

2024 Des Plaines River Watershed Workgroup (DRWW) Annual Accomplishments

The mission of the DRWW is to bring together a diverse coalition of stakeholders to work together to preserve and enhance water quality in the Des Plaines River and its tributaries within Lake County, Illinois.

According to the Illinois EPA, almost all the waterways within the Des Plaines River Watershed are impaired. The goal of the DRWW is to improve water quality in the Des Plaines River and its tributaries through monitoring, project and best practices implementation, and education and outreach that will achieve attainment of water quality standards and designated uses for the watershed. The DRWW continued in 2024 to address the NPDES regulatory requirements of its constituents, and provided professional development opportunities to members, stakeholders, and constituents.

2024 Executive Board

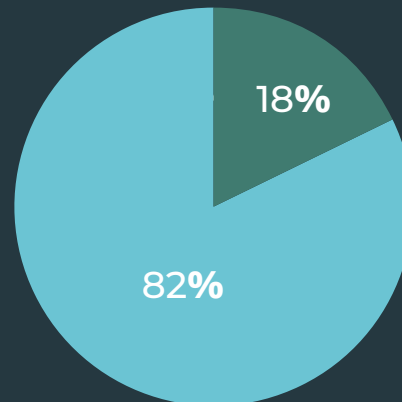
- Paul Kendzior, President, Village of Libertyville
- Chuck Bodden, Vice-President, NSWRD
- Michael Talbett, Treasurer, Village of Kildeer
- Joel Sensenig, Secretary, Lake County Public Works
- Steve Waters, Monitoring Committee Chair, NSWRD
- Alana Bartolai, Lakes Committee Chair, LCHD
- Gary Glowacki, Member at Large, LCFPD

2024 Monitoring Committee

- Steve Waters, Chair, NSWRD
- Alana Bartolai, LCHD
- Austin McFarlane, LCPW
- Nick Huber, LCFPD
- Brian Kuebker, Village of Libertyville
- Chris Johnson, Illinois Sierra Club
- James Bland, EPS, Inc

2024 DRWW Expenses

- Biological & Water Quality Monitoring (82%)
- Administration, Education & Outreach (18%)



Major Accomplishments

- **2015:** The DRWW was officially formed and gained 18 members in the first year!
- **2016-2018:** Illinois EPA awarded a Section 319 grant to develop a watershed-based plan. DRWW monitoring costs of \$279,000 were utilized as grant matching funds. The watershed plan was developed and completed with DRWW's input in June 2018 and approved by the Illinois EPA.
- **2019:** The DRWW contracted with Geosyntec to develop a Preliminary NARP Workplan with a multi-year plan to complete the NARP in 2023, satisfying the POTW NPDES Special Condition permit requirements.
- **2020-2023:** DRWW updated the bylaws and membership dues structure. The DRWW completed the three-year monitoring program based on the preliminary NARP Workplan recommendations. Contractor Geosyntec completed the DRWW NARP, and it was submitted to the Illinois EPA on December 29, 2023.
- **2024:** DRWW started discussion on the NARP Implementation Plan.

Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plan

After three years, the DRWW completed and submitted the Nutrient Assessment & Reduction Plan (NARP) to the Illinois EPA on December 29, 2023. The NARP, required by a special condition in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, identifies phosphorus input reductions by point and non-point source discharges in addition to other measures necessary to remove phosphorus related impairments in the watershed. This plan was developed and funded by the DRWW Membership.

As the DRWW waits for a response and potential approval from the Illinois EPA on this submission, the DRWW Board and Committees are starting to discuss the NARP Implementation Plan and schedule. The DRWW has received comments on the submitted NARP report, which the Workgroup is currently reviewing. The DRWW and its members look forward to continuing discussions with the Illinois EPA during this next phase.

The Implementation Plan within the report includes recommended actions, including shorter-term actions that can be implemented and longer-term priorities for implementation. An implementation schedule is being developed with realistic milestones to allow the DRWW and other watershed stakeholders to pursue and utilize funds and resources more effectively.

The DRWW would like to thank the DRWW Membership for funding and providing critical feedback during the development of the NARP.



DRWW site 13-6 at Russell Road where water from Wisconsin enters Lake County.

Board & Committee Reports: Executive Board

In 2024 the DRWW Executive Board continued to work with the Monitoring Committee to make financial and technical decisions for the workgroup monitoring activities. As the DRWW waits for a response and potential approval from the Illinois EPA on this submission, the DRWW has started discussing the NARP Implementation Plan. The DRWW and its members look forward to continuing discussions with the Illinois EPA during this next phase. The DRWW continued sponsorship of the Regional Winter Best Management Practices Workshops and is preparing the Integrated System Model (IPS) Model Report for public posting. The Executive Board also welcomed a new member in 2024.

Monitoring/Water Quality Improvements Committee

The DRWW contracted with the Lake County Health Department (LCHD) to perform water quality monitoring for 2024. LCHD collected water samples at 73 locations for water chemistry throughout the Des Plaines River Watershed. This includes the mainstem of the Des Plaines and all its tributaries. Samples were collected five times throughout the year in February, May, July, August and September, and analyzed at the LCHD Environmental Health Laboratory. Parameters being monitored during every sampling period include Total Suspended Solids, Ammonia, Total Nitrates, Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen, Conductivity, pH, Water Temperature, Total Phosphorus, and Dissolved Reactive Phosphorus. Additionally, in February and August, Chloride, Sulfate, Total Hardness and E. coli are monitored. During May, July, August and September sampling events sestonic chlorophyll-a was collected.

