

# Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission

2007 Annual Report



Champlin • Corcoran • Dayton • Hassan • Maple Grove • Medina • Plymouth • Rogers

This report was prepared  
for the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission  
by JASS.

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*Cover photograph: Elm Creek in Maple Grove, Minnesota*

# **2007 Annual Report**

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## Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission

**The Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission** was established to protect and manage the natural resources of the Elm Creek watershed. Its current members are the cities of Champlin, Corcoran, Dayton, Maple Grove, Medina, Plymouth, and Rogers and the Township of Hassan.

### **History.**

The Commission was formed in 1973 as a joint powers organization by the cities of Champlin, Corcoran, Dayton, Maple Grove, Medina, and Plymouth, and the Hennepin Conservation District, under the authority conferred to the member parties through MN Statutes Sections 471.59 and 103B.211. In 1981 the Town of Hassan entered the agreement. The cities of Greenfield and Rogers became non-voting, non-paying members of the Commission in 1982. In 2000, the City of Corcoran withdrew from the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Commission in order to include all of its area under the Elm Creek Commission. Likewise, the City of Greenfield voted in 2001 to withdraw from the Elm Creek Commission and to include all its area in the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission. Rogers became a full member of the Commission in 2000.

In 2003, the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners authorized the establishment of conservation services under County auspices. Effective in June 2003, the Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services (HCDES) began providing technical services to the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission. These services include conservation engineering services related to hydrology and hydraulic analyses, the review of site development plans, administration of the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), and technical assistance regarding best management practices (BMPs) for stormwater management, erosion control and the protection of water quality. This necessitated an amendment to the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) since, prior to that time, technical services were provided by the Hennepin County Conservation District (HCD), a party of the original JPA.

### **The Watershed.**

The Elm Creek Watershed covers approximately 130.68 square miles and lies wholly within the north central part of Hennepin County, Minnesota. The Crow and Mississippi Rivers demarcate the northern boundary. Although some areas in the north drain to the Crow and Mississippi Rivers, they are within the legal boundaries of the Elm Creek watershed.

### **The Commission.**

A Board of Commissioners comprised of representatives appointed by the member communities was established as the governing body of the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission. The table in *Appendix 1* shows the names of the Commissioners appointed to serve in 2007 along with the Commission's administrative, legal and technical support staff. The Commission has no employees.



## Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission

<b>Local Government Unit</b>	<b>Area (Square Miles)</b>	<b>%age of Watershed</b>
Champlin	3.08	2%
Corcoran	36.09	28%
Dayton	25.06	19%
Hassan	19.96	15%
Maple Grove	26.37	20%
Medina	9.35	7%
Plymouth	4.45	3%
Rogers	6.31	5%

The Commissioners meet monthly on the second Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. at Maple Grove City Hall, 12800 Arbor Lakes Parkway. These meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome. Meeting notices, agendas and approved minutes are posted on the Commission's website, [www.elmcreekwatershed.org](http://www.elmcreekwatershed.org).

The duties of the Commissioners include:

1. Preparing and adopting a watershed management plan meeting the requirements of MN Rules Chapter 8410. The purpose of the Elm Creek Watershed Management Plan is to:
  - a. Protect, preserve, and manage surface water and groundwater resources;
  - b. Minimize property damages and economic losses through water resource management;
  - c. Manage public expenditures needed to study, control, and/or correct flooding and water quality problems;
  - d. Educate and inform the public on pertinent water resource management issues and increase public participation in water management activities;
  - e. Identify and plan for means to effectively protect and improve surface and groundwater quality;
  - f. Establish more uniform local policies and official controls for surface and groundwater management;
  - g. Reduce erosion of soil into surface water systems;
  - h. Promote groundwater recharge;
  - i. Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water recreational facilities;
  - j. Reduce and control stream degradation through land protection measures, runoff restrictions, and pollutant restrictions.
2. Reviewing and approving local water management plans as defined in MN Rules Chapter 8410.

