

ENVIRONMENT

Protecting water resources is sewer district's new focus

Where does it go?

That's the apt title for a new Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District campaign "designed to strengthen the region's appreciation of our water resources."

Sure, it would be easy to poke the embattled sewer district for apparently not taking the same care over the last few decades with watching where it's money goes.

And yes, the campaign is a scarcely veiled commercial for the district's push to manage the region's storm water in addition to the sewage from Cleveland and 60 surrounding suburbs.

Still, the water appreciation idea is a good one.

"Our water resources are among the most essential economic drivers in Greater Cleveland," said Julius Ciaccia, sewer district executive director. "It is in our best interest to make sure that this natural resource is well protected — and protecting our water environment is precisely our job."

District officials say the campaign, which began Feb. 4, is a marketing effort to convince people in Cleveland and the 60 other suburbs served by the sewer district that water matters — more than they may realize.

It features a Web site, wheredoesitgo.org, which provides clean water tips such as not pitching motor oil or other chemicals (including old prescription medicines) down the drain.

It also addresses ways to keep pollutants out of storm water — runoff from home downspouts, city storm sewers and large paved areas such as parking lots.

Each community in our region now handles its own



Michael Scott

storm-water matters, but the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency has ordered each to file a plan to treat storm water by 2008.

That's where the sewer district and its water campaign come in.

A 2006 sewer district study had figured it would cost about \$337 million to fix more than 500 different storm water problems. Officials have tentatively floated a \$5 a month per home fee to bring in \$23 million a year to handle everything.

The Web site urges us to "think about the relationship between storm water, flooding issues and water pollution" and notes that most of the time this runoff now goes untreated.

Green party: You can get your green next weekend in Cleveland.

The "Emerge: A Celebration" party Saturday, Feb. 23, at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History will mark 15 years of work by EcoCity Cleveland and its merger this year into the museum's newly created Center for Regional Sustainability.

Guests will dine on hors d'oeuvres made with organic and locally sourced ingredients, organic wine selections and Great Lakes Brewing Co. beer tasting (cash bar), live entertainment and raffle prizes.

Proceeds from the 8 p.m. to midnight event will benefit the center. Tickets are \$35 for members, \$45 for nonmembers. For \$100, you can get the party and a 7 p.m. private reception with EcoCity founder David Beach and museum Executive Director Bruce Latimer,

For information, call 216-231-1177 or go to cmnh.org.