



Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy

Annual Overview for 2015

Congratulations to our 10th class of the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy which concluded in May 2015 and consisted of 30 participants. They included both volunteers and professionals, including:

- watershed coordinators
- consultants
- stormwater coordinators
- undergraduate and graduate students
- Extension educators
- federal, state, county and city government representatives
- naturalists and environmental educators,
- planners,
- researchers,
- volunteers and interested citizens, and
- nonprofit representatives.



Those participants who completed all components of the face-to-face workshops and distance education received their Professional Certificate in Watershed Management.

Workshop 1

The first workshop was held at McCormick's Creek State Park, in the historic Canyon Inn. This scenic state park provided

an excellent location for our program. Participants enjoyed a walk to the waterfalls in the mild winter weather. Highlights included the Watershed Game, an interactive tool to help individuals understand the connection between land use and water quality, how to gather social information, interpreting monitoring data, and a watershed case study. Excellent team leaders including Matt Meersman, Sara Peel, Julie Speelman, Bryan Wallace, Natalie Johnson, and Logan Garner provided guidance, energy, and the voice of experience.



Online social networking

We continued to use our online social networking component at <http://iwatersheds.net>. Using the program "Ning", which is similar to a private Facebook just for the Academy, participants shared thoughts, discussed issues, and

exchanged information. The site was also used as an archive for the information provided to participants regarding face-to-face meetings. All IWLA alumni and the steering committee members were also invited to participate.



Workshop 2

The second workshop at Tecumseh Leadership provided an opportunity to reconnect. Highlights included learning about MS4s and how to partner with these programs, connecting best management practices and water quality, engaging volunteers, assessing stream channels, getting out into the stream to experience Hoosier Riverwatch monitoring, and the always-loved zipline across the pond.

Workshop 3 – Graduation

Jack Wittman, Principal GeoScientist at INTERA, inspired participants by explaining some of the water challenges we face nationally and locally. Participants presented their group projects, and those who had completed all modules received a professional certificate in watershed management.



Evaluations

The Academy has always received very strong evaluations from participants. The Academy participants found all the sessions for both workshops to be useful. Over 95% of the participants greatly appreciated the networking among Academy participants and the opportunity to work in small group activities that required critical thinking. Some specific comments regarding the most positive aspects of the Academy include:

- Learning about new web tools – creating maps/surveys are so powerful, and keeping up to date on the latest/greatest is always super useful
- The networking that we did will be incredibly helpful for me in my job! This session helps to make the entire management process seem not quite so daunting.
- The changing of groups was a great way to force me to work closely and get to know even more people.
- This academy consists of an absolutely great group of folks that are not only willing, but excited to help and guide you to your watershed knowledge goals. I would highly recommend this academy to anyone looking for more information on watersheds.
- The homework has been helpful to pull ideas of watershed management together
- I entered the Academy solely for my interest but have found the resources we are learning about are incredibly useful in my job as well.
- The Academy allowed me to develop a new understanding of these topics, meet with like-minded, watershed-aware people, and develop relationships.