3. Exercising the authority of a Watershed Management Organization under MN Statutes Chapter 103B to regulate the use and development of land when:
  - a. a local water management plan has not been approved and adopted, or
  - b. a local permit requires an amendment to or variance from the local water management plan, or
  - c. the Commission has been authorized by the local government to require permits for land use.
4. Exercising authority when the local government fails to enforce the policies of the Commission.

According to the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act, the Watershed Management Plan must:

1. Provide a land and water resource inventory;
2. Present information on the hydrologic system and its components, including any drainage system previously constructed under MN Statutes Chapter 106 (the Public Ditch Laws), and existing and potential problems;
3. State goals and policies, including management principles, alternatives and modifications, water quality, and protection of natural characteristics;
4. Develop a management plan, including the hydrologic and water quality conditions that will be sought and the significant opportunities for improvement;
5. Describe conflicts between the watershed plan and existing plans of local government units;
6. Write an implementation program that is consistent with the management plan and which includes a capital improvement program, as well as standards and schedules for amending the comprehensive plans and official controls of local government units in the watershed to bring about conformance with this watershed plan.

### **Second Generation Plan.**

In 2000 the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission and the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission, working cooperatively with WSB & Associates, began developing their *second generation* watershed management plans. Input from meetings with citizens from both watersheds, the Commissions' Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), and representatives from various state agencies was used to create a draft plan that was presented to watershed residents, the member cities, and local and state agencies for review and comment. BWSR approved the *Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan* on October 27, 2004. The Commission adopted the plan on December 8, 2004.

### **Local Watershed Management Plans.**

Every member community must prepare and adopt their own water management plans. Local plans must comply with MN Statutes, Sec. 103B.235 and MN Rules 8410.0160 and 8410.0170 regarding local plan content and the requirements of the Commission's Watershed Management Plan. Under the statutes, member cities are required to revise their plans to conform with the Commission's plan within two years of Commission plan adoption. The status of member communities' regulatory programs is found in *Appendix 2*.

### **Project Reviews.**

Land use within the Elm Creek watershed has been influenced by agricultural activities, rural residential, and higher density development pressure. Existing and projected land uses for areas within the Commission's



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boundaries are described in the member communities' Comprehensive Plans. These land use plans include residential, commercial, and industrial development; designated park and open space areas; and public recreational areas.

Under various authorities the Commission reviews local development plans for conformance with the standards outlined in their second generation Watershed Management Plan. Projects are reviewed for erosion and sediment control, wetland, floodplain and stormwater management, as well as Department of Natural Resources (DNR) permits. The Commission's technical staff performed 62 project reviews in 2007. A list of each project, its location, and the critical areas reviewed is attached as *Appendix 3*. The Commission anticipates fewer projects will be reviewed in 2008 due to a downturn in the economy that has resulted in fewer residential development starts.

### Water Monitoring.

The Commission conducts lake and stream monitoring programs to track water quality and quantity conditions. The Commission began monitoring Elm Creek and its tributaries in 1975 and the lakes within the watershed in 1980. The Commission conducts chemical, physical and biological monitoring of the streams and physical and chemical monitoring of lakes. Periodically, the Commission may also participate in special studies if a need is identified or in larger projects such as lake diagnostic-feasibility studies.

### Lake Monitoring.

In 2007 the Commission monitored Diamond, Fish and Weaver Lakes in cooperation with Three Rivers Park District. In addition, the Commission funded the monitoring of Cowley, Henry and Rice Lakes through Metropolitan Council's Citizen Assisted Monitoring Program (CAMP). Summaries of the 2007 CAMP report and the Park District's 2007 lake sampling results, as well as the lake monitoring schedule, are included in *Appendix 4*.

**Table 2: Lake and Watershed Characteristics**

Lake	Size	Max Depth	Mean Depth	Watershed	Land Use Characteristics
Cowley	47	7		1555	Agricultural, rural residential,
Diamond	408	8	6.5	2666	Agricultural, rural residential
Fish	244	48	19	1990	Residential, commercial, park
Henry	77	5	3**	979**	Agricultural, rural residential
Rice	252	11	6	17171	Residential, park
Weaver	159	57	21	510	Residential, park

\*Open water area

\*\*Approximation



Lake and watershed characteristics of the lakes monitored in 2007 are shown in Table 2. Water quality parameters for the lakes can be used to determine their Trophic State (state of nutrient enrichment) using Carlson’s Trophic State Index (TSI). Table 3 shows the summary of 2007 data.

