

6 parts to storm water planning

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Banding together to find solutions to common problems has worked well for 13 Tri-County Area communities that hired engineer Patrick Meyer's company to help them comply with Phase II of the Environmental Protection Agency's storm water management requirements.

"We wanted to make sure there was an efficient way of dealing with the problems," Meyer said. "While all communities have to deal with the same issues, the magnitude of the problems are different. Some communities may be going through major growth and development, so post-construction and stabilization is a big issue."

The process started in 2003 and runs through 2008 and is likely to continue for another five years after that, Meyer said. There are six categories within that process that municipalities, townships and counties have to address.

They include:

- Public education and outreach on storm impacts.
- Public involvement.

"The first two requirements go hand in hand," Meyer said. "The local agencies, the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and Bradley University created a DVD about 1 1/2 years ago to explain the issues to the public."

- Illicit discharge and construction elimination.

To track illegal discharge from construction sites, the EPA has required that each community develop a map of its storm water and sewer system.

"The reason is if you see something in the creek that is not supposed to be there, you can trace it back to its source," Meyer said.

- Construction site storm water run-off.

The local agencies are striving to meet or exceed the EPA requirements, Meyer said. City of Peoria engineer Jane Gerdes pinpoints new construction as a major area of concern.

"Our enforcement has increased sharply, and construction run-off is a huge problem," she said.

- Post-construction storm water management.

Compliance is tricky because so many people are involved in each construction site, and not many of them are ultimately accountable if regulations aren't followed.

"These controls have been in place for some time now," said Matt Wahl, Peoria County's director of

Planning and Zoning.

"There is an amazing number of people who enter a construction site before a family ever enters a new residence, for instance," Wahl said. "There are contractors and subcontractors, and they all need to know that they cannot come in and dump their delivery and leave. "

- Pollution prevention and good housekeeping.

This requires local agencies to take steps such as street sweeps and inlet cleaning.

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