

What's Going On In Our Corner?

Northern-West Central Wisconsin MS4 Permittees



Municipally Owned Vs. Operated Stormwater (BMPs): What's The Difference?

The term 'municipally owned' are stormwater best management practices (BMPs) owned by the municipality and likely located on municipally owned property. Also referred to as public BMPs, these BMPs are required to be maintained by the municipality.

The term 'municipally operated' is used to define any privately owned BMPs the municipality has maintenance authority on (e.g., long-term maintenance agreement, easement agreement, etc.).

With maintenance authority on private BMPs, the municipality can ensure the private BMP is being inspected and maintained. Typically, private BMP owners should be inspecting their BMP per the long-term maintenance agreement. However, to ensure this is occurring, it's vital the municipality verifies this by requesting reports.

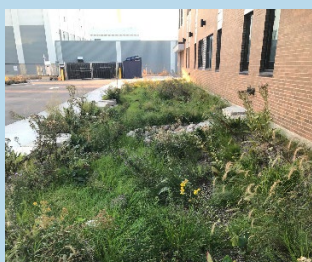


Photo Credit: Wisconsin DNR



Photo Credit: Explore Menomonie

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Staying Vigilant In Dunn County

The Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin spearheads water quality projects statewide. In the West Central region, one of their main focuses is on the Red Cedar Watershed, with projects encompassing kidney bean crops, phosphorous monitoring and algae blooms.

Dunn County largely surrounds the Red Cedar Watershed. Sitting next to beautiful rivers, lakes, forests and thousands of farms, many pollution problems (phosphorus and others) in the area deplete Lake Menomonie and the watershed not only of water quality, but also of tourism potentials, teeming wildlife and refined water quality practices within agriculture. UW-Stout students and staff have worked diligently to uncover the reasoning behind Lake Menomonie's algae blooms while ensuring that past protections or mitigation efforts to rid the watershed of pollutants have been successful. Namely, Keith Gilland and Tina Lee, professors at UW-Stout, lead these monitoring programs and research opportunities.

Graciously, there's been plenty of helping hands to address water quality. However, it's hard to extend a solution when we're still figuring out the source of the problem.

While reinstating funding for a monitoring program that fell to the wayside in recent years and encouraging high school and undergrad students' education of water quality issues in the region, the Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin has developed internship programs, new course curriculums and even a camp with direct research opportunities. With collaborative efforts across all 13 University of Wisconsin universities, this initiative directly fuels the future of Wisconsin's water quality workforce.

"We've been funding that Red Cedar Watershed program for about three years," said Heidi Jester, communications and marketing lead for Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin. "People care about [water quality], but they also just need to know that there are issues and what the factors are that affect the water [surrounding them]."

Getting students into the field to do hands-on water quality work combined with continued funding for monitoring and research programs is a win-win for Wisconsin. The Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin prioritizes efforts partnered with counties, universities and other local and government organizations. Read more at [Freshwater Collaborative of Wisconsin](https://www.freshwatercollaborativeofwisconsin.org/).

Spring Cleaning: Stormwater BMPs

'April showers bring May flowers' indicates spring is on its way, and so is the rain! Therefore, it is a crucial time to implement a variety of different 'spring cleaning' BMPs to reduce or eliminate stormwater pollutants in your municipality's runoff in time for heavy rain events. Below are just a few examples of spring-cleaning activities:

Structural Stormwater BMP Inspections

Snowmelt events can carry debris and litter that may clog stormwater inlet structures. Maintaining BMP inlet structures so they are clear is important to avoid flooding and to ensure the stormwater BMP is functioning as designed. Inspecting stormwater BMPs after the winter season will help make sure the municipality's stormwater BMPs are ready for the rain. As a reminder, the MS4 Permit requires stormwater BMPs to be inspected at least once every five years.

Street Sweeping

When the snow melts, this can leave behind debris and other pollutants that have accumulated over the winter months. Street sweeping shortly after the snow melts or increasing the frequency of street sweeping during this timeframe can help get this material off the streets before a big rain event washes it to the nearest stormwater drains.

Spring Cleanup Events

Hosting spring cleanup volunteer events to pick up trash and other debris in your community helps keep our environment clean and assists in BMP function, but it can also count as a public involvement or education activity. Several cleanup events were held this past Earth Day (April 20, 2024) across Wisconsin. For example, Milwaukee Riverkeeper held its [spring cleanup event](#) at more than 90 locations across the Milwaukee River Basin. Madison Parks also held an [Earth Day Challenge](#) to clean up local parks. In the La Crosse area, there was a [community river cleanup](#) on May 11, 2024.