**Table 3. Carlson’s Trophic State Index (R.E. Carlson)**

Lake	TSI	Trophic Status	Expected Conditions
Cowley	82	Hypereutrophic	Severe algae blooms with poor transparency. Periodic winter kills.
Diamond	72.9	Eutrophic	Severe algal blooms with decreased transparency, potential fish kills during summer and winter.
Fish	55.4	Eutrophic	Decreased transparency, anoxic hypolimnion during summer, macrophyte problems evident
Henry	65*	Eutrophic	Dominated by aquatic vegetation.
Rice	60	Eutrophic	Dominated by aquatic vegetation.
Weaver	57.7	Eutrophic	Decreased transparency, anoxic hypolimnion during summer, macrophyte problems evident. Water quality improved significantly in 2005 and 2006 and decreased slightly in 2007.
*approximation			

Historical trend data are available for Fish and Weaver Lakes and are listed in *Appendix 4*. The trend data include samples from April through October for the entire monitoring period and the summer means (May through September) since 1995. This was the first year that Rice Lake has been involved in CAMP. The 2007 data is the first year of known data collected for nutrients and chlorophyll-a. As the Commission continues to implement its second generation Management Plan, the goals for these lakes will be constantly evaluated. The Commission will also consider a non-degradation policy to prevent further degradation of its water resources.

**Stream Monitoring.**

The Elm Creek watershed contains several large depressions and drainageways. Water is generally directed from the south and west to the northeast via four main drainageways – Rush Creek, North Fork Rush Creek, Diamond Creek, and Elm Creek. These drainageways converge in the Elm Creek Park Reserve and enter Hayden Lake. Water is eventually discharged to the Mississippi River near the Mill Pond in Champlin.

The monitoring station in Champlin is operated with the cooperation of the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The Commission shares the costs of operating the station, which collects continuous flow data and periodic event and base water quality data. Both grab samples and storm runoff samples are collected and analyzed for various parameters. Analyses of the streamflow and water quality monitoring data for Elm Creek



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and its tributaries are summarized below. Real time data from this monitoring station may be viewed on the Internet at [http://waterdata.usgs.gov/mn/nwis/uv/?site\\_no=05287890&PARAMeter\\_cd=00065,00060](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/mn/nwis/uv/?site_no=05287890&PARAMeter_cd=00065,00060).

The gauging site is located at the Elm Creek Road crossing in the Elm Creek Park Reserve. Continuous flow monitoring, low flow, and storm event sampling are completed at the site. The watershed area above the gauging station is 86 square miles, or 81% of the hydrologic watershed.

### Flow Monitoring.

Storm event samples are collected using an automatic sampler. Routine manual sampling occurs approximately monthly. A spreadsheet of the data received in 2007 water year (WY) is included in *Appendix 5*.

The average daily discharge for the 2007 WY, October 1, 2006 through September 30, 2007, was 25 cubic feet per second (cfs) or 3.95 inches. During the same period, the minimum and maximum observed average daily discharge values were 0.33 cfs and 214 cfs, respectively. The long-term average daily discharge at the station is 39.3 cfs or 6.13 inches (years 1979-2007). Long-term flow volumes (calendar and water years) are also included in *Appendix 5*.

**Table 4. Elm Creek Annual Instantaneous Peak Discharge Rates**

Date	Peak Flow (cfs)	Date	Peak Flow (cfs)	Date	Peak Flow (cfs)
4/4/79	307	8/1/90	225	4/25/01	875**
3/25/80	199	6/1/91	371	5/11/02	554
6/15/81	44	3/8/92	380	6/28/03	695
4/3/82	471*	6/22/93	315	6/03/04	350
3/9/83	408	4/30/94	669*	10/30/04	118
2/25/84	341	3/17/95	237	10/09/05	295
3/18/85	579*	3/19/96	407	3/17/07	223
3/27/86	812*	4/1/97	511*		
8/1/87	185	4/5/98	306		
3/27/88	39	5/15/99	538*		
3/31/89	159	7/13/00	112		

\*These values have been revised based on the 2001 rating curve.

