



SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN WATERSHEDS TRUST, INC.  
*Sweet Water*

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**Sweet Water Launches Public Education Campaign to Reduce Area Water Pollution**  
*Public Can Make a Significant Impact with Simple Actions*

**Milwaukee** (August 17, 2011) The Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust (Sweet Water) is launching a public education campaign – THE REAL WATER PARK – to inform area residents about their role in reducing water pollution in area rivers and Lake Michigan.

THE REAL WATER PARK campaign highlights the public's actions and expectations of water quality at man-made water parks versus natural rivers and lakes. For example, no one would consider visiting a water park that allowed lawn fertilizer and pet waste in its pools.

"This education campaign is vitally important," says Jeff Martinka, executive director of Sweet Water. "Our research has clearly shown that the vast majority of the public believes their actions have no impact on water quality but, in fact, the exact opposite is true. Everyone can take simple steps to improve the quality of our waterways, such as cleaning up pet waste, being careful in using fertilizer and salt and disconnecting downspouts."

The REAL WATER PARK campaign targets the residents of five southeastern Wisconsin watersheds where the Milwaukee, Menomonee, Kinnickinnic, Oak Creek and Root rivers flow and points to the problems of neighborhood stormwater runoff. On August 22, billboards in the Milwaukee area will call attention to protecting THE REAL WATER PARK. In addition, online advertising that begins today will drive watershed residents to [www.RealWaterPark.com](http://www.RealWaterPark.com).

"Our streams, rivers and Lake Michigan are precious natural resources that enrich our communities and help attract new residents and visitors to our area," says Tom Grisa, Vice Chair of Sweet Water and its representative from the City of Brookfield. "We want everyone to know that positive actions taken by residents in their homes, yards and neighborhoods can significantly reduce pollution in our waterways."

***Call to Action***

THE REAL WATER PARK campaign encourages residents to do their part to reduce pollutants and stormwater runoff. Its web site includes simple things anyone can do to help improve water quality and features a REAL WATER PARK pledge for residents to take. Those who sign the online pledge

will be entered in a drawing for a water park prize package. In addition, a REAL WATER PARK Facebook page and Twitter feed have been established to provide tips, advice and insight to help protect the area's waterways.

Sweet Water is asking residents to:

1. Clean up pet poop so rainwater doesn't wash the waste into area waterways.
2. Direct downspouts into rain barrels, the yard or garden, instead of the sewer or driveway.
3. Stop oil and other fluids from leaking from your car.
4. Test the soil before fertilizing because your lawn may not need extra nutrients. Keeping lawn fertilizer out of waterways is an important step to achieving better water quality.
5. Leave grass clippings on the lawn or add them to a compost pile.
6. Mow your lawn less often; set the mower blade to three inches.
7. Use a carwash or wash your car on the lawn.
8. Try to use less water when it's raining so the storm sewers are free to handle the rain water.
9. Plant a rain garden with native plants.
10. Check toilets and faucets for leaks, since a leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons of water a day.

### ***Public Misperceptions***

According to research conducted by the Public Policy Forum for Sweet Water last fall, the public does not have a good understanding of pollution sources and how simple actions can improve the water quality of area rivers and Lake Michigan.

The survey found:

- The public incorrectly believes the major sources of water pollution are sewer overflows and industrial wastes when, in fact, 90% of water pollution comes from non-point sources, such as urban and rural runoff.
- 84% of the public feels that their actions do not have an impact on water quality nor do they see a role for themselves in helping to protect water resources.

Martinka adds, "It's important for everyone to understand that individual actions, when multiplied across the watershed region, can have a positive effect of reducing non-point runoff."

### ***Support***

The REAL WATER PARK campaign is funded by grants from the Menomonee River Municipal Partners, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Fresh Water Future and the Joyce Foundation.

For more information, visit [RealWaterPark.com](http://RealWaterPark.com) or [swwtwater.org](http://swwtwater.org).

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Sweet Water is a nonprofit organization created in 2008 as a partnership of local governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses, academia, and individuals working collectively to improve the water resources in the 1,100 square miles of Greater Milwaukee watersheds.