



# 2025 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 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), almost all 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. In 2025, the DRWW continued to address National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program requirements, evaluated the Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plan (NARP) Implementation plan, and provided professional development opportunities to members, stakeholders, and constituents.

## 2025 Executive Board

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

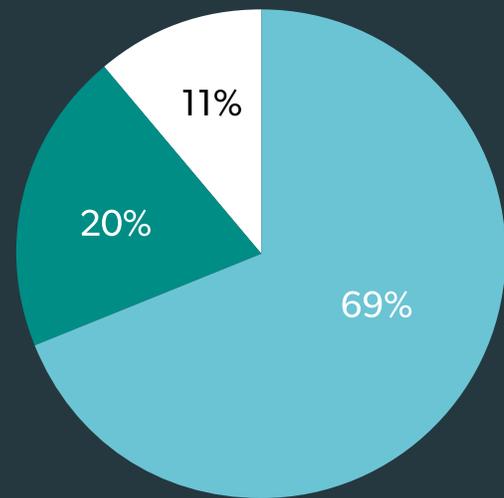
## 2025 Monitoring Committee

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

## 2025 Lakes Committee

- Alana Bartolai, Chair, LCHD
- Rob Flood, NSWRD
- Gerry Urbanozo, LCHD
- Tom Morthost, Village of Third Lake
- Nick Huber, LCFPD

## 2025 DRWW Expenses



- Water Quality Monitoring (69%)
- Coordination Services, Education & Outreach (20%)
- Post-NARP Comment Responses (11%)

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All DRWW meetings are free for the public to attend and follow Open Meetings Act requirements. DRWW meetings also fulfill the Public Participation and Involvement Minimum Control Measure (MCM) from the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. For the 2026 schedule, go to [drww.org](http://drww.org)!

# Board & Committee Reports

## Executive Board

In 2025, Executive Board members discussed the NARP Implementation plan schedule as well as possible projects. DRWW also worked with Geosyntec Consultants to respond to outside comments on the NARP which the Illinois EPA received in June 2025. The Board continued sponsorship of the Regional Winter Best Management Practices Workshops with the Salt Smart Collaborative across Northeastern Illinois. DRWW also sponsored an MS4 Pollution Prevention Workshop by Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (SMC) and McHenry County Planning and Development. Finally, Board members reviewed the updated MS4 permit by the Illinois EPA, which went into effect August 1, 2025, to ascertain strategies for supporting agency members.

## Monitoring Committee

The DRWW contracted with the Lake County Health Department (LCHD) to perform water quality monitoring for 2025. LCHD collected water samples at 73 monitoring sites throughout the Des Plaines River Watershed. 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 was monitored. During May, July, August and September sampling events, sestonic chlorophyll-*a* was collected at 18 monitoring sites. The Committee reviewed and discussed the monitoring data at each of their meetings. The Committee also contacted a Publicly Owned-Treatment Works (POTW) when a monitoring site downstream had an elevated level of phosphorus. Finally, the Committee reviewed and approved the 2026 Monitoring Strategy. The revised program focuses on analytical requirements of the NARP while continuing to study the Des Plaines River's water quality status.

## Lakes Committee

As part of the NARP Implementation Plan and in response to updated MS4 permit requirements, the Lakes Committee compiled phosphorus education materials. This resulted in a Phosphorus Education Library which is a part of the DRWW Resources webpage, and is available to the public (see page 4). Between February and September 2025, the Lakes Committee surveyed DRWW members on their leaf collection and street sweeping protocols. A summary was generated from survey answers (see page 5) and shared with the public via the DRWW website.



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## DRWW Membership

### 29 Agency Members

- City of Lake Forest
- City of Park City
- City of Waukegan
- City of Zion
- Ela Township
- Fremont Township
- Illinois Department of Transportation
- Lake County (Division of Transportation, Public Works)
- Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD)
- Libertyville Township
- North Shore Water Reclamation District (NSWRD)
- 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

### 11 Associate Members

- Applied Technologies, Inc.
- Christopher B. Burke Engineering
- EPS, Inc.
- Geosyntec Consultants
- Gewalt Hamilton
- Hey & Associates
- ILM Environments
- Lake County SMC
- Sierra Club
- Vernon Hills Park District
- Village of Old Mill Creek

# DRWW 2025 Sponsored Events

In 2025, DRWW sponsored 3 educational events within the watershed which addressed MS4 permit requirements and provided professional development opportunities to members and stakeholders.