\*\*All-time instantaneous peak discharge. 100-year flood discharge at this site is 2290 cfs.

Table 4 shows the annual instantaneous peak discharge values at the gauging station for the period of record. The flow hydrograph for the 2007 WY and the daily discharge and the summary information at the Elm Creek USGS gauging station are included in *Appendix 5*.

### Elm Creek Channel Study.

In their second generation Watershed Management Plan, the Commission determined that bank stabilization and erosion control are very high priority issues. In 2005 the Commission undertook the Elm Creek Channel Study to identify unstable areas of Elm Creek, Rush Creek, North Fork Rush Creek and Diamond Creek. Due to its rapidly changing land use, low flow regimes in Elm Creek are changing and threatening the stability of the

stream. The Commission wanted to determine these low flows at critical points along the Creek and stable stream configurations that can sustain these flows. This knowledge was necessary in order to develop policies at the subwatershed level to prevent further degradation of the stream. Bonestroo, Rosene, Anderlik & Associates (BRAA) was selected to conduct the channel study.

Recognizing the need for intergovernmental cooperation to prevent degradation of aquatic resources, assess the quality of stream resources in the watershed and develop and implement a comprehensive management plan, the Three Rivers Park District entered into a cooperative agreement with the Commission to provide cost-share assistance to complete the study.

The Channel Study included the following steps:

1. Site survey of 45 channel locations.
2. Hydraulic analysis and determination of bankfull channel capacity (considered to be the stable condition) at the surveyed locations.
3. Hydrologic modeling of the current watershed to estimate the frequency of bankfull flow at each location.
4. Assessment and recommendations of watershed management practices to reduce the input of stream stability based on future conditions.

In 2006, the field survey work was completed, the TR-20 snowmelt model converted to HydroCad, current land uses and hydrology identified, and bankfull storms determined at surveyed reaches. Utilizing the model output for a specific site on Rush Creek, BRAA also provided peak flow discharge rates and hydrographs comparing four scenarios:

1. 30% impervious for all land upstream of the site with existing rules
2. 30% impervious development upstream of the site with proposed Channel Protection Standards
3. 30% impervious development upstream of the site with extended detention for the first 1.0 inch of runoff
4. 30% impervious development upstream of the site with detention as proposed by Wulliman and Urbonas, "Peak Flow for Full Spectrum of Design Storms."

HydroCad models were run for the 1-, 2-, 5-, 10-, 25-, 50-, and 100-year storms with durations of 2-, 6-, 12-, and 24-hours. Based on their comparisons, BRAA concluded that the 24-hour extended detention of the channel protection volume is the recommended design standard. For all scenarios considered, 30% impervious cover leads to significant increases in stream flow at the locations modeled.

The Channel Study stated the following conclusions:

1. Many stream channels have been impacted by development.
2. The current watershed management requirements have not been adequate to reduce flow from development to provide for a stable channel.
3. Additional watershed management requirements are needed to address channel stability.
4. Extended detention and reduction of surface water runoff should be implemented by the Commission to maximize channel protection. Low impact design techniques and infiltration practices are encouraged wherever possible to reduce the need for extended detention.



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Following a public presentation of the Channel Study on August 8, 2007, at Maple Grove City Hall, and after review and comment by the member communities and reviewing agencies, the Elm Creek Channel Study was accepted by the Commission on September 12, 2007.

An anticipated outcome of the Channel Study will be revised management practices that will be incorporated into the Commission's second generation Watershed Management Plan as revised standards that must be adopted by the member communities. The Commission accepted draft revised standards as prepared by Staff and in December 2007 began the review process for a Minor Plan Amendment to its Management Plan that would incorporate language to revise the Commission's existing Water Quality standards. A public hearing will occur in February 2008. Adoption of the revised standards will likely occur in March 2008.

