



# Ripple Effects

Eagle Creek Watershed: We're All in It Together

## Mission Statement

To utilize a holistic approach to watershed management with the ultimate goals of improving water quality, increasing public awareness of watershed water quality, and encouraging stewardship of the watershed's resources.

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## ECWA Concerns

- Lawn chemicals, particularly nitrogen and phosphorus, and resultant algal blooms.
- Degradation of aquatic habitats as a result of increased sedimentation.
- Nutrient loading; harmful levels of herbicides and other chemicals.
- High levels of *E.coli* and other pathogens.
- The public's level of understanding of the watershed and its value as a natural resource.

## JOIN US!

We welcome your participation. Should you have an interest in joining the ECWA, please contact John Ulmer at [remlu@tds.net](mailto:remlu@tds.net)

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## Eagle Creek Watershed Alliance Embarks on \$655,375 Project

The Eagle Creek Watershed Alliance, ECWA, was awarded a federal Clean Water Act grant to continue its work in the Eagle Creek Watershed. The watershed, all the land area that drains into Eagle Creek Reservoir, includes portions of Boone, Hamilton, Hendricks, and Marion counties in central Indiana. The Alliance, and its predecessor the Eagle Creek Watershed Task Force, have worked to improve water quality for over ten years. Past efforts of the Alliance have included the promotion of no-till farming practices, fencing to restrict livestock access to streams, manure management systems to reduce runoff into streams, education of hundreds of elementary students in water quality awareness, and DNA typing of *E. coli* bacteria just to mention a few.



The focus of this grant will be to reduce nutrient loads in the water. Excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus (two of the three major components of fertilizer) provide plenty of food for aquatic plants, especially algae. Excessive algae "blooms" (dense floating mats of algae) degrade water quality by reducing oxygen and producing taste and odor problems as the algae dies and decomposes. While taste and odor have been problems in past years, blue-green algae presents new challenges for the reservoir. Blue-green algae can produce toxins, one of which, Microcystin, can cause eye, ear, and skin irritation and in high concentrations be a liver toxin.

The Center for Earth and Environmental Sciences (CEES) at IUPUI recently developed a Microcystin analysis laboratory which is the only one of its type in Indiana. The Center is also the administrator for the Alliance's grant as well as providing essential scientific support. In addition to CEES, there are several other partners, such as Veolia, Indy Parks, Zionsville, and SWCDs, that the Alliance relies on to meet the match requirements of the grant. The grant was awarded as \$393,225 cash from IDEM, with a requirement of \$262,150 in-kind match. The efforts of our partners help us reach the educational goals of the grant, one of which is related to nutrient and fertilizer use.

Specifically, the ECWA is working to limit the amount of nutrients entering our waters through the education of homeowners. A recently launched educational campaign called Clear Choices for Clean Water is one of the strategies the ECWA is using to educate and engage the public about lawn fertilizer and phosphorus reduction. Groups such as the Indiana Wildlife Federation, Upper White River Watershed Alliance, and IUPUI-CEES are also using this tool to educate the public on the importance of reducing the amount of nutrients that are applied to lawns, making this a statewide effort. **Visit the campaign website, [www.clearchoicescleanwater.org](http://www.clearchoicescleanwater.org) and take the pledge! Be part of the water quality solutions that help protect Eagle Creek!**

## Z'Greenfest

April 18th was green indeed in Zionsville. Over 800 individuals and families enjoyed the sunny afternoon, music, and over 30 booths celebrating the Nature Center's 4th Annual Earth Day/Arbor Day festival.



Eagle Creek Watershed Alliance joined other like minded groups such as Indiana Wildlife Federation (IWF), Improving Kids Environment, Hoosier Environmental Council, Sierra Club, local Master Gardeners, and others in green activities.

[www.EagleCreekWatershed.org](http://www.EagleCreekWatershed.org)

The Alliance had over 125 “water droplets”, or kids, take the Incredible Journey through the water cycle. During the journey they learned the importance of clouds, rivers, lakes, land, and oceans at each point in the cycle. A colorful beaded bracelet records the stops along the way. The Incredible Journey is a Project WET activity of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. More than 100 families received watershed brochures telling them what they can do to improve water quality as well as information on home septic systems.

Both IWF and the Alliance were messaging the need to reduce phosphorous on local lawns. A fifty pound bag of 12-10-12 fertilizer contains enough phosphorous to potentially produce over 2000 pounds of algae. The “no phosphorous” message was reinforced by a \$5 off coupon on zero phosphorous fertilizer and other environmentally friendly items from Akards True Value local hardware store.

The first outreach program for this new grant period was a success indeed, thanks to all the volunteers from Eagle Creek Watershed Alliance.

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## New Agriculture Liaison Hired

Harold Thompson was recently hired as the new Agriculture Liaison for the Eagle Creek Watershed. Harold retired from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly the Soil Conservation Service in 2008 after 39 plus years of service. During this time, he worked throughout Indiana as District Conservationist before being assigned as an Area Conservationist supervising NRCS operations in multiple counties in southern Indiana.

Harold is a graduate of Paoli High School, Orange County and Purdue University in Agriculture Education. Thompson is also a past president of the Indiana Forage Council and the Hoosier Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. He and his wife Becky reside in Danville, Indiana.



As the Ag Liaison, his duties include meeting and working with land owners in the watershed to install best management practices through the cost-share program in order to improve water quality in the streams and water bodies. Harold and the ECWA will be present at several upcoming Ag Field Days.

- Soil, Nitrogen, Cover Crops, Woodlot Management, & Precision Farming - August 17th, Hendricks Co. - contact Boone, Hendricks, or Putnam Co SWCD to register
- Drainage - August 27th, Hamilton Co - to register call Hamilton Co SWCD at 317-773-2181
- Soil Quality - September 1st, Tipton Co (Boone, Clinton, Hamilton, Howard, Madison, & Tipton Co. Partnership) - to register call Hamilton Co SWCD at 317-773-2181
- Cover Crops - September 16th, Hamilton Co - to register call Hamilton Co SWCD at 317-773-2181

Conservation practices are available through 319 grant funding received by the Eagle Creek Watershed from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). Residents of Eagle Creek Watershed interested in installing conservation practices should visit the ECWA website at [www.eaglecreekwatershed.org](http://www.eaglecreekwatershed.org) or email [coordinator@ecwa.org](mailto:coordinator@ecwa.org).

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## Blue-Green Algal Blooms & Nutrients that Cause Them: Exploring Indiana’s Story

IUPUI Center for Earth and Environmental Science, Veolia Water Indianapolis, the Eagle Creek Watershed Alliance, and the Upper White River Watershed Alliance recently hosted a one day symposium on blue-green algae. The general session presentations offered a comprehensive overview of blue-green algal bloom issues, which included environmental factors, innovative research, policy implications, and outreach solutions. The Symposium concluded with a panel session discussion, focused on the topic of “Approaches to Limiting Phosphorus in Indiana Waterways”, with expert panelists representing elected officials, government agencies, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and universities.



The Symposium was held on June 17th in the Grand Kellersaal Ballroom of the Rathskellar in Downtown Indianapolis. Attendance exceeded 200 people, including reporters from WTHR Channel 13 who covered the event as part of its evening news program. An evening reception followed the Symposium where participants continued conversations and watershed groups recruited new members.

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