



**For Immediate Release**

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**Water Groups Join Forces to Conduct Public Education Campaign**

Puppet Voiced by Kenosha Native Delivers Message

**Milwaukee and Racine (June 26, 2012)** – Two southeastern Wisconsin water groups have united to launch “[Respect Our Waters](#),” a multi-year marketing initiative to educate area residents on the actions they can take to help improve the quality of area rivers and Lake Michigan.

Beginning June 27, [Sweet Water](#) (the Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust) and [Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network](#) (Root-Pike WIN) are spearheading a 12-week television advertising campaign that features a puppet, Sparkles the Water Spaniel, to emphasize bad and good human behavior. Jeff Cesario, a Kenosha-born stand-up comedian who has won two Emmys and appeared on the “Tonight Show,” “Late Show with David Letterman” and “Late Night with Conan O’Brien,” voices the wise-cracking, always vigilant Sparkles.

In four, 30-second spots, Sparkles focuses his attention on the importance of picking up yard debris, cleaning up dog poop, using lawn fertilizer and chemicals responsibly and preventing oil and fluids from leaking from cars. The spots catch Sparkles as he drops in on area residents and trains the humans by:

- whacking a man with a newspaper who’s sweeping grass clippings and other debris into the street
- rewarding a woman with a treat for picking up her dog’s poop
- squirting a guy with water as he liberally applies chemicals to his lawn, after overfertilizing the week before
- shaking a noisy can at a man whose car is leaking oil onto the street

The spots close with variations of “This is Sparkles the Water Spaniel, reminding you clean water is all about proper training.”

“It’s important for southeastern Wisconsin residents to understand that their actions directly impact the quality of our rivers and Lake Michigan,” says Susan Greenfield, executive director of Root-Pike WIN. “The TV spots use humor to emphasize how we should change our behaviors to benefit the waterways.”

In addition to the television advertising, in July and August, Sweet Water and Root-Pike WIN are conducting grassroots outreach. The two groups will be at more than 15 community events throughout southeastern Wisconsin to educate residents one-on-one. During those events, the groups will distribute 18,000 pet waste bags, provide native plants for rain gardens and give away rain barrels and Milorganite.

“The launch of this campaign is exciting because it represents two water groups and 28 communities that have banded together for a common cause,” says Jeff Martinka, executive director of Sweet Water. “Due to this spirit of cooperation and the pooling of resources, we’re able to have a bigger impact than we could ever accomplish separately.”

During its initial year, Sweet Water and Root-Pike WIN are urging area residents to:

- Pick up pet waste.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn.
- Use lawn fertilizer and chemicals sparingly. In fact, the groups recommend testing the soil to make sure the yard really needs the extra nutrients before applying fertilizer.
- Inspect vehicles to make sure they’re not leaking oil or other fluids.

“What many residents don’t understand is that anything that washes into storm sewers goes directly into our area rivers and then into Lake Michigan,” explains Greenfield. “That means, whenever it rains, dog poop, lawn fertilizer, grass, leaves, car fluids and any other debris on sidewalks, streets and parking lots flow into the waterways.”

Martinka points to a 2010 study conducted by the Public Policy Forum for Sweet Water that showed the public does not have a good understanding of pollution sources and how simple actions can improve the water quality of area rivers and Lake Michigan.

The survey found:

- The public incorrectly believes the major sources of water pollution are sewer overflows and industrial wastes when, in fact, 90% of water pollution comes from other sources, such as urban and rural runoff.
- 84% of the public feels that their actions do not have an impact on water quality nor do they see a role for themselves in helping to protect water resources.

In addition to the four actions emphasized in the television ads, the groups are also encouraging residents to:

- Plant rain gardens and trees.
- Direct downspouts into rain barrels, the yard or garden instead of the sewer or driveway.
- Use a carwash or wash cars on the lawn.

The current campaign is funded by \$125,000 in grants from 28 municipalities and the Wisconsin DNR. The total negotiated value of the year-one initiative is \$250,000 in television advertising and creative development.

For more information, visit [www.respectourwaters.com](http://www.respectourwaters.com), [swwtwater.org](http://swwtwater.org) or [rootpikewin.org](http://rootpikewin.org).

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Root-Pike WIN, established in 2000, is a nonprofit organization focused on the protection, restoration and sustainability of the Root River and Pike River watersheds. The Southeastern Wisconsin Watersheds Trust (Sweet Water) is a partnership established in 2008 to achieve healthy and sustainable water resources throughout the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds through the coordinated, collaborative efforts of its members.

A few words about...  
JEFF CESARIO

Jeff was born and raised in Kenosha, Wisconsin and worked as a musician before stepping up to the much more stable arena of standup comedy.

He's a veteran of the Tonight show, Letterman, Late-Late Show and four of his own specials, most recently on Comedy Central. He stars in **The Dick Rossi show on funnyordie.com**, and also cleans up nicely for the corporate crowd, including IBM, Budweiser, Amex, ING and more.

Jeff won two Emmys for his work on HBO'S "Dennis Miller Live", worked on the great "Larry Sanders Show," & wrote the Warner Brothers feature, "Jack Frost." Most recently Jeff wrote on the 2012 Oscars with Billy Crystal, and was head writer on Spike TV's Guys Choice Awards.

Jeff is married and is the proud father of a 3-year-old baby girl. Feel free to check out [jeffcesario.com](http://jeffcesario.com) for more info.