## MS4 Pollution Prevention Workshop

DRWW sponsored the May 21, 2025, MS4 Pollution Prevention Workshop hosted by the Lake County SMC and McHenry County Planning & Development. The workshop provided important information about pollution control and the MS4 Permit program. The workshop featured speaker Todd Bennet (Illinois EPA), who shared insights into the MS4 audit process. Additional presentations provided guidance on good house-keeping practices vital to compliance and protecting water quality, as well as case studies of best management practices implemented by Lake and McHenry County. The workshop had a total of 72 in-person attendees and over 120 virtual attendees.



Todd Bennet, IL EPA, presents on the MS4 audit process.



Alana Bartolai, LCHD, presents "What is Deicing".

## Winter Best Practices Workshops

DRWW continued to support the Northeastern Illinois Regional Winter Best Practices Workshops. The workshops focus on ways to keep public and private sector professionals up to date on best practices for winter maintenance that safely reduce road salt use. In 2025, DRWW was a sponsor for nine Winter Best Practices Workshops where over 1,200 individuals were trained both in person and virtually. Lake County hosted over 80 attendees at the in-person Libertyville workshop on September 30, 2025.

## Lake County Calibration Event

On November 4, 2025, DRWW sponsored the Lake County Calibration Event. Attendees worked with Force America staff to calibrate their winter maintenance vehicles and learn how to train others on how to calibrate their equipment. The event sold out for the second year in a row! DRWW encourages members to look for ways to reduce road salt use while ensuring safe travel on streets.

Check out the *Salt Smart Collaborative* and *Lake County SMC* for resources to use and share on Winter Best Management Practices.



Attendees calibrate their vehicle with Force America staff.

# DRWW 2025 Highlights

## Phosphorus Education

DRWW members worked with Lake County SMC to compile materials that address the NARP Implementation goal to distribute materials on phosphorus ([Table 5](#)), and fulfill the NPDES MS4 Permit Minimum Control Measure to provide educational materials on targeted residential and commercial issues (Part IV.B.1.a.iii). These materials can now be found at [www.drww.org/phosphorus-education-library](http://www.drww.org/phosphorus-education-library).

### Help Reduce Nutrient Pollution in Lake County!

Written by Chris Johnson  
(DRWW Member, Sierra Club)

For the last several years, the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission has worked hard to reduce nutrient pollution in the Des Plaines River Watershed. The nutrients phosphorous and nitrogen occur naturally in waterways. But when excess amounts of these nutrients enter waterways, they can have devastating effects, creating toxic algae, reducing oxygen, harming fish and other wildlife, reducing water quality, and limiting recreational uses.

There are important steps that you as a homeowner can take to reduce the amount of nutrients that are entering and harming Lake County's beautiful waterways. Please consider taking the following steps.

#### Outdoors Nutrient Reduction

- Limit fertilizer use. This step is critical to reducing nutrient runoff. In Illinois, lawn fertilizers containing phosphorous are banned. If you hire a lawn-care company, make sure they are complying with state law and are using no-phosphorous lawn fertilizer.
- Keep leaves, grass clippings, and other organic material off the streets. Avoid blowing leaves or clippings into areas where they can wash into storm sewers. Consider using a lawn mower that turns clippings into mulch, which helps to fertilize lawns.
- Use native plants. These plants are the most effective method of reducing the need for fertilizers. Native plants are adapted to Illinois's climate and soil conditions and do not require fertilizers once they are established.
- Arrange native plants into rain gardens. A rain garden consists of a depressed area of plants that absorb water and allow it to soak into the ground, preventing runoff.
  - Go to: [epa.gov/soakuptherain/soak-rain-rain-gardens](http://epa.gov/soakuptherain/soak-rain-rain-gardens)
- Disconnect your downspouts and install rain barrels to catch water collected from the roof. Doing this will reduce nutrient runoff. You can then use this water for plants and gardens.
- Pick up pet waste from yards, parks, and shorelines. Pet waste contains phosphorus.
- Use a commercial car wash that properly disposes of or recycles wastewater.

#### Indoors Nutrient Reduction

- Inside your home, make sure that your dish soap, laundry detergent, and dishwasher detergents are all free of phosphates.
- Reduce your indoor water usage, which reduces the strain on wastewater treatment plants.

The following steps will also save you money:

- Purchase low-flow shower heads.
- Use shower timers.
- Turn off faucets when brushing teeth.
- Check indoor pipes for leaks.
- Install a water meter if you do not already have one.



