



Annual Overview for 2010

The fifth class of the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy concluded in May 2010 with a record 35 participants. They included both volunteers and professionals, including:

- watershed coordinators
- consultants
- stormwater coordinators
- graduate students
- federal, state and local government representatives
- private citizens
- lake association members, 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 wintry weather.



Highlights included the Watershed Game, an interactive tool to help individuals understand the connection between land use and water quality, a watershed case study, and a song by the IDEM Watershed Specialists. Excellent team leaders including Matt Meersman, Kent Wamsley, Mark Prankus, Holly Jones, and Tammy Gilbert provided guidance, energy, and the voice of experience.

Online social networking

An innovation in 2010 was an online social networking component. 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 Porter County's success in linking watershed protection and land use planning, an opportunity to get out into the stream to experience Hoosier Riverwatch monitoring or stream restoration, and the always-loved zipline across the pond.



Workshop 3 – Graduation

Acting NRCS State Conservationist Shannon Zezula and IDEM Watershed Assessment and Planning Branch Chief Lou

Renshaw inspired participants with graduation talks, the 35 participants presented team projects, and 27 participants 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:

- “It is comforting to know the number of individuals and organizations devoted to the improvement of Indiana’s aquatic systems. Networking with these individuals was especially important.”
- “The networking and diversity of the group was great. I know many people initially felt out of their league due to complete lack of experience or knowledge in watershed management. It was instantly comforting to see the broad range of skills that people brought to the table.”
- “Helped me to visualize much better the issues and various aspects to be addressed and how to address them.” [Critical Areas]
- “Steve and his partner, Cory, were knowledgeable - getting out in the water to see and discuss the different issues was great – finally, I understand.” [Stream Restoration]
- “This information confirmed the change in stream hydrology we suspected exists in our watershed. We have been looking for this information for several years.” [Stream Restoration]
- “Very interesting. What they’ve accomplished thus far takes the long-range view and the fact that they got it approved is fantastic. Great ideas!” [Porter County Watershed Protection and Land Use]
- “Probably the highlight of the 2-day program for me. He was knowledgeable, experienced and practical/realistic.” [Porter County Watershed Protection and Land Use]

Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy wins Excellence in Teaching Award

On April 27, 2010, Jane Frankenberger, Laura Esman, and Brent Ladd were presented with Purdue University's 2010 Distance Learning Excellence in Teaching Award for the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy. According to Mark Pagano, Dean of Continuing Education and Conferences, the "award committee was impressed by the team's integration of the online learning modules with Web-based meetings using Adobe Connect and other online social networking tools." Dean Pagano also mentioned that the committee "acknowledged the wide impact that the IWLA is having on professionals around the state."



Dean Jay Akridge congratulates the team. Photo by Richard Myers-Walls