

Several organizations have teamed together to advance green infrastructure solutions that would replicate the natural water cycle. Through native plants and soils, storm water can be absorbed on land rather than running off, just as it does in nature. The ultimate goal is to see runoff as a resource, not a nuisance.

To accomplish this transformation, advocates are working with water utility operators, city managers, and road agencies, encouraging them to talk to one another to consider how runoff can be treated more holistically as a resource.

Road engineers could also be talking with municipal water treatment operators to explore other options for directing road runoff into infiltration basins that can recharge aquifers and support municipal water sources.

Or runoff could be directed into habitat reconstruction areas to both cleanse it and provide habitat for native plants and animals. The same can be true for wastewater treatment as well. Although Michigan is not currently in a state of drought, we have seen some exceptionally dry periods in recent years. Although nowhere near the dire situation in California, the reuse of properly treated wastewater is providing an option in many of our communities. Trying to remove the public's distaste, the so called 'ick' factor, is another plank in this organization's education platform.

WasteWater Education trains regulators and wastewater service providers across the country in the CDC's safe handling of human waste plus best practices for conveying that personal hygiene message to their customers. They also partner with a number of organizations to build consensus on these issues to make the

facilitation of greener infrastructure a reality.

But it starts with public education. And the key, says Best, is to show how making wise choices saves money, both for individuals and municipalities. Something as simple as turning off a faucet when brushing your teeth, or putting unwanted pharmaceuticals in the trash instead of your toilet, or cutting down on harsh chemical cleaning agents can all help keep a little extra 'green' in your wallet.

Through conference presentations, distance-learning opportunities, various exhibits and outreach efforts, WasteWater Education assists businesses, governments, and individuals to discover why wastewater treatment is so important and to understand the benefits municipalities stand to gain by embracing change. □

WasteWater Education

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