'Soaking It Up' In La Crosse County

In 2010, the La Crosse Urban Stormwater Group created La Crosse Area Waters to support local communities in meeting (and exceeding) MS4 and EPA stormwater quality requirements. La Crosse Area Waters is made up of 10 local communities: La Crosse County, city of La Crosse, city of Onalaska, town of Onalaska, village of Holmen, town of Shelby, town of Campbell, city of La Crescent (in Minnesota), village of West Salem and town of Holland.

The communities pool together education, outreach and other resources to inform on stormwater runoff by showcasing examples of installations, project guidance, events, videos and more. "The most unique part of our outreach and group in general is our video series. They are high-quality, digestible and fun resources to share with the community not only to shout out certain people or businesses for their BMPs but do educate on the importance of stormwater mitigation," said Kaitlyn Wiehe, AmeriCorps Sustainability VISTA at La Crosse Area Waters.

One recent video highlights their first "Soak It Up!" award winner, Misty's Dance Studio. The "Soak It Up!" award was introduced in 2018 and was an initiative formed to highlight homeowners and businesses who use landscaping and green infrastructure to 'soak up' stormwater runoff. La Crosse Area Waters helped Misty's Dance Studio create a site that had intentional grading, rain gardens and natural mitigation efforts. The site's landscaping successfully helped the area have no property damage, effortless storm mitigation and beautiful areas full of life after storm events.

La Crosse Area Waters is based in Habitat for Humanity La Crosse's Restore, and it serves as an educational headquarters. "It was created to be a learning center for stormwater BMPs... You can point to almost anything on the property and go 'Yeah, that serves a purpose,'" she said.

La Crosse Area Waters continues to spread awareness on stormwater BMP benefits, showing that stormwater mitigation can be both practical and beautiful. Learn more on the [La Crosse Area Waters website](#).

Plowing Snow: Damage To Landscaping

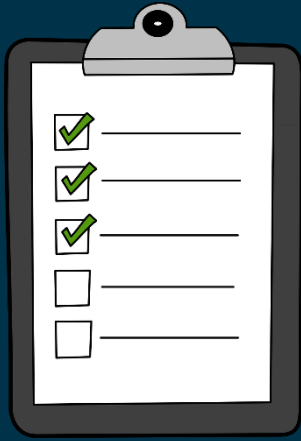
As the snow melts, damages to landscaping may begin to show along public walkways, parks and other areas kept clear of snow. These unstable areas can create a muddy mess but could also runoff into nearby waterways or stormwater drains.

Stabilizing these areas to ensure vegetation will grow back is a beneficial spring-cleaning BMP that could be implemented.

Other BMPs, such as clearly identifying the boundaries of lawn areas when the ground is covered in snow, can help avoid this issue in the first place. For example, reflective snowplow markers or large bright stakes could help outline the edges, landscape and plant materials. However, be sure to install these makers before the ground is frozen and the first anticipated snowfall.



Photo Credit: [Winter Lawn Tips: Snow Plow Damage \(nutrilawn.com\)](#)



Want To Be Featured In The MS4 Summer Edition?

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

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

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or

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Upcoming Dates, Reminders And Events

MS4 General MS4 Permit Expiration

The MS4 General Permit expired on April 30, 2024. Though the MS4 General Permit will not be reissued by May 1, the permit will be administratively extended since all MS4 General Permittees reapplied for permit coverage with their fourth year MS4 Annual Report submittal. MS4 General Permittees should continue to implement current permit conditions until the next permit is issued. If you have questions, please contact your regional stormwater specialist.

DNR Awards \$6 Million In Grants To Help Restore And Protect Wisconsin's Surface Water

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recently announced approximately \$6 million in grant funding to lake organizations, nonprofit organizations and municipal and county governments throughout Wisconsin. Funding, which includes Healthy Lakes and Rivers grants as well as support for the Clean Boats, Clean Waters and Lake Monitoring and Protection Network programs, will be used to help restore and protect the state's surface water resources in 2024 and beyond. The [FY24 Surface Water Grants Proposed Funding List](#) can be found on [the DNR's Surface Water webpage](#).

Wisconsin DNR 2022 Water Conditions List

The [2022 Water Condition Lists](#) may be used to check the receiving water status for both the impaired waters list and restoration waters list section of a total maximum daily load.

Save The Date: Wisconsin Stormwater Week 2024

The second annual Wisconsin Stormwater Week will be held on Sept. 21-29, 2024! Check back soon to learn more and discover [Wisconsin Stormwater Week events](#) in your area for 2024.