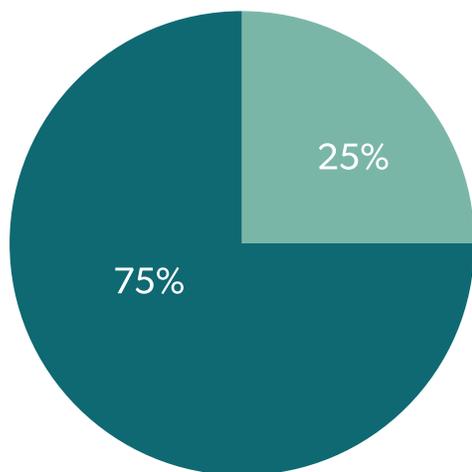
View from a DRWW monitoring site near Route 21 and Hollister Drive.

# DRWW 2025 Highlights

## Leaf Collection Survey and Report

Research shows that leaf disposal can be a cost-effective best management practice to improve water quality. Decaying organic materials, such as leaf litter, can release excess nutrients into local streams and lakes causing eutrophication and algal blooms. To better understand nutrient inputs within the Des Plaines River watershed, DRWW members were asked a series of questions regarding their leaf disposal practices in 2025. A summary report was generated using these 12 survey responses. The full report can be found at [www.drww.org/phosphorus-education-library](http://www.drww.org/phosphorus-education-library). See some of the results below!

Do you have a street sweeping program?

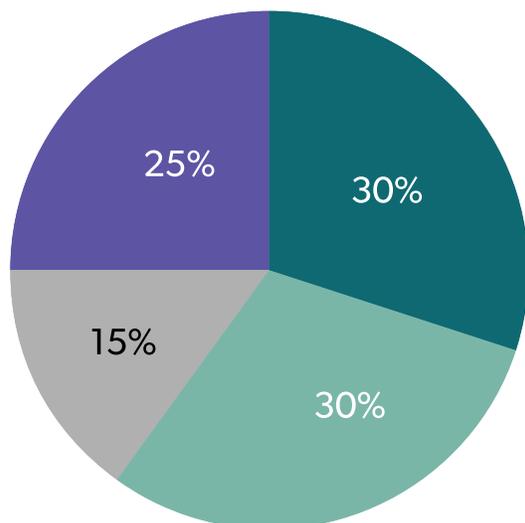


● Yes ● No

How important are these reasons to your street sweeping program?  
Rank by order of importance.

1. Keep materials out of the storm sewer
2. Maintain street/roadway safety
3. Water quality improvement
4. Aesthetics/cleanliness
5. Permit requirements

How are you encouraging residents to dispose of fallen leaves?



- Newsletter
- Website
- Social media
- Other (public meetings, SMC handouts)

# What are DRWW Membership Benefits?

## Cost Savings with Collaborative Monitoring

- DRWW membership dues provide significant cost savings to the watershed and individual communities for monitoring. If an MS4 community performed monitoring individually, costs would be based on a number of factors, but the minimum requirement would at least be two monitoring sites.

### What does the cost comparison look like?

- The cost to MS4 communities managing an individual monitoring program is estimated at upwards of \$10,000 for quarterly upstream and downstream monitoring sites (General NPDES Permit No. ILR40, Part V, Item A, Section 2b), bidding, contract management, reporting and data formatting for permitting and monitoring requirements.
- The cost to DRWW for 2025 water column chemistry and biological assessments is \$89,085 for the entire watershed, which equates to roughly \$1,200 per monitoring site and includes 73 sites in the monitoring program. Our membership includes 27 MS4 permit holders, which if performed independently, would cost approximately \$270,000. Collectively, the economy of scale provided by the workgroup and its membership save the watershed upwards of \$180,000 in yearly monitoring.

## MS4 Permit Compliance

### For Chlorides...

- “If the permittee performs any deicing activities that can cause or contribute to a violation of an applicable State chloride water quality standard, the permittee shall participate in any watershed group(s) organized to implement control measures which will reduce the chloride concentration in any receiving stream in the watershed” (General NPDES Permit No. ILR40, Part III, Item D).

### For Public Involvement and Participation...

- “The permittee shall identify any watershed work groups within its jurisdiction. The permittee should participate with watershed workgroups and other stakeholders in the watershed to enhance the storm water management program through the watershed group” (General NPDES Permit No. ILR40, Part IV, Item B, Section 2e).

## Illinois EPA Reporting

- Monitoring data is analyzed and summarized into a comprehensive report, and formatted to meet Illinois EPA annual submittal requirements (General NPDES Permit No. ILR40, Part V, Item A.b.x.)



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