation
 - Update from the November NLRS workshop and on Extension changes
 - Extension changes
 - Extension is consolidating nutrient efforts. Emails now coming from Illinois NLRS instead of IWRC.
 - Possibility for more involvement with other Extension entities (Master Naturalists and Master Gardeners, etc.) that could benefit the stormwater sector.
 - November NLRS Workshop
 - Workshop speakers discussed tracking. Regarding stormwater, there needs to be a way to better capture what MS4s are doing.
 - Walton Family Foundation has funded a project to determine tracking metrics so there can be uniformity among the Hypoxia Task Force (HTF) states. USWG member Reid Christianson is working on the project. He can help guide us on the metrics that HTF will be asking from all the states.
 - At the November NLRS Workshop, PWG formed a Communications Subgroup to address a need for nutrient partners to speak with one voice. The subgroup developed a PowerPoint to be used by any partners to talk about NLRS and wrote a letter to legislators informing them about the NLRS. NLRS, Biennial Report, and Biennial Report fact sheet also sent to legislators with the letter. The PowerPoint is flexible and additional slides can be added that focus on stormwater issues.
 - Review group and subgroup charges
 - Do we still feel the need for legislative subgroup?
 - Leslie says no. Holly Hudson leaning towards no as well, but is wondering if education should be tracked better.
 - Is there a need to have entities from this group to specifically talk about NLRS as it pertains to stormwater to any specific groups?
 - Leslie thinks it might be overkill since Amy already sent the letter to legislators, unless we're talking about smaller groups.
 - Eliana thinks state legislators are covered by the letter, but if there are other decision-makers that aren't covered by the letter, is that something this group wants to focus on?
 - We could target local elected officials and stormwater management officials or introduce this idea to groups of mayors. Have to include the benefits to the mayors' communities.
 - Should we change the focus of the legislative subgroup to an education subgroup? And add line about creating/cultivating a clearinghouse list.
 - John Sloan likes the idea of focusing on local benefits, we know that urban stormwater probably isn't a huge source of nutrients to begin with so it's hard to get people excited.
 - Do we need a subgroup or is this covered in the group charge?
 - Heidi wonders if this is something we could couple with a certificate program? Locals are interested and we could connect the working part and getting the word out.
 - Eliana agrees we might need a few dedicated people to be working on it, which would mean a subgroup.

- Email Eliana if you would like to be on the Education Subgroup.
- Lawn to Lake Program (Allison Neubauer, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant (IISG))
 - Allison is the point person for Lawn to Lake (L2L), which informs homeowners and communities how actions we take on land affect our water – how applying fertilizers to lawns can lead to nutrient runoff.
 - L2L program began in Lake Champlain and IISG brought it to the Lake Michigan area in 2010.
 - Working on revamping L2L Program, most outreach has been to homeowners. Updating products and creating new resources geared towards online use. Would love to get more social media and online use.
 - Want to redo brochures, information is still good, the publications are just a little outdated. If anyone has new content that they're not representing in materials online, Allison would be glad to get in touch. Main project is guidebook, there were a lot of partners who worked together on it.
 - Timeframe for guidebook? A couple years to get everything done.
 - Reid wonders if they are doing any quantification of water quality benefits. They are not, Margaret Schneemann had tried to quantify them in the past but it seemed more complicated for their purposes with pollution prevention outreach. Reid thinks it might be helpful to try to quantify individual practices, similar to how cover crops can reduce nutrient loss by 30%.
 - If there was help with the quantification, Allison would be interested. She would talk with her supervisor (Sarah Zack) about it.
 - Seven core principles with directions on how to implement sustainable landscape practices:
 - Right plant, right place
 - Fertilize appropriately
 - Manage lawn pests responsibly
 - Water efficiently
 - Compost
 - Attract wildlife
 - Reduce stormwater runoff
 - Has reached landscapers, turf managers, folks from municipalities, corporate campuses, homeowners through a group by Midwest Pesticide Action Center and their Midwest Grows Green initiative
 - Is Lawn to Lake limited in geographical application?
 - No, can be applied statewide.
- National Green Infrastructure Certification Program (NGICP) Training (Heidi Leuszler, Parkland College)
 - Parkland is a community college in Champaign, IL and they are partnering with Water Environmental Federation to offer NGICP training. Water Environmental Federation (WEF) is trying to make a national qualification where everyone knows the same standards and knows the value and working vocabulary of stormwater. The certification program includes training and an exam.
 - Parkland would be the only training center in the area.
 - The training would include how to read maps and design plans, maintenance, knowing the value of stormwater. Audiences could be managers, administrative people, workforce, low income groups, etc.
 - Bob Newport wonders if the training would focus more on making people more employable by landscaping companies or to give landscape companies an edge when bidding for jobs.
 - In discussion with WEF, lots of landscapers don't really understand what they're trying to build so they need the basic training but it's not enough training to actually construct rain gardens. The training would be basic and then have workforce development and monitoring. Then there will be a higher training so that people actually know how to build rain gardens, etc. Then a third level for people who are making big decisions. Hope is to get different levels of certification but to at least lay down a foundation with how everyone speaks about green infrastructure.
 - Will there be funding available for the certification?
 - Not sure that Parkland will be able to do much more than offering the program, hopefully partners will be able to provide funding to get their workers certified.
 - Will we get municipalities to understand about the program so they can build green infrastructure or hire companies that do green infrastructure?

- Everyone wants it but that doesn't mean that the certified people will get the contracts. It is a good idea to contract with the certified companies.
- When you send out the survey, was that pretty successful in getting information back?
 - Sent to about 200 people who work in park districts, forest preserve districts, public works, grad students in water management, municipalities, MS4 group members, and received 70 responses. There was a list of what people wanted and people wanted seasonal employees, full time employees, and administrators all trained.
- Next Steps
 - Conclusions and Action items determined by group.
 - Email Eliana if you want to be on the Education Subgroup.
 - Eliana will send an email to those on Tracking Subgroup, let Eliana know if you want to be on subgroup.
 - 2018 meeting dates and end of year workshop
 - Call on July 16th, 2:00-3:30pm.
 - Face to face in Chicago area around September.
 - End of year 1-day NLRS workshop
 - November 13th in Champaign, IL