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New municipal group dedicated to stormwater education forms in the Rock River Basin

Cities in the Rock River Basin have created the Rock River Stormwater Group (RRSG), to initiate a Stormwater Education Program to fulfill the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Municipal Separated Storm Sewer, or MS4 permit requirements and to promote sustainable stormwater practices in the Rock River Basin.

The cities of Beaver Dam, Beloit, Fort Atkinson, Janesville, Jefferson, Milton, Watertown and Whitewater, as well as the Town of Beloit and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater developed the Rock River Stormwater Group under Section 66.0301 (2) of the Wisconsin Statutes, which authorizes cooperation between municipalities and allows joint exercise of power or duty.

"The City of Whitewater is pleased to have joined this group" states Dean Fischer, Director of Public Works. "The City has lead efforts to decrease our city's contribution to stormwater through the creation of the Stormwater Utility, the creation of detention basins and working with developer's to ensure erosion control on construction sites. We are looking forward to working in partnership with the other members of the RRSB on the public education and outreach program."

This partnership isn't limited to communities that have a stormwater permit, but will be open to any and has three levels of membership: Full Members are any organization who must hold an MS4 Permit. Fees are based on population \$5,000 for those over 10,000 and \$2,000 for those under 10,000; Associate Members are municipalities and agencies that do not have to meet MS4 permit requirements, but desire to improve their stormwater education programs by working in partnership with other municipalities. Their annual fee is \$1,000; Partners are any organization interested in promoting water quality by helping implement the stormwater education and outreach program. There is no fee to be a partner, just a willingness to improve stormwater education.

The group has completed a two year Education and Outreach Plan and a one year work plan; additionally they have begun producing stormwater related media releases, drafted a website and begun planning for a spring construction site erosion workshop. The current web address is <http://www.rockrivercoalition.org/RRB/RRSG.asp>.

Officers are President, Tim Whittaker of Janesville; Vice-President, Joe Radocay of Watertown; Secretary, Bill Frisbee of Beloit and Treasurer Dean Fischer of Whitewater.

"Both the quality and the quantity of stormwater impacts the entire Rock River and its tributaries, the people of Janesville are near the bottom of the basin and end up with everything that gets into the river, from the entire 3,700 square mile watershed, flowing past them. So it is important that we all work together to educate our citizens, our businesses, our staff and our elected officials for a cleaner river for everyone." states Tim Whittaker from the City of Janesville and RRSB President.

RRSG to Hire Stormwater Education Coordinator: The MS4 permit requires that all permitted entities implement a Public Education and Outreach Program. The Rock River Stormwater Group has decided to hire, through a contract of services, an Education Coordinator who will be responsible for implementation of this plan. The Request for Proposals (rfp) has just been released and can be found on the group's website listed above. The group expects to hear from individuals, consulting firms and from non-profits who are interested in the position. On Feb. 9, 1:00 – 2:30 at the Fort Atkinson City Hall there will be a meeting for potential applicants to discuss the project and answer questions. Proposals are due to the RRSB by February 18 with a start date on or about April 6, 2009.

For questions about the group, the request for proposals or to join, contact Tim Whittaker at whittakert@ci.janesville.wi.us or 608-755-3169 or Dean Fisher, at dfischer@ci.whitewater.wi.us, 262-473-0540 ext 240 or Suzanne Wade, UW-Extension Rock River Basin Educator at suzanne.wade@ces.uwex.edu.

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