### **Macroinvertebrate Monitoring (River Watch).**

The Elm Creek watershed is the largest watershed completely within Hennepin County boundaries. Located in the north central section of the county, it covers an area of 109 square miles. Elm Creek and its tributaries are 23 miles long. There are three major tributaries in the watershed. The North Fork of Rush Creek starts in Greenfield and flows through Corcoran, Rogers and Hassan; the South Fork of Rush Creek originates in Corcoran and the main stem begins in Medina and flows through Plymouth, Dayton and Champlin, where it discharges to the Mississippi River.

Since 1995 the Commission has worked with the Hennepin Conservation District (HCD) to create and maintain a benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring program. In 2003 the program came under the guidance of the Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services (HCDES). River Watch, as this program is now called, is used both for education and data collection. It is a goal of the Commission to sustain existing monitoring sites, gain water quality data, and promote river stewardship through teaching and project participation by students.

In 2007, students from five schools performed monitoring at six locations in the Elm Creek watershed.

*2007 Hennepin County River Watch Results*, available from HCDES, includes results from all the Hennepin County monitoring sites. A map showing their locations as well as excerpts from the report on the sites in the Elm Creek watershed are found in *Appendix 6*. The complete report is available at <http://www.co.hennepin.mn.us>, keyword River Watch.

### **Wetland Monitoring.**

The Commission serves as the local government unit (LGU) for administering the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) for the cities of Champlin and Corcoran and the Township of Hassan. The Commission reviews exemption applications, drain and fill applications, replacement plans, and banking applications; attends Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) meetings; and fulfills other requirements of WCA.

The Commission's goal is to assure that WCA rules are properly implemented, wetland violations are resolved and replacement plans are reviewed. In 2007 the Commission reviewed 21 plans involving wetlands and received no new wetland banking applications. They also participated in ten TEPs. Three new potential Wetland Conservation Act violations were investigated within the watershed in 2007. A somewhat lower level of activity is anticipated in 2008.

Four outside firms were approved to perform wetland consulting services for the Commission in 2006-2007. They are named in *Appendix 1*.

### **Performance Standards for Wetland Mitigation Sites.**

In order to administer the Wetland Conservation Act more effectively, in 2007 the Commission developed the *Wetland Review Process*. This guide includes an overview of wetland requirements, a flow chart showing the review process, a WCA sequencing worksheet, the Commission's performance standards for wetland mitigation, and the Commission's monitoring report requirements.

### **Wetland Health Evaluation Program.**

In 1997 the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) developed monitoring and assessment protocols for volunteer use in wetlands. Today, the Minnesota Wetland Health Evaluation Program (WHEP) continues to use these same methods to train citizens to conduct assessments of wetland health by sampling both the invertebrate and plant communities. Volunteers identify their samples, score the wetland appropriately, and ultimately assess the condition of the wetland. In order to produce quality data, two quality assurance (QA) steps are built into the program. The first is a "cross-check," whereby teams sample one wetland from another team. The second is a check performed by the Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services (HCDES) staff. All data sheets and resulting scores are checked for accuracy by the HCDES coordinator.

The Hennepin County WHEP began in 2002. In 2007 eight teams comprised of more than 60 citizen volunteers monitored 30 sites across Hennepin County. Nine wetlands were monitored in the Elm Creek watershed.

The WHEP uses the Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) to provide a thorough analysis of wetland condition. An IBI score shows a strong response to human disturbance and/or pollution. Six measures are used to make up the IBI for invertebrates, seven for vegetation. Each wetland receives both a macroinvertebrate and vegetation score.

In 2007 macroinvertebrate scores ranged from a low of 6 (very poor) to a high of 36 (excellent), with most of the sites in the 15-22 (moderate) range. The vegetation IBI scores ranged from 7 (very poor) to 24 (moderate). This is unsurprising as most urban wetlands exhibit reduced vegetative diversity due to their altered hydrology and pollutant and sediment conveyed by storm sewers.

More information on Minnesota WHEP can be obtained at [www.mnwhep.org](http://www.mnwhep.org), or by contacting Mary Karius, HCDES, [mary.karius@co.hennepin.mn.us](mailto:mary.karius@co.hennepin.mn.us).

