

# Yahara WINS: Partnership continues effort to keep phosphorus out of area waters

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CONTACTS: Martin Griffin, Yahara WINS executive committee president, [MartinG@madsewer.org](mailto:MartinG@madsewer.org), (608) 222-1201, ext. 124

MADISON, WI – Partners in the Yahara Watershed Improvement Network kept nearly 50,000 pounds of phosphorus out of local waterways in 2018, the second full year of a 20 year project to reduce algae blooms and improve water quality in the Yahara River watershed.

Project highlights in 2018 included the addition of Columbia County as a project partner, innovative research into advanced manure composting, and recognition of the Yahara WINS partnership by the U.S. Water Alliance. Meanwhile, project partners continued to support implementation of ongoing phosphorus control measures in urban and agricultural settings throughout the watershed.

Though extreme weather in 2018 posed a challenge to phosphorus control, project leaders are confident that the Yahara WINS project remains the best path to clean water goals.

“Last year’s intense weather reinforced how important it is to control runoff,” said Martye Griffin, Yahara WINS executive committee president. “Heavy rains can introduce more phosphorus to our waterways, and climate change is projected to make these events more common. The work of Yahara WINS partners is helping our community be more resilient in the face of extreme weather.”

Most phosphorus reductions reported in 2018 resulted from practices that reduce

agricultural runoff, such as cover crops, harvestable buffers and low-disturbance manure injection. Working with local farmers to implement these practices, Dane County prevented 21,570 pounds of phosphorus from reaching waterways, Yahara Pride Farms prevented 22,097 pounds, and Rock County prevented 327 pounds in the small area of the Yahara watershed in the county.

In addition to supporting agricultural runoff controls, Yahara WINS funded projects to manage phosphorus in urban areas. Yahara WINS awarded grants in 2018 to the Town of Dunn for a leaf management project and to the City of Madison and Upper Sugar River Watershed Association for projects to capture phosphorus in stormwater ponds.

Together, these partners exceeded the phosphorus prevention goal set for 2018 by project leaders. The 47,223 pounds of phosphorus diverted from local waterways in 2018 is almost half of the eventual project goal of 96,000 pounds per year. The project is planned to continue ramping up over time to meet this goal by the final years of the project.

### Project background

The Yahara Watershed Improvement Network, known as Yahara WINS, is a groundbreaking initiative to achieve clean water goals for the Yahara Watershed. In this effort, community partners led by Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District are collaborating on a strategy called watershed adaptive management in which all sources of phosphorus in a watershed work together to reduce phosphorus. The effort began in 2012 as a pilot project and in 2017 transitioned to a full scale effort.

The 20 year adaptive management project aims to achieve permit requirements and regional Clean Water Act goals identified through the Rock River Total Maximum Daily Load by 2036. To accomplish these goals, the group facilitates partnerships, conducts outreach, pools resources to fund phosphorus reducing practices in the watershed, analyzes stream samples and works with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to address regulatory needs for the project. For more information and to view a copy of the annual report, check out the Yahara WINS webpage, <http://www.madsewer.org/Programs-Initiatives/Yahara-WINS>.

Lynn E. Coleman

Resource Team Associate



Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District  
1610 Moorland Road • Madison, WI 53713-3398

P: 608-222-1201

<mailto:lynnk@madsewer.org>