



Investigating Water Quality

Partnerships and site additions help grow a Milwaukee-area storm water monitoring program

By Caitlin Cunningham



MMSD sampling experts lead SWS Managing Editor Caitlin Cunningham in a discussion and demonstration of field methods.

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) provides wastewater treatment and flood management services for 1.1 million people over 411 sq miles in the greater Milwaukee area. The regional government agency encompasses or includes six watersheds.

In 2000, MMSD launched its storm water program—not for regulatory purposes, but rather as a voluntary research initiative. As part of the program, MMSD collects storm water during storm events when possible and samples surface water immediately after rain, snowmelt and baseflow events as a rule to assess environmental impacts. The resulting data supports the district's 2020 Facilities Plan, intended to identify the facilities, programs, operational improvements and policies it will need by 2020 to comply with existing permits and additional regulatory requirements.

“The district is being proactive to solve the region's problems rather than leaving local entities to do it themselves,” said MMSD Public Information Manager Bill Graffin.