



Annual Overview for 2009

Purdue celebrated the conclusion of the fourth class of the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy in May 2009. Twenty-five participants from throughout Indiana with very diverse backgrounds including watershed coordinators, MS4 operators, students, consultants, resource managers, and non-profit representatives convened in January 2009 to begin face to face workshops and distance education on becoming more effective watershed leaders. Those who completed all components of the program received a Professional Certificate in Watershed Management.

In addition to the regular schedule of presentations for the Academy, Purdue added two new sessions in 2009: one on social indicators for watershed management, and another on the use of online social networking websites, including a discussion on which options were appropriate tools and their relevance in watershed management and sustaining a watershed group.

Outcome-based evaluations each year have been used to enhance the content, improve the overall experience, and demonstrate the impact on watershed management. The Academy has received very strong evaluations from participants, many of whom reported that the leadership and watershed science skills they gained through the Academy are already increasing their effectiveness at building effective watershed partnerships.

In the past four years, 106 people have participated in the Academy, through which they have learned skills in organization and communication, watershed technology, GIS, policy, watershed science, and leadership. The Academy continues to receive very positive overall evaluations from its participants.

Evaluations

Session evaluations are completed by Academy participants after the January and March face to face meetings. Overall, the evaluations for 2009 were very positive. Regarding the January meeting, which focuses on gathering people and information on your watershed, the Academy participants found all the sessions to be useful, especially the sessions on social indicators and stakeholder involvement. Over 90% of the participants greatly appreciated the networking among Academy participants. Some specific comments regarding the most positive aspects of the Academy included:

- “networking, networking, networking”
- “The IWLA is an excellent opportunity to meet watershed leaders from across the state and share experiences”
- “If people were interested in clean water and how to move their watershed projects forward, this academy is a MUST. I had high expectations for the academy, and they were met, so I’m happy”

During the March face to face meeting presentations included presentations on working with local officials, water monitoring and restoration, identifying critical areas and selecting Best Management Practices (BMPs). Again, the evaluations were very positive. The Academy participants found all the sessions to be useful, and



particularly enjoyed the chance to work in the stream. Over 95% of the participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to work in small group activities that required critical thinking, specifically the sessions on Critical Areas and BMPs, and the stream monitoring and restoration. Some specific comments received regarding these sessions included:

- “great exercise and speaker, it applied everything we have discussed in the academy”
- “very effective combination of a real example and group exercises”
- “good presentation and exercises were well planned for time allotted”
- “I really enjoyed the activity. I’m going to take the entire class [Hoosier Riverwatch]”
- “very great finds in the stream”
- “very interesting topic, good speaker, would like to hear him speak again”
- “provided answers to a number of questions I have had”

After graduation in May, we conducted an online survey of all participants to gain feedback on what had worked well, what could be improved, and to ascertain what participants felt they had gained from the Academy, and received very positive feedback. A few responses to the question, “how has the Academy helped you meet your goals” included:

- “Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy has allowed me to work on a basic framework for our watershed to model. I have learned that many times entities have begun watershed work with basically a blank slate. It is wonderful that all of us have learned to structure a watershed management plan and have been given many tools to allow us to further each of our individual work. My goals have been reached simply by learning what is expected from the stakeholders and citizens.”



- “The Academy has allowed me to make a lot of contacts with several people who can help me meet my goals. I gained a lot of insight to how other agencies work and how I can work with them to achieve success.”
- “It has forced me to take steps to meet landowners in the watershed, talk with stakeholders such as SWCD, NRCS, IDNR and the County Plan Commission as well as lake associations in the county. These contacts will propel us to greater educational efforts, a major goal in our Watershed Plan.”

