

Nineteen central Dane County municipalities work together on storm water media campaign

by Marcia Hartwig, MAMSWaP Storm Water Education Coordinator

Have you noticed the talking umbrellas on TV or heard the memorable *My Fair Lady* theme song on your radio with different lyrics? These are ads part of a media campaign by the Madison Area Municipal Storm Water Partnership (MAMSWaP), nineteen municipal entities that have joined together to raise awareness of storm water impacts to area waters.

The media campaign, **myfairlakes.com**, urges residents to learn more about how their daily activities impact our lakes, rivers and streams. “In Dane, only the rain goes down the drain,” is the mantra of the campaign, projecting that nothing but rain—no pollutants, no garbage, no debris—be allowed to go down storm drains or into ditches. Viewers are asked to log on to www.myfairlakes.com to learn more about how their daily activities impact area water resources. There, a menu of suggested actions explain how to positively impact our water resources.

County Executive Kathleen Falk said, “This is a wonderful example of how political boundaries are set aside in our county and municipalities agree to work together to be more efficient and to save money for taxpayers. Rather than recreating the wheel 19 times over, we’ve joined together to keep our lakes, rivers and streams clean. Storm water runoff from urban and rural areas is a primary problem for our lakes and streams. Preventing this pollution is a priority for all of us.”

Jim Bertolacini, Storm Water Management Specialist for WDNR’s South Central Region, said, “This group of communities is the first in the state to make an intergovernmental agreement like this. The cooperation demonstrated by these municipalities continues to impress the WDNR and is serving as a model for other regions in the state and country that need to address storm water pollution.” Bertolacini oversees the WDNR’s storm water discharge permit program in the Madison area. “The media campaign is partially funded by a grant awarded by the WDNR. The cooperation exemplified by the MAMSWaP

municipalities was a major consideration when awarding the grant,” stated Bertolacini.

Storm water, a major source of pollution to Dane County’s lakes, rivers and streams, is untreated runoff from rainfall and snowmelt. The myfairlakes.com media campaign brings attention to how rain and melting snow washes off driveways, sidewalks, roof tops, streets and other hard surfaces, picks up a smorgasbord of pollutants—oil, grass clippings, leaves, fertilizers, pet waste, sediment and more—and carries it directly to Dane County’s waterways. As described on the website, there are many opportunities for citizens to become more involved in helping to address this problem.

Communities involved in the joint effort include the Cities of Fitchburg, Madison, Monona, Middleton, Sun Prairie, and Verona; the Villages of DeForest, Maple Bluff, McFarland, Shorewood Hills, and Waunakee; the Towns of Burke, Blooming Grove, Madison, Middleton, Westport, and Windsor; Dane County, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The campaign began last spring with radio and TV ads. More radio ads aired during the summer before another round of radio and TV ads in the fall. The fall ads were complemented by the “Love Your Lakes, Don’t *Leaf* Them” campaign, sponsored by several watershed groups, MAMSWaP, and others, that used billboards, yard signs and pamphlets to raise awareness of keeping leaves out of the street gutters. More radio, internet and TV ads will run this winter and in the spring of 2006. The campaign reaches far beyond the MAMSWaP municipalities and even Dane County. Twenty-eight Wisconsin counties and hundreds of thousands of viewers/listeners are in the media area and able to see and hear the “only rain” message. MAMSWaP is planning to do a follow up survey to determine the effectiveness of the campaign.

To see and hear the ads, or learn more about the campaign, go to www.myfairlakes.com.