### **Digitization Project.**

In 2007 the Commission completed a project to digitize the original floodplain study that was done in the 1980s. The floodplain study was incorporated into the second generation Management Plan but has remained in hard copy format. Short Elliott Hendrickson (SEH) converted hard copies of the Elm Creek flood hazard maps to a rectified digital format in order to make the data available in electronic and GIS formats.

### **Elm, Rush and Diamond Creek Stream Monitoring Project.**

In 2007 the Commission received a Clean Water Legacy Act (CWLA) grant for the Elm, Rush and Diamond Creek Stream Monitoring Project. This project is a program to monitor Elm Creek, Rush Creek, North Fork Rush Creek, and Diamond Creek at four sites above the confluence of Elm Creek for dissolved oxygen, invertebrate populations, bacteria levels, and pollutant transport (phosphorus, nitrogen, and sediment) and to monitor



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Weaver, Fish, Diamond, Cowley, Henry and Rice lakes for total phosphorus, total Kjeldahl nitrogen, chlorophyll-a, surface temperature and water transparency. In addition to these parameters, Weaver, Fish, and Diamond lakes are also monitored for soluble reactive phosphorus, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and pH.

The results of the project will allow the Commission to assess the effectiveness of its second generation plan rules in reducing impacts on aquatic life and reducing pollutant transport.

From this project the Commission can also begin development of strategies to complete a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analysis of the stream network in the watershed. Rush Creek is included on the Pollution Control Agency's list of Impaired Waters for fish bioassessments; Elm Creek is listed for dissolved oxygen; and Fish, Diamond, French and Henry lakes are listed for Nutrient/Eutrophication Biological Indicators for Aquatic Recreation, triggering the necessity for a TMDL.

The Stream Monitoring Project will extend through June 2009; the TMDL process will begin in late 2008 following two years of water monitoring.

### **Education and Public Outreach.**

In 2007 the Commission became a member of the joint watershed Education and Public Outreach Committee (EPOC). Comprised of members from the Bassett Creek, Elm Creek, Shingle Creek, and West Mississippi watershed management organizations and representatives from Hennepin County Department of Environmental Services and Three Rivers Park District, EPOC's goal is to coordinate and collaborate in education and outreach activities in the northwestern Hennepin County watersheds. In 2007 they conducted a joint opinion survey to help identify the water resources knowledge base of residents living in the nineteen cities covered by the four organizations. An intended outcome of the survey will be a joint educational program for citizens, municipal employees and educators.

### **Written Communications.**

The Elm Creek Commission maintains a website [www.elmcreekwatershed.org](http://www.elmcreekwatershed.org) to provide news to residents of the watershed and beyond. The Watershed Management Plan, Channel Study, monthly meeting materials, project reviews, Annual Reports and other watershed-related information are posted there. In addition, from time to time, news releases are provided to the member cities and their official newspapers for publication. [www.pressnews.com](http://www.pressnews.com) serves as the Commission's official newspaper.

### **Interest Proposals.**

The required biennial solicitation for interest proposals for professional, technical and wetland consulting services was published in the January 8, 2007 edition of the *State Register*. After reviewing the responses, the Commissioners approved the individuals and companies named in *Appendix 1*.

### **Financial Reporting.**

*Appendix 7* includes the Commission's approved budget for 2007, a report of revenues and expenditures for 2007, and the 2007 Audit Report prepared by Johnson & Company, Ltd., Certified Public Accountants.

**2008 Work Plan.**

In addition to continuing the programs and activities described above, in 2008 the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission will:

Participate in Hennepin County's Stream Health Evaluation Program (SHEP). SHEP consists of teams of adult volunteers who collect reliable data with the assistance of a sponsored team leader. Strict Quality Assurance/Quality Control measures are built into this program to insure use of appropriate protocols and procedures.

Sponsor a Metro Blooms Rain Garden Workshop in conjunction with its Education and Public Outreach Program.

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*Questions regarding this 2007 Annual Report should be directed to  
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