

Providing Stormwater Assistance

How Your District Can Get Involved

As a Soil & Water Conservation District Director, you decide the programs and activities of your District. You may be interested in assisting with Stormwater Management and non-agricultural erosion and sediment control issues in your county, but unsure of how to begin. This fact sheet is intended to outline some of the stormwater activities that Districts can become involved with. This is only a sample of ideas to help you make decisions on stormwater involvement. As a Director you are well aware of the needs of your county and know what is best for your county and District.

Stormwater Education:

Providing stormwater education to municipalities and citizens is an excellent way to begin working on stormwater management. Additionally, if you are in a county with one or more designated MS4s* these activities may help those communities in meeting their Stormwater Management Plan goals.

- Organize and/or host educational workshops for municipal officials, stormwater design professionals, contractors and building inspectors.
- Where general information is needed, explain permit requirements for new development projects over one acre in size.
- Regularly inform various audiences of opportunities offered by your District, the State or other groups in your newsletters or other written updates. Include resources such as training and funding opportunities, outreach and guidance materials, and available services.
- Create a lending library or become a clearinghouse for technical information, tools, and educational materials if this is not already being done in your county.

Public Involvement:

The key to success for any new program is getting the public involved and maintaining interest. As a District Director, you have already made the decision to be involved. Helping to engage community members will promote your District while fostering awareness of water quality and stormwater issues.

- Sponsor and coordinate citizen activities such as storm drain stenciling, stream or beach clean-ups and streambank plantings.
- Produce materials that promote homeowner awareness of stormwater issues. Distribute at schools, county fairs, libraries, and other high-profile areas.
- Provide assistance to citizen-based groups that have a local interest in stormwater management and water quality issues.

Illicit Discharges:

Stormwater management practices are designed to treat and discharge runoff from precipitation. However, it is not uncommon for other sources of pollutants to also be discharging to storm sewers. Effluent from septic tanks, sanitary wastewater, carwash and laundry wastewater, and improper disposal of hazardous wastes may also be discharging into storm sewers. Detecting and eliminating these illicit discharges is required for MS4 communities, and will help all communities improve water quality.

- Assist communities in detecting illicit discharges by providing services such as shoreline surveys, septic dye tests, and coordination of citizen watch groups.
- Work with communities to develop strategies for eliminating illicit discharges.
- Provide technical assistance for projects aimed at correcting existing illicit discharges.

Construction Activities:

Under the Phase II Stormwater regulations, any new construction project that disturbs one acre or greater of soil is required to obtain a permit prior to breaking ground. This permit is required statewide. To obtain a permit, the applicant must have a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan that addresses erosion and sediment control, and post-construction runoff. This is an area in which Districts can play a critical role in stormwater management, since many have vast experience in erosion and sediment control. Note: Implementation of some BMPs on agricultural land may be exempt from needing a permit, but proper erosion and sediment control practices are still needed.

- Assist NYS DEC by performing site plan reviews, complaint investigations, compliance checks and pre-construction assistance. The SWCC will reimburse** Districts for their assistance with these services if requested by a regional DEC office.
- Assist communities by performing site plan reviews.
- Implement stream buffers in high priority areas.
- Assist communities with seeding of roadside ditches.

Existing Development Activities:

The Phase II Stormwater requirements for construction have been designed to ensure that newly developed areas meet water quality standards; but what about stormwater runoff from previously developed areas? Altered landscapes, particularly paved areas, can often carry a wide array of pollutants in runoff. Revisiting these sites to address polluted runoff issues is important to protecting water quality. Installing stormwater management practices on sites that have already been developed is referred to as “retrofitting”. Stormwater retrofitting is another way that Districts can get involved.

- Offer technical assistance for stormwater retrofit projects.
- Help communities prioritize stormwater retrofit needs.
- Provide stormwater monitoring services to assess site conditions.

Good Housekeeping:

Assisting municipalities with operation and maintenance plans is another way the Districts can serve their communities. Districts have been assisting agricultural operations with pollution prevention for some time. Many of these same practices can be applied to non-agricultural areas as well including routine maintenance of installed BMPs, proper waste disposal and hazardous waste collections.

- Assist municipalities in developing maintenance plans for stormwater management practices.
- Provide routine inspections of stormwater management practices to ensure proper function.
- Assist in hazardous waste collection activities.
- Educate municipalities on proper storage and application of de-icing materials.

Communication:

The stormwater management activities listed here are just a few of the ways that Districts can get involved. The best way to determine what will work best for your Districts is through communication. Finding out what other Districts, partners and regional DEC offices are doing should be the first step. If you have questions regarding District involvement in the Phase II Stormwater Program, please call your Regional Soil & Water Conservation Committee representative or your Regional DEC Water Quality Engineer.

*MS4 – Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System

**Reimbursement is subject to availability of funds. Contact your Regional SWCC Representative for more information