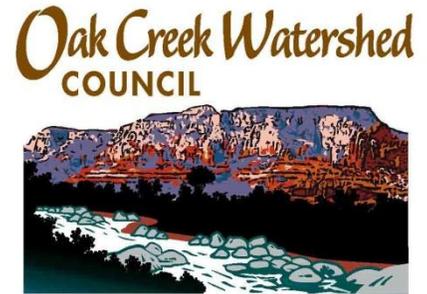


NEWS RELEASE

Oak Creek Watershed Council
P.O. Box 732, Sedona, Arizona 86339

<http://www.oakcreekwatershed.org>



For Immediate Release

Date: September 26, 2012

Contact: Barry Allan, (928) 554-5460

barry@oakcreekwatershed.org

OAK CREEK WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCWIP) COMPLETED **3 YEAR GRANT PROJECT FINISHES ON SEPTEMBER 30TH**

Sedona, AZ - The Oak Creek Watershed Council (OCWC) has completed the Oak Creek Watershed Improvement Plan (OCWIP) and received approval from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ).

Funded by a grant from ADEQ and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the OCWIP identifies problems associated with the impairment of Oak Creek by the fecal coliform *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), as well as solutions to those problems. Also included in the grant is the development of the Oak Creek Community Outreach Program (OCCOP).

"Oak Creek is not attaining water quality standards for *E. coli* because exceedances have been found repeatedly for many years. The presence of *E. coli* in Oak Creek is a concern because it is an indicator of the likely presence of fecal contamination which may cause human health problems" said Barry Allan, Executive Director, "the OCWIP is a work-in-progress document that will provide guidance to the Oak Creek Watershed community, as well as environmental professionals, in the future."

The Oak Creek Watershed Improvement Plan can be reviewed on the Oak Creek Watershed Council website at www.oakcreekwatershed.org along with a new video public service announcement. It will also be available at public libraries in Sedona, Coconino County and Yavapai County.

"This grant project may finish on September 30th" said Allan, "but ours is a targeted watershed and there will be further funding opportunities next year to help us implement the solutions to Oak Creek's pollution problems. Regardless, it is imperative those who recreate in and around the Creek, help right now by keeping their dogs on a leash and cleaning up after them; leaving no trace of cans, bottles, cigarette butts and other trash; and not using the Creek as a bathroom or to clean diapers."

Because Oak Creek is already an impaired watercourse it is particularly sensitive to littering, as well as human and animal feces. One gram of dog feces may contain over 20 million E. coli cells along with bacteria and parasites, and litter attracts forest animals which in turn defecate in the Creek area.

"The Oak Creek Community Outreach Program (OCCOP) has been developed as a sustainable watershed education program and is an integral part of the Watershed Improvement Plan. The success of the Community Outreach Program is contingent on cooperation from all watershed residents and visitors" said Allan, "and its objective is to raise awareness level regarding the consequences to littering and pollution, as well as encouraging adherence to all protocols in the **Clean Water Start with Me** campaign. Every day is a red flag day for Oak Creek, and that has to change if we want to ensure the legacy of clean and healthy water for future generations."

The Oak Creek Watershed Council provides a full array of watershed services to the community and is active in water quantity and conservation, habitat degradation as well as economic impact issues. It partners with other community organizations and encourages watershed residents to support its efforts in helping to make the Verde Valley a truly vibrant community.

For information about how residents and visitors can learn more about the stewardship of Oak Creek, visit <http://www.oakcreekwatershed.org>

The Oak Creek Watershed Council also sponsors a second website which focuses on recreating in Oak Creek Canyon at <http://www.oakcreekcanyonaz.org>

The Oak Creek Watershed Council is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) corporation dedicated to maintaining a standard of excellence for watershed stewardship, as well as preserving the integrity of Oak Creek, and its tributaries. It was recently named Nonprofit Organization of 2012 by the Sedona Community Foundation.

###