

DES PLAINES RIVER WATERSHED

WORKGROUP

DRAFT WORKPLAN

2017-2021

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DRAFT

## **DRWW: A BRIEF HISTORY**

Lakes and streams within the Des Plaines River watershed have been identified by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) as impaired for phosphorus, fecal coliform, chloride and other pollutants. The pollutants are a result of point and nonpoint source pollution, entering rivers and streams through pipes and by sheetflow, after flowing across the landscape. These rivers and streams do not meet IEPA's designated uses of aquatic life, primary contact recreation, and fish consumption. IEPA's goal is to improve water quality so that waterbodies can be removed from the impaired list.

In lieu of imposing costly upgrades to publically owned treatment works' (POTWs) and more stringent permit limits to communities' National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, IEPA is allowing for the formation of a local workgroup, to take these issues of water quality impairment on at a local level. This model is being successfully implemented in areas across the state (the DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup, for example).

In response, POTWs and communities within the Des Plaines River watershed in Lake County formed a workgroup in 2015: a voluntary, dues paying, membership organization that is monitoring water quality and strategizing to improve water quality based on scientific data, making decisions at the local level. Membership consists of POTWs, municipal separate storm sewer permittees (MS4s), environmental groups, and concerned citizens. The Workgroup, the Des Plaines River Watershed Workgroup (DRWW), meets regularly, is governed by a set of bylaws and an elected executive board, and provides many benefits to the general membership including:

- Water quality data collection and reporting
- Water quality improvement initiatives
- Local decision making
- Cost savings
- NPDES permit compliance: shared monitoring effort, education and outreach materials
- Continuing education credits to maintain professional certifications

Annual dues are being used to implement a comprehensive, watershed wide monitoring program, which will be the basis for water quality improvement initiatives, and to cover technical and administrative support. The annual dues will also be used as match for completing the watershed planning effort within the Des Plaines River watershed, which is being funded in part by a Section 319 grant.

### **The Des Plaines River Watershed**

The Des Plaines River watershed covers over 130,000 acres or just over 200 square miles in Lake County, Illinois. The Des Plaines River starts just west of Kenosha, Wisconsin and flows south through Racine and Kenosha Counties in Wisconsin, and then through Lake, Cook, and Will Counties in Illinois. The river then joins the Sanitary and Ship Canal in Lockport, flows west through Joliet, before converging with the Kankakee River to form the Illinois River. The Illinois River then flows into the Mississippi River, which flows south to the Gulf of Mexico.

In Lake County, there are nine subwatersheds that make up the larger Des Plaines River watershed: North Mill Creek, Mill Creek, Newport Drainage Ditch, Bull Creek, Indian Creek, Buffalo Creek, Aptakisic Creek, Upper Des Plaines mainstem and Lower Des Plaines mainstem. The Des Plaines River watershed includes 33 Lake County municipalities, 12 townships, and two drainage districts. There are eight publically owned treatment facilities that discharge approximately 80 million gallons a day of treated wastewater to the Des Plaines River within Lake County. The majority of the mainstem of the river is bordered by forest preserve and open space.

### **DRWWs Mission**

The mission of the Workgroup is to bring together a diverse coalition of stakeholders to work together to determine and resolve priority stressors affecting water quality and stream resource quality in the Des Plaines River and its tributaries, resulting in permit limits and designated uses being met.

### **DRWWs Vision**

The Des Plaines River and its tributaries meet or exceed water quality standards and designated uses within the Watershed in Lake County. The workgroup consists of local leaders who are striving to become “game changers” for water quality improvement, providing a national model of water quality leadership and resulting in significantly improved water quality in the Des Plaines River Watershed.

## **Strategy 1 – Monitoring and Water Quality Assessment**

### OBJECTIVE 1:

Continue to assess water quality status and trends in the Watershed and enhance these efforts as impairments and pollution sources are identified and resources allow.

#### 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS

The DRWW Monitoring Committee will:

- Annually review the monitoring program to assess site locations, data parameters and budget.
- Consult with outside experts to determine when enough data has been collected, or when parameters should be added or deleted.
- Make data available for watershed planning and to DRWW members
- Use monitoring results to identify and prioritize impaired stream reaches.
- Analyze monitoring results to pinpoint the sources of pollution.
- Use the monitoring results to evaluate effectiveness of watershed projects and initiatives.
- Create an annual report to satisfy the NPDES permit reporting requirements of its members.

### OBJECTIVE 2:

Assess the feasibility of creating a watershed-wide database of monitoring data.

#### 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS

The DRWW Monitoring Committee will:

- Determine data needs of members
- Identify other databases and evaluate the ease of interfacing with them, cost to create and maintain them, frequency that members query the database.

## **Strategy 2 – Regulatory Relationships and Requirements**

### OBJECTIVE 1:

Create a working relationship with Illinois EPA, US EPA, and other Workgroups to discuss NPDES permit requirements (POTW and MS4) and explore the feasibility of a water quality trading program.

## 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS

### The Technical Coordinator and Members will:

- Meet one-on-one with Regulators
  - to discuss the Workgroup's goals, implementation plan, and resource needs
  - to keep them informed of Workgroup progress
  - to stay abreast of regulatory program nuances and new requirements, and
  - explore options regarding a nutrient trading program
  - explore economically beneficial permit allowances for POTWs
- Attend other workgroup meetings or trainings, as time permits, to stay informed about what other groups are doing and proposed regulatory changes.

## OBJECTIVE 2:

Encourage and support MS4's to include innovative water quality services, projects, BMPs and Green Infrastructure.

## 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS:

### The Technical Coordinator with Membership support will:

- Identify MS4s who are leaders in this field, e.g., Algonquin, Schaumburg.
- Organize annual tour of projects, BMPs, green infrastructure.
- Provide support and attendance at Municipal meetings as requested, for technical support
- Identify MS4 permit requirements that the DRWW can provide supplemental services to address.

## **Strategy 3 – Water Quality Improvement Projects Planning and Implementation**

## OBJECTIVE 1:

Cooperate and Participate developing the Action Plan and the Implementation and Education and Outreach Strategies for the Des Plains River Watershed-based Plan.

## 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS

### The Technical Coordinator and Monitoring and Lakes Committees will:

- Provide monitoring data and the monitoring report to help identify Water Quality Improvement Projects and recommendations for the Watershed Action Plan.
- Attend and participate in Watershed Planning meetings in 2017-2018.
- Identify other Watershed Projects or Initiatives (rain garden initiatives, etc.) that will collectively improve water quality.

## OBJECTIVE 2:

Develop funding and support for Watershed Projects.

### 5-YEAR ACTION STEP

The Technical Coordinator and the Executive Board will:

- Develop a list of high priority watershed improvement projects from the watershed Action Plan for implementation.
- Investigate and list all possible sources of funding, including in-kind services and local sponsor contributions to implement watershed improvement projects.
- Inquire how other groups are funding watershed projects.
- Assist in identifying and coordinating multi-jurisdictional water quality implementation projects.
- Prepare a strategy to accumulate and sustain enough resources to meet the project budget, including operation and maintenance.
- Enlist watershed experts to review proposals for projects and offer advice to applicants, helping them to develop better, more competitive proposals.
- Develop educational/outreach materials or other support services for the project.

## OBJECTIVE 3:

Develop conceptual plans, budget and schedule for Watershed Projects (30% engineering plans).

### 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS

The Technical Coordinator with the Executive Board will:

- Determine if this project planning work can be done with resources within the workgroup or if contractor support will be required.
- Prepare a Request for Proposals and procurement processes when needed.
- Contractor scope includes a conceptual engineering plan and budget.

- If in-house resources will be used, identify tasks to be completed, individual responsible for completing each task and timeframe to complete tasks.

#### OBJECTIVE 4:

Implement Water Quality Improvement Projects and long-term maintenance.

##### 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS

The Technical Coordinator will assist the local sponsor to:

- Coordinate with project partners and prepare any necessary agreements.
- Preparation of design plans and specifications, if necessary, to implement the project
- Prepare Requests for Proposals and put the project out for bid.
- Select a contractor
- Provide oversight of contractors work, as time permits.

### **Strategy 4 – Leadership & Engagement**

#### OBJECTIVE 1:

Grow our members into game changer leaders through education, training, watershed experiences and role modeling.

##### 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS

The DRWW Leadership and Technical Coordinator will:

- Allow every member to express and employ their talents, ideas, experiences, skills and expertise.
- Sponsor quarterly guest speaker series to educate about pressing watershed issues and to identify collaborative opportunities to address them.
- Collaborate with existing groups to sponsor a variety of Watershed awareness events (i.e. clean ups, canoe trips, Earth Day, etc.) with an education component.

#### OBJECTIVE 2:

Recognize members, businesses, groups, community leaders, elected officials and other individuals that significantly contribute to the DRWW's mission and goals.

##### 5-YEAR ACTION STEPS

The DRWW Executive Board will:

- Nominate individuals or organizations who are making a substantial contribution.
- Agree on when and how recognition will be conferred.

### **OBJECTIVE 3:**

Develop an education and information program that identifies benefits the Workgroup provides to the public (stakeholders) in the watershed for recruitment of members and public education.

#### **5-YEAR ACTION STEPS**

The Technical Coordinator with assistance from the DRWW Committees will:

- Maintain an informative and useful web site.
- Publish an e-newsletter to members quarterly that includes work progress updates and timely information on watershed programs.
- Host events and speaking engagements with public officials in order to update them on crucial watershed issues and identify partnership opportunities.
- Reach out to additional public sector stakeholders – townships, park districts, drainage districts, school districts, etc. – to inform them of the Workgroup’s activities and invite them to become DRWW members.
- Reach out to private sector stakeholders – business community, consultants, homeowner and lake associations, large property owners, farmers, churches – to inform them of the Workgroup’s activities and invite them to partner with us.

### **OBJECTIVE 4:**

DRWW annual operations

#### **ANNUAL ACTION STEPS**

The Technical Coordinator and Executive Board will:

- Develop, adopt and disseminate an annual:
  - Work plan for the DRWW
  - Budget for the DRWW
  - Report on DRWW accomplishments
- Review member dues annually and send out notices for dues payment.
- Review DRWW by-laws
- Organize and facilitate 4 quarterly general member meetings each year.