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**Local Leaders Take Proactive Steps, Engage with Winona Lake Community**

WINONA LAKE, IND. – Local leaders met at Grace College on Tuesday, Dec. 11, to assess a recent Winona Lake storm water incident and find actionable steps to prevent future problems. Representatives from Warsaw Chemical, Winona Lake Preservation Association (WLPA), City of Warsaw Stormwater Utility, Town of Winona Lake and the Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams were present. The meeting was facilitated by Dr. Nate Bosch, director of the Lilly Center.

“Winona Lake is for everybody to enjoy,” said Chris Rankin, WLPA board member. “No one wants to see it polluted; everyone wants to see it taken care of. We’ve got a chance to address problems like this one. Let’s do it.”

On October 31, after a night of heavy rainfall, a few observant community members noticed a foamy white substance pouring from the storm drain into the lake at 2400 Winona Ave. Bosch and Ryan Workman, MS4 coordinator at City of Warsaw Stormwater Utility, were among the first to visit the site and take water samples for analysis. The white foam was produced by a surfactant used to make detergents at Warsaw Chemical. An estimated two-to-three gallons of surfactant were spilled on the ground when being transferred from a supply truck. After lab analysis, it was determined to have no lasting impact on public safety or the environment.

“The city does its best to give personal attention to all water quality concerns,” said Workman. “Now that we know what caused this particular problem, we can address it.”

Warsaw Chemical is located on Argonne Road. In response to a different issue in 2015, the company voluntarily installed a retention pond on their property to safely catch and discharge storm water. The company substantially reduced their on-site chemical storage and eliminated storage of certain chemicals altogether. The offending drain, located at 2400 Winona Ave., leads from the retention pond as well as several other industrial and residential areas and into Winona Lake; however, the pond is separated from the lake by a valve that can be quickly opened or closed.

Kevin Feldman, president of Warsaw Chemical, acknowledged the more recent concerns and addressed them directly. “It’s important to us to protect the lake,” he said. “When we learned about the foam on Winona Lake, we immediately shut the valve and pumped the retention pond’s water into four large frac tanks.” Warsaw Chemical waited for the Stormwater Utility to conduct water testing before discharging the tanks into the city’s sanitary sewer. Feldman noted that the amount of surfactant released was harmless and biodegradable.

The meeting’s outcome was constructive. “The Lilly Center wants to provide the right tools and information to create lasting change that ultimately protects the lake and its residents,” said Bosch. “Our hope is that these action steps, which are mutually agreed upon, will end future chemical spills from Warsaw Chemical into Winona Lake.”

First, valve operation: Under normal operation, Warsaw Chemical’s retention pond valve will be kept open to keep storm water flowing properly. If there is a threat, the valve to the lake would be immediately shut to prevent contaminated runoff from entering Winona Lake. Employees have already been retrained accordingly.

Second, new procedures for unloading supply trucks have been implemented. The entire unloading process is supervised, but should a substance leak unexpectedly, there is a second containment unit to catch the spill. Under that unit is an absorbent mat. Outdoor areas are being inspected twice daily as well, first by a regular employee and then by a supervisor, to document and remove anything that could be washed away by heavy rain or snow melt.

Finally, Warsaw Chemical is providing a direct line of communication to its risk management team for community members to ask questions and note any problems they see. To contact Warsaw Chemical, email winonalake@warsaw-chem.com.

More information about Winona Lake and the Lilly’s Centers efforts is available at lakes.grace.edu.

*Caption: In October, a few observant community members noticed a foamy white substance pouring from the storm drain into the lake at 2400 Winona Ave. The substance was found to be harmless and biodegradable, but local leaders have taken action steps to prevent future spills.*

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The Lilly Center for Lakes & Streams at Grace College conducts research, provides resources, engages and educates residents, and collaborates with local organizations to make the lakes and streams of Kosciusko County clean, healthy, safe and beautiful. To date, the Lilly Center has conducted scientific research on over 30 streams and 40 lakes. The Lilly Center is driven to create a legacy of stewardship by equipping community members, visitors and future generations to understand and enjoy the county’s natural beauty. For more information, visit [lakes.grace.edu](http://www.lakes.grace.edu).