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**EPA to Fund a New, Cooperative Approach to Improve Menomonee River Water Quality**

For Immediate Release: August 31, 2011

Contact: Kate Morgan – 414-416-6509, [kmorgan@1kfriends.org](mailto:kmorgan@1kfriends.org)

**Milwaukee, Wisconsin** – The Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust (Sweet Water) today announced the award of a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) to the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and its partners. The grant supports a national pilot project to develop a watershed-based stormwater permit for communities in the Menomonee River watershed. Signaling a new era of watershed-wide cooperation, the effort's ultimate goal is a cooperative partnership linking up to 20 governmental units in the 136-square mile Menomonee River watershed within a single, collaborative storm water permit framework. The approach offers tremendous potential to cost-effectively improve water quality.

**A formal announcement was made today, Wednesday, August 31<sup>st</sup> at 11 a.m. beside the Menomonee River at Hart Park, 7300 Chestnut Street, in Wauwatosa, WI, 53213.** The event featured remarks by Susan Hedman, Administrator for EPA Region 5 in Chicago, Cathy Stepp, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Anthony S. Earl, Joyce Foundation Board Member and former Wisconsin Governor and WDNR Secretary, and Kevin Shafer, Executive Director of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District. The Joyce Foundation has made major, multi-year investments in water quality programs in southeastern Wisconsin, including in the Sweet Water initiative. A variety of elected officials from Menomonee River watershed

communities also attended, including City of Wauwatosa Mayor Jill Didier.

"EPA is pleased to support this innovative project, which will help Wisconsin communities work together to protect the Menomonee River in a cost-effective manner," said EPA Regional Administrator Susan Hedman. "This project will enhance Southeastern Wisconsin's reputation as a water quality leader."

"We hope that our support of this pilot project, one of just three in the country, offers cost-effective water quality alternatives for Menomonee River communities," said Secretary Cathy Stepp, WDNR.

MMSD's Kevin Shafer noted, "Watershed-based permits can extend to the natural boundaries of watersheds, rather than being confined to particular political jurisdictions. The approach is designed to meet core storm water program requirements, while also tailoring management efforts to the needs and characteristics of specific watersheds."

Former Wisconsin Governor and Joyce Foundation Board Member, Anthony S. Earl said of the Foundation's investment in the Milwaukee area, "The Joyce Foundation is honored to play a role in improving cooperation and water quality in Southeastern Wisconsin. We believe that lessons learned in the Menomonee River watershed could be applied to efforts to protect and restore waters throughout the Great Lakes and the nation. We applaud this critical step and look forward to continued success."

The grant will be managed by the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) and will support the work of Sweet Water, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) and others to create a watershed-based storm water permitting model for Menomonee River watershed communities (a watershed map accompanies this release).

A Watershed Based Permit (WBP) offers a number of significant potential advantages over more conventional municipality-by-municipality permitting approaches, including:

- Cost-savings through partnerships – co-permittees can work together collaboratively, maximizing cooperation, integrating and prioritizing implementation, and potentially reducing costs.
- One-stop shopping and streamlining of applicable goals and requirements in one place.
- Improved water quality – with increased potential to customize actions to watershed characteristics, and doing a better job of restoring waters in a cost-effective way.

Watershed-based approaches for storm water permitting were strongly recommended to the EPA in a 2008 National Research Council report on the NPDES storm water program. The innovative

Menomonee watershed permitting effort would be a national pilot for the EPA, one of just three planned across the country.

The WDNR, which issues and enforces the water discharge permitting system in the State, is working closely with the Menomonee River communities to evaluate permit provisions that will provide efficiency opportunities for the municipalities and advance restoration and protection of the Menomonee River and the nearshore area of Lake Michigan. It is hoped that the new WBP framework can be in place by the close of 2012.

Tom Grisa, Director of Public Works for the City of Brookfield and Vice Chair of the Sweet Water organization, talked of the economics of a pooled approach, "Watershed-based permitting is an appropriate approach toward improving water quality in a cost-effective and responsible manner. I look forward to working with the EPA, WDNR, MMSD, and our municipal partners in this effort."

Jeff Martinka, Executive Director of Sweet Water, concluded by noting, "Our organization was formed to foster just this kind of collaborative effort to improve regional water quality. The efforts made possible by this EPA grant are integral to our long-term efforts to reduce nonpoint source pollution in our region."

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Sweet Water, the Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust, Inc., is a unique partnership established in 2008 to achieve healthy and sustainable water resources throughout the 1,100 square mile Greater Milwaukee watersheds through coordinated, collaborative efforts. Its partners include independent units of government, special purpose districts, non-profit organizations, local residents and representatives of business and academia, all sharing common goals for our shared waters. Sweet Water partners have unified to address the issues facing our rivers and Lake Michigan through a basin-wide approach, an approach exactly like that proposed to the EPA in this project.

For more information on Sweet Water, visit [www.swwtwater.org](http://www.swwtwater.org) or contact Jeff Martinka, Executive Director, at 414-382-1766 or via [martinka@swwtwater.org](mailto:martinka@swwtwater.org).

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CIVIL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE MEMONEE RIVER WATERSHED: 2000