The DRWW Monitoring Committee reviewed and finalized the 2022-2023 DRWW Water Quality Monitoring Report from MBI. The 2022 study area covered roughly 135 square miles of the upper Des Plaines River watershed including Mill Creek, North Mill Creek, and the mainstem of the Des Plaines River. The assessment determined the aquatic life status of each sampling location, the proximate stressors that correspond to observed impairments to target management actions to those stressors and screened for any potential issues with use attainability. The report was finalized in June 2024.

The DRWW Monitoring Committee has been reviewing the NARP Implementation Plan and developing a timeline for implementation to address the key findings from the NARP data and modeling analysis. The DRWW has also been reviewing comments received on the DRWW NARP and coordinating with the Illinois EPA on how to address these and future comments.

The DRWW also proactively reached out to one of the commentators. During the November 21, 2024 DRWW Monitoring Committee meeting, Dr. JoAnn Burkholder, Director of the Center for Applied Aquatic Ecology at North Carolina State University, presented a summary of her comments on the draft NARP for the Upper Des Plaines River and has answered questions concerning the comments on the DRWW NARP report.



James Fitzgerald, LCHD, heading to DRWW site 13-9.

Board & Committee Reports Cont.

Lakes Committee

The DRWW Lakes Committee continued to monitor the lakes within the watershed and coordinated outreach and education opportunities targeting topics including lake management plans, invasive species, routine monitoring of lake and storm water inlets, nutrient reduction, and project implementation. The DRWW continued to monitor the water quality of project lakes and carp removal efforts.

The DRWW Lakes Committee has also been reviewing the NARP Implementation Plan. The Committee reviewed actions to provide benefits to the watershed and are working to review practices in relation to street sweeping and leaf litter pickup and are designing a survey to distribute to the DRWW Membership to assess those practices. The leaf collection survey will be distributed at the 2025 February Annual Meeting.

2024 Deicing Workshops

The DRWW continues to sponsor and support the Northeastern Illinois Regional Winter Best Practices Workshops (Deicing Workshops). The workshops focus training efforts on ways to keep public and private sector professionals up to date on best management practices (BMPs) for winter maintenance that safely reduces road salt use. In 2024, the DRWW sponsored seven Winter Best Management Workshops. The virtual and recently returned in-person workshops trained over 1,200 individuals in winter BMPs for both public roads and parking lots & sidewalks.



ALCDOT plow truck in front of one of the LCDOT salt domes.

On October 23, 2024, the DRWW also sponsored the Lake County Calibration Event, which was the collaborative effort of several Lake County departments: Stormwater Management Commission, Health Department, and Division of Transportation (LCDOT) and Force America. This event was targeted towards people who are responsible for calibrating snow removal vehicles or those that would be training their staff on how to calibrate their vehicles. The event was full within 2 weeks of announcing the event. The response to the event was overwhelmingly positive and was able to help local winter maintenance professionals calibrate their vehicles for the winter.

The DRWW encourages members to look for ways to reduce road salt use while ensuring safe travel on transportation surfaces. Check out the **Salt Smart Collaborative** and **Lake County** for resources to use and share on winter deicing BMPs.



A Force America representative goes over the calibration process at the Lake County Calibration Event.



LCDOT staff demonstrate how to calibrate a vehicle at the In-Person Workshop in Libertyville on Sept. 24, 2024.

**In 2024, DRWW held 21 meetings;
8 executive board, 2 general membership,
3 lakes, and 8 monitoring/water quality
impairment abatement committee meetings.**

**For a calendar of the 2025 meeting dates and
additional information on the DRWW, visit www.drww.org.**



**DES PLAINES RIVER
WATERSHED
WORKGROUP**

DRWW Membership

29 Agency Members

- City of Lake Forest
- City of Park City
- City of Waukegan
- City of Zion
- Elia Township
- Fremont Township
- Illinois Department of Transportation
- Lake County
- Lake County Forest Preserve District
- Libertyville Township
- North Shore Water Reclamation District
- Vernon Township
- Village of Buffalo Grove
- Village of Deer Park
- Village of Deerfield
- Village of Grayslake
- Village of Green Oaks
- Village of Gurnee
- Village of Kildeer
- Village of Lake Zurich
- Village of Libertyville
- Village of Lincolnshire
- Village of Lindenhurst
- Village of Long Grove
- Village of Riverwoods
- Village of Round Lake Beach
- Village of Round Lake Park
- Village of Third Lake
- Village of Vernon Hills

12 Associate Members

- Applied Technologies, Inc.
- Christopher B. Burke Engineering
- EPS, Inc.
- Fehr Graham Engineering & Environmental
- Geosyntec
- Gewalt Hamilton
- Hey & Associates
- **ILM Environments***
- Lake County Stormwater Management Commission
- Sierra Club
- Vernon Hills Park District
- Village of Old Mill Creek

* Joined in 2024