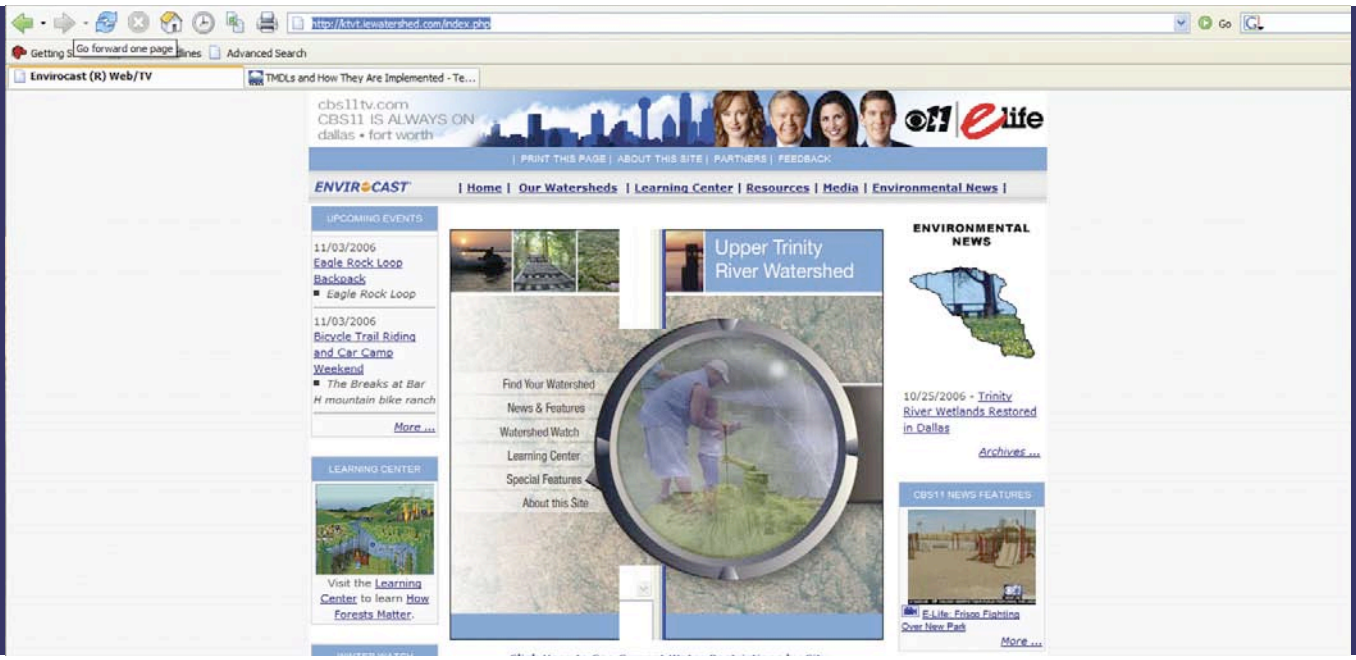
Story by Kathy Wythe



A new environmental education program, "e-Life," that combines an interactive Web site and television news spots, premiered last fall as the latest tool to help North Texans learn more about their environmental quality of life.

"Whether by mouse or remote control, North Texans can click their way to a whole new world of environmental information," Richard E. Greene, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region 6 administrator, said at the kick-off event.

"The e-Life project is intended to increase awareness about local environmental issues and individual, voluntary measures that the public can take to protect our North Central Texas watershed resources," said Project Coordinator Leslie Rauscher of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG).

e-Life is co-sponsored by EPA, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB), NCTCOG and KTVT-TV CBS 11.

The environmental program focuses on the nine watersheds in the Upper Trinity River Basin with its network of lakes, creeks and rivers that supply North Texas with fresh water.

Through on-air news stories and public service announcements, KTVT-TV and its team of meteorologists and reporters broadcast useful information to viewers on how they can help conserve water and prevent or minimize nonpoint source (NPS) pollution. Through an Environmental Education Events calendar, citizens also learn how they can get involved in local watershed protection and NPS pollution prevention efforts in their communities.

"We are so excited about this opportunity to help our viewers better understand where their water comes from and the risks of taking it for granted," said KTVT-TV Chief Meteorologist Kristine Kahanek. "I hope this awareness leads to a community ready to do whatever it takes to protect our watersheds."

The comprehensive Web site, **http://ktvt.iewateshed.com**, is an educational tool to help individuals learn how they can help prevent water pollution at home and in the community, Rauscher said.

Interactive watershed tools provide information about drinking water quality, wetlands, floods and droughts, agriculture, land use, forestry, soil erosion, urbanization and other watershed topics. Animated movies compiled from satellite and radar technology replicate moving "flyovers" of specific watersheds.

Environmental education goes multimedia

"Through sponsorship of e-Life, TSSWCB hopes to bridge the rural-urban interface to educate and involve the public in improving and maintaining the quality of water resources for current and future generations of Texans," said Aubrey Russell, chairman of TSSWCB.

Rauscher said the project uses stakeholders to provide expertise in a variety of topic areas, including NPS prevention and abatement, stormwater management, water conservation, solid-waste management, air quality, flooding, soil erosion and applied environmental science. Eligible participants include local governments, federal and state agencies, soil and water conservation districts, water districts, universities, environmental associations and environmental non-profit groups that operate in the Upper Trinity River project watersheds. Interested stakeholders can contact Rauscher or visit **http://www.nctcog.org/envir/SEEclean/stormwter/programareas/public_education/Envirocast/index.asp**.

To make this project successful, Rauscher said the project needs local information about the Upper Trinity River watersheds such as:

- Upcoming local, educational events the public can attend
- Ideas for environmental news stories
- Links to local Web sites that contain useful information about the project watersheds
- Digital copies of helpful brochures and other educational materials that can be posted to the Web site
- Photos of the project watersheds for the photo gallery

The project is modeled after a successful collaborative effort anchored by EPA and supported by StormCenter Communications for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. These innovative projects are now active in nine metropolitan areas across the nation