

## 2018 Flood Response

*Unprecedented efforts to engage the public yield results*

*Donna Collingwood, Civil Rights*

"In all my years in engineering, we've never done anything like this before," said Janet Schmidt, Principal Engineer for the Stormwater Section, when talking about work on the flooding outreach plan. The staff time and resources that went into the effort were unprecedented and invaluable in the feedback they yielded.

The record flooding of August 2018 caused flash flooding which overwhelmed existing infrastructure and caused damage to streets, sewers, homes, and businesses.

Engineering did a RESJI tool analysis on the flooding, resulting in an education plan and an outreach plan.

Step one was a massive post card mailing for a meeting, which resulted in 400 people attending. The team decided more and different means of outreach were necessary. Richie Breidenbach and Matt Allie (both Project Engineers with the Stormwater Section) began gathering contacts from everywhere they could: church groups, NRTs, community centers, libraries.

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## We're all in this together

We are all making adjustments, large and small, due to living during a pandemic. The impact on our lives varies. We are fortunate to have good leadership at the city and at the department of public health.

It's no secret that the most vulnerable in our community are the hardest hit by the corona virus. The pandemic is exposing long standing problems such as lack of health insurance and equitable health care—and the ramifications of that.

It's difficult to see things play out this way and at the same time, heartening to see the efforts being made by many to help in some way. In some cases, this tragedy is inspiring good acts.

Making sure we all have enough to eat is crucial. Contributing to food pantries or Second Harvest helps meet the need. Community centers are another place to consider. The Goodman Center is managing a neighborhood meal distribution three days a week. Centro Hispano offers the opportunity to donate through Latino Consortium for Action Emergency Relief Fund for COVID-19. Some are using their sewing skills to make masks. And all over town, people are putting messages of encouragement and support on their windows, in trees, and, in my neighborhood, these messages are being shared by giant, air-filled snowmen and other holiday persona. All efforts, large and small, make a difference. ■■■



*Photo courtesy of Dane County Public Health*

From these contacts, they compiled a huge data base and used social media and other means to make contacts.

The flood web site was an essential part of the plan ([www.cityofmadison.com/flooding](http://www.cityofmadison.com/flooding)). Information for flooding had been all over the place, and now it was centralized. It's a multi-agency web site so different departments can update their information as needed.

The next step was focus groups and online flood reporting. Staff went to areas where flood calls came in and did walking tours with residents. Staff sent separate mailings, saying they would be there at a variety of times, and that worked well. Each focus group (30 separate focus groups total for 2019) averaged about 10-20 people. Information was shared back and forth with staff, consultants and residents. There were always three or more staff at these sessions so staff were readily accessible. For the second round of Public Informational Meetings, these **focus group members** were specifically invited to review the progress on the project. At the end of the general presentation, everyone broke into different tables at the focus groups to show the results of the computer modeling and to ask the residents and property owners to verify this is what they experienced during the floods. There was a focus group in each NRT area.

Engaging participants through the focus groups worked well. Participants could see their feedback go into the process, which let them know they were not just checking a box. People were motivated by their individual situations. They came out to the meetings, brought their kids and neighbors, and were generally engaged.

A challenge for the team has been to know if they took the right steps, or took extra steps that weren't necessary. The plan takes this into

account – it's flexible, and will adapt to the information gained at subsequent meetings.

The team got good advice from NRTs on how to engage with the community such as tabling at bus stops and the Boys & Girls Club. They also used alder blog posts to get the word out. The team learned through the process that there were some unforeseen technical challenges. This came to light with the COVID-19 and social distancing requirements. Typical face to face engagement strategies are being changed on the fly to try to make complicated information easily understandable and to try to get as much specific information to residents on their areas of concern. A key point was how much the community appreciated follow up and seeing their feedback incorporated. In engaging in follow up meetings, there was transparency, and that was important too.

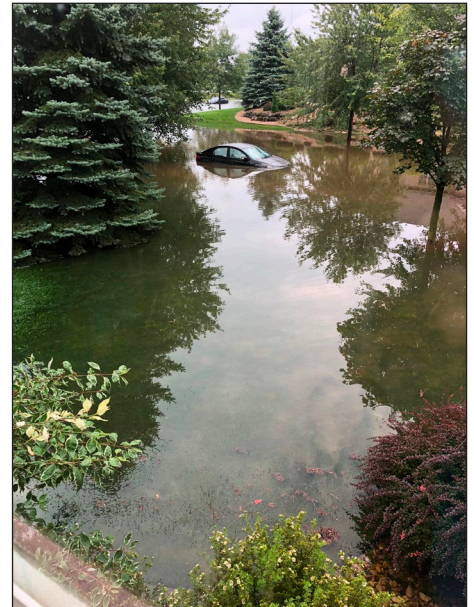
The team found out there was an office park on the west side where some of the businesses were out

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**The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much it is whether we provide enough for those who have little.**

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*







tens of millions of dollars. They had never called to report the flooding, and were appreciative of what the team was doing. Making deliberate efforts to go to those property owners and businesses was very important. There would have never been a way to get this information otherwise. Meeting them on site was also key so they could show us the impacts of the flooding first hand and know we are working on a solution.

“We kept the RESJI challenge of how to NOT let the most vocal dictate what we do as a city,” said Matt. The team came in with a robust plan, and invested lots of staff time and coordination. Flooding issues can be really complex, “we don’t want to fix one thing and have it negatively impact another area,” Matt said.

A big challenge is getting people to understand the entirety and complexity of the system, and that, no, making the pipe wider is not going to solve the problem. Information and education are key to getting residents to understand, be involved in, and have an impact on issues that intimately affect them. This was a very difficult situation for everyone involved. Engineering staff had very positive feedback and it was clear how using the RESJI process took that challenging situation with a high probability for a very negative response and made it a valuable tool for both the City and also for the community. ■■

## Environmental Justice in Wisconsin

*Donna Collingwood, Civil Rights*

In February, Stacie Reece presented on environmental justice for the RESJI speaker series. Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

That is the official definition from the EPA. Reece started with some history, then gave a Wisconsin specific example. Enbridge, a Canadian company, wants to expand its pipeline network throughout the Midwest to transport tar sands from the Canadian forests to the Gulf Coast, primarily for export. With aggressive campaigns on the East and West Coasts opposing export plans, Enbridge wants to make the Midwest a tar sands freeway to get the oil south.

Enbridge’s Line 61 travels through Wisconsin from Superior to Delavan, then crosses the Illinois state line and continues south to refineries. Enbridge is close to tripling Line 61’s capacity from the original 400,000 to 1.2 million barrels per day —45% more than the Keystone XL and 155% more than the Dakota Access Pipeline. Any “spills” or problems with this pipeline could be devastating to Wisconsin.

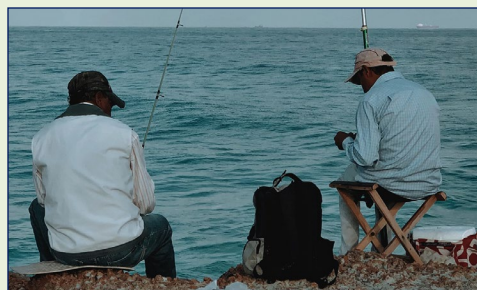
Reece discussed “fenceline communities,” neighborhoods that are immediately adjacent to a company and directly affected by the noise, odors, chemical emissions, traffic, parking, and operations of the company. In the U.S., fenceline communities that are next to plants that emit hazardous waste are disproportionately inhabited by people of color and the working poor. Because Madison doesn’t have a large centralized industrial area, this

problem doesn’t show up as much here as in more industrial cities like Milwaukee. However Madison Kipp’s vicinity is one local example of the pockets that do exist in Madison.

There can be a tension around the choice of jobs vs. the environment. Companies will offer to bring a toxic plant to a struggling area with the promise of jobs that are much needed. However, this is a false choice that perpetuates the negative impacts on community and environmental health which displaces any of the economic gains. The goal of the environmental justice movement is to give communities decision-making power in the equitable distribution of environmental risks and benefits

A recent development has been the use of counterterrorism tactics to defeat pipeline insurgencies. At Standing Rock, water canons and attack dogs were used by private security companies against peaceful protestors. The issue at Standing Rock was that the pipeline crosses the Missouri River, which is a source of water for the Sioux. A consequence is anti-pipeline protest legislation popping up around the country to protect the oil companies. Wisconsin passed such a law in 2019.

Environmental justice is a huge topic, as Reece acknowledged, but it’s important that we have some concept of it as the impacts of climate change continue. Clean air and water are vital to human beings and it’s important that these precious resources are shared equitably. ■■



## Calendar of Opportunities

### MAY

5/19/2020

**Speaker Series: Equitable Development in Madison, Dan MacAuliffe and Urvashi Martin.** 1:00-2:00 pm, Zoom.

5/28/2020

RESJI CORE Team will screen **Race: The Power of an Illusion, Part 1.** 10:00 am-11:30 am, Zoom.

### JUNE

6/1/2020

Witnessing Whiteness Summer Course: Monday evenings from 6:00-8:00 pm starting June 1 and ending August 3. <https://tinyurl.com/wwwsummer2020>

6/5/2020

RESJI CORE Team will screen **Race: The Power of an Illusion, Part 2.** 2:00 pm-3:30 pm, Zoom.

6/19/2020

RESJI CORE Team will screen **Race: The Power of an Illusion, Part 3.** 2:00 pm-3:30 pm, Zoom.

6/25/2020

RESJI CORE Team **business meeting.** 10:00 am-11:00 am, Zoom.

### JULY

7/15/2020

**Speaker Series: Screening of "Cracking the Code" and discussion.** 1:00-2:30 pm, Zoom.

7/23/2020

RESJI CORE Team **TBD.** 10:00 am-11:00 am, Zoom.

We all do better  
when we **ALL**  
do better.

### NEWS & VIEWS

Thanks for reading! We hope you enjoyed these stories and we want to hear your feedback for future issues. The newsletter will be published quarterly.

We'd like to hear from you regarding racial equity and social justice in your work.

**Contact** newsletter editor Donna Collingwood at [dcollingwood@cityofmadison.com](mailto:dcollingwood@cityofmadison.com)



Racial Equity  
& Social Justice Initiative

Racial Equity & Social Justice Initiative

### KEY CONCEPTS

## Climate Justice



"Environmental injustice, including the proliferation of climate change, has a disproportionate impact on communities of color and low income communities."

—NAACP

**What can YOU do?**  
Understand your own biases  
Learn about RESJI  
[www.cityofmadison.com/civilrights/racial-equity-social-justice-initiative](http://www.cityofmadison.com/civilrights/racial-equity-social-justice-initiative)

**Contact Us**  
(608) 266-4910 | [RESJI@cityofmadison.com](mailto:RESJI@cityofmadison.com)

 Racial Equity  
& Social Justice Initiative

**We all do better when we ALL do better.**

“Wherever you go, go with  
all your heart.” —Confucius

### FREE BYSTANDER INTERVENTION TRAINING:

In response to the rise in Anti-Asian/American and xenophobic harassment, we at Hollaback! partnered with Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC) to adapt our free bystander intervention training to meet this moment.

Unfortunately, anti-Asian and Asian American racism and xenophobia has been partbusiness of American history for a long time. As the coronavirus pandemic escalates, we have seen more harassment, discrimination, and even violence directed at these communities. The Asian Americans Advancing Justice affiliation has been documenting hate crimes and hate incidents since 2017 at [www.StandAgainstHatred.org](http://www.StandAgainstHatred.org), which is available in English, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

Please note you must register in advance for all trainings. They will be capped at 1,000 people.

- Thursday, May 21st at 7pm ET / 6:00pm CT / 5:00pm MT / 4:00pm PT / 1:00pm HST. [Register here.](#)
- Saturday, May 30th at 2pm ET / 1:00pm CT / 12:00pm MT / 11:00am PT / 8:00am HST. [Register here.](#)