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New Program Honors Waukesha County for Water Conservation Efforts

WAUKESHA, Wis. — Waukesha County was honored as one of Wisconsin’s first Water Star communities for its exemplary water protection efforts. County Executive Dan Vrakas received the award on Friday, May 7th at the Southeast Wisconsin Water and Energy Efficiency Expo.

The new program, which was launched this Earth Day, honors cities, villages, towns and counties that have taken important steps to protect surface water and groundwater, such as effective storm water controls, ensuring water quality, protecting habitats through sound land use planning, shore land protection and encouraging residents to conserve water.

“Too often we complain about what isn’t being done instead of celebrating the positive steps municipalities are taking,” said Suzanne Wade, a University of Wisconsin-Extension basin educator and Water Star coordinator. “I’m amazed at the local wisdom that these municipal staff and elected officials have used in solving problems. Water Star is one way for them to share their good work.”

“Partnerships are critical to how Waukesha County addresses its water quality and quantity concerns,” said Dan Vrakas, Waukesha County Executive. “Whether it’s through our comprehensive land use planning, our sustainability planning or regulatory codes, we coordinate with local businesses and our local municipal partners to develop an environmentally and economically responsible water policy.”

A diverse partnership helped Waukesha County update its storm water ordinance in 2005 to meet new state runoff pollution performance standards and address lessons learned under the previous ordinance. Some of the unique updates include links to local land division and zoning procedures to ensure storm water planning is completed early in the development site planning processes, saving developers’ time and ensuring better compliance with ordinance requirements.

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“New Program Honors Waukesha County for Water Conservation Efforts,” continued ...

The updates also included technical standards to prevent basement flooding, which proved their value during the 2008 floods experienced in the area. Additionally, strict ordinance provisions ensure the proper construction and maintenance of privately owned storm water facilities, even after the facilities are transferred to other buyers.

In addition to storm water regulations, Waukesha County has executed intergovernmental agreements with 25 local communities to implement a comprehensive storm water educational program in the county. The program includes a popular annual workshop for developers, engineers and contractors.

Waukesha County, along with the city of Waukesha, has also established the Water Conservation Coalition, a coalition among businesses, water utilities and citizens that has been nationally recognized for its water conservation efforts. Coalition conservation efforts include a water challenge, in which one participant reduced water use by more than 50%, and the regional Water and Energy Efficiency Expo. With the aid of this coalition, the City of Waukesha has seen an 11% decrease in water demand.

Municipalities interested in being part of the Water Star program can apply online at

<http://www.waterstarwisconsin.org>

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