

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network Announces New Clean Water Mascot

May 30, 2017

Kenosha, WI – May 30, 2017 – Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network (WIN), a 501(c)3 non-profit that restores and protects Lake Michigan tributaries in Southeast Wisconsin, announced today that it now has a new “life size” clean water mascot, “Sparkles the Water Spaniel”. Sparkles was created as part of their Respect Our Waters program, which began in 2012 as a new way to educate residents of Southeastern Wisconsin on ways to reduce stormwater runoff pollution through better homeowner land management practices. Sparkles will make his first appearance at the Kenosha HarborMarket on June 3, 2017, to meet area residents and encourage people of all ages and interest levels to enjoy WIN’s “The Mystery of Pike Creek” event at Kenosha Public Museum from 11 am to 2 pm, also on June 3rd. Sparkles will also be participating in the Fourth of July Parade in the Village of Somers, at Dog Day in the City of Oak Creek, and will appear at other area events.



Sparkles the Water Spaniel hard at work planning our next event.

According to the Department of Natural Resources, the Lake Michigan tributaries of Southeastern Wisconsin are some of the most degraded and impaired in the state. Runoff pollution in the form of phosphorus, nitrogen, sediment, road salt and bacteria are the major contributors to this problem. Sparkles brings awareness and actionable advice to homeowners and their children about how to reduce runoff pollution at home and in their communities.

“As water passes through yards it picks up chemicals, bacteria, and other contaminants which are really harmful to our rivers and Lake Michigan,” Sparkles barked. “Don't get me wrong, fertilizing your yard is often the fastest way to get that green glow that begs to be rolled around in. But using excess pesticides and fertilizers means that most of them will run straight off of your lawn with the first sign of rain and flow straight into our lakes and rivers. These chemicals pollute our water resources and create unbalanced ecosystems that are unsafe for fishing and swimming.”

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“No matter what your gardening style may be, the best way to ensure a happy and healthy yard is to remember that your yard is connected to a much bigger picture: a watershed,” said Allison Thielen, Root-Pike WIN’s program manager and Respect Our Waters campaign leader. “Our watersheds are our gifts – our mission is to protect them. As we improve them, they bring valuable benefits to the ecosystem, economy and wellness of our community.”

“When dog poop isn't picked up, whether in your yard or in a public area, all of these contaminants are carried off by runoff and sent directly into our rivers and lakes,” Thielen said. “Beaches become unfit and swimming unsafe. Fishing, walking, running and biking near the water becomes unpleasant and unsightly. Sparkles helps us get that message across to a variety of audiences.”

The Root-Pike watershed encompasses parts of Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee and Waukesha counties, where the organization and its volunteers work to protect, restore, and sustain the ecosystem through watershed restoration planning and plan implementation support. The Root-Pike WIN is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization started in 1998 by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to identify critical natural resource issues in the Root River and Pike River watersheds. The organization incorporated as a nonprofit in 2001, and has since awarded over \$545,000 in small grants to more than 100 local conservation projects in the Root-Pike Watershed. To learn more about Root Pike WIN, the Respect Our Waters campaign, and the implementation of the watershed restoration plans for the Pike River, Root River, and Wind Point watersheds, please visit www.rootpikewin.org.

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