Quarterly–Summer Edition

August 2024

What's Going On In Our Corner?

Northern-West Central Wisconsin MS4 Permittees

The MS4 Permit Standard

MS4 permit conditions are developed to meet the MS4 permit standard: reduce pollutants to the maximum extent practicable (MEP), protect local water quality and meet CWA standards. MS4 permittees satisfy the MS4 permit standard by complying with their permit and successfully implementing the stormwater management programs.

Stormwater quality is impacted by various urban activities. While many of these activities occur in every community, the extent of these activities and the practices needed to mitigate impacts from these activities varies.

Additionally, although practices used to mitigate stormwater pollutants may be the same throughout communities, implementation can vary, affecting effectiveness. For example, Community A and Community B experience similar volumes of traffic and, therefore, pollutants. Although both communities implement the same street sweeping practices (e.g., equipment, frequency and timing), Community A allows cars to park on the street while Community B does not. Community A may not be able to sweep the curb line, making its street-sweeping efforts less effective. Consequently, to reduce pollutants to the MEP, Community A may have to implement additional practices.

Photo Credit: Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region

Topics

Eliminating Runoff Through Community Efforts At La Crosse Restore

La Crosse Area Waters (LAW) is made up of 10 local municipalities that combine resources to advocate for and educate citizens about local projects that reduce runoff pollution and preserve the health and beauty of waterways.

Local collaborations with like-minded people and organizations have been crucial to the success of La Crosse Area Waters. One of the first collaborations was with Habitat for Humanity of the Greater La Crosse Region, which led to the area's first Stormwater Learning Site.

With numerous partners, LAW transformed the landscape to incorporate multiple stormwater best management practices (BMPs) such as a 300-gallon rainwater collection tank, five types of permeable pavement, four bio-filter rain gardens, a naturally self-irrigating mound garden, more than 700 native plants, raised garden beds, a raspberry patch and multiple food-producing forbs.

"At Habitat, we believe that caring for the environment goes hand-in-hand with building quality housing," says Kahya Fox, Habitat La Crosse Executive Director. "We are proud of this amazing collaboration that allows our property to produce virtually zero polluted runoff and educate people at the same time."

La Crosse Area Waters focuses efforts on working collectively, rather than individually, leading to more innovation and increased success for runoff projects in the La Crosse area.

Illicit Discharge Detection And Elimination: Dry Weather Outfall Screenings

Dry Weather Outfall Screenings? Dry weather stormwater outfall screenings remain an effective way to identify illicit discharges or connections. Since flow should not be present during dry weather, determining the source of flow is critical to determine if the flow is illicit. Typically, "dry weather" is 48-72 hours after a rain event. However, based on the precipitation event and size of the drainage area, this time may vary.

What is considered flow? Often, it's obvious if flow is present. However, sometimes flow is more difficult to determine. Overall, if flow is questionable, investigate upstream of the stormwater outfall to determine if flow is present. If so, test the flow at that upstream location for pollutant parameters required by your MS4 permit.

Standing water at outfall during dry weather. Photo Credit: Wisconsin DNR

Outfalls located within a low area allow stormwater to pool. Consequently, standing stormwater may be mistaken for flow. If standing stormwater is present, investigate upstream of the outfall. If flow is present upstream, test the flow at this upstream location.

It may be difficult or impossible to determine flow at outfalls that are fully or partially submerged by receiving waters or located within enclosed waterways. Like the example above, investigation must occur upstream of the outfall to determine flow.

In areas with high groundwater, flow may be questionable. To avoid testing groundwater, screenings should be avoided during times of high groundwater, such as early spring. However, as with the examples above, investigation should occur upstream of the outfall to determine flow.

Composting Leaves And/Or Yard Waste

In some communities, it is a common practice to compost leaves and/or yard wastes collected since most Wisconsin license landfills do not accept this material. Because of this, there are a few important things to remember if your community decides to compost:

Maintaining The Composting Pile

A compost pile should be aerated to add oxygen to the mix. If the pile is not turned over on a routine basis, the pile can become anaerobic (no oxygen), create a foul smell and result in a compost with a lower nutritional value. For composting sites over 50 cubic yards, a permit is required. Please visit the DNR's website to learn more about what can be composted and the rules and regulations.

Placement Of Composting Pile

Materials should be stored in a way that considers the flow path of stormwater. Storing the pile on pervious surface or covered with a canopy can help prevent compost runoff containing high levels of nutrients. Due to high nutrients, it is important that materials are stored away from storm drains, surface water and wetlands.

Have A Plan On How Your Community Will Get Rid Of The Composted Material

To avoid excess accumulation of composted material, communities can offer free pick-up of material to residents. Other communities may also partner with a composting farm, topsoil business or other related companies to ensure that the material is put to good use.

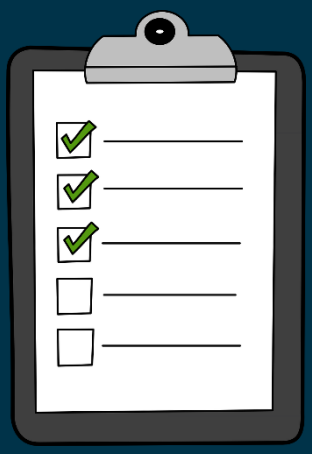
Major, Minor And Priority Outfalls

Major and minor outfalls are based on pipe or drainage area size. For an outfall to be considered major, it must meet one of the criteria listed in s. NR 216.002(16). Outfalls that do not meet these criteria are considered minor.

Since major outfalls serve large drainage areas, the likelihood of illicit discharges looks greater. As such, MS4 permits continue to require screening major outfalls. However, results have shown screenings should not solely be based on size. Consequently, MS4 permits have included screening requirements for minor and priority outfalls.

Though a priority outfall may fit the definition of a major outfall, priority outfalls should be based on illicit discharge potential in the contributing drainage. Characteristics that should be considered include history of known/suspected illicit discharges, sections of storm and/or sanitary sewer that have exceeded/approaching their design life, contributing drainage areas with 80%+ imperviousness, business with frequent changes in property ownership or operations, etc.

Lastly, although the MS4 permittee determines its own priority outfalls, MS4 outfalls should routinely re-evaluated.



Want To Be Featured In The MS4 Fall Edition?

We want to hear about your municipality's success stories and practical procedures.

Please reach out to Wisconsin DNR stormwater staff with stories to include in upcoming editions:

Michelle Asher
Michelle.Asher@wisconsin.gov

or

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WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Upcoming Dates, Reminders And Events

Save The Date! Wisconsin Stormwater Week Is Back, Sept. 21-29, 2024

Stormwater Week is an awareness campaign that aims to inform, educate, and engage Wisconsin residents on the topic of stormwater pollution prevention through shared, consistent messaging. Each weekday of Wisconsin Stormwater Week focuses on different aspects of stormwater pollution prevention. Find useful content such as webinars, social media posts and more.

Get Tips On Dealing With Certain Invasive Plants

A quick primer on four common invasives, how to recognize them on the landscape and how to handle them when you do. For details on these and the 100-plus other terrestrial plants listed as invasive under Wisc. Admin. Code NR 40, check the Invasive Species Master Resource Table. Or read the article.

Storm Water Permit Viewer

Need to see what active construction sites with DNR permits are within your community? Or maybe you are curious to see where permitted stormwater industrial facilities are located? The Storm Water Permit Viewer provides an interactive map to explore active WPDES Stormwater Permits and much more. Select "Show Layers" in the top left corner to select different layers.

Great Lakes Basin River Water-Quality Trends

This dashboard summarizes water quality information for tributaries of the Great Lakes in the United States. Nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment concentrations are measured monthly 24 rivers that flow into the Great Lakes.

2024 Surface Water Grant Applicant Guide And Program Guidance Now Available Online

The 2024 Surface Water Grant applicant guide and program guidance documents are now available for review on the DNR's Surface Water Grants webpage. Additionally, a NEW recorded introductory webinar for new applicants is available on the Surface Water Grants webpage. Pre-applications are due Sept. 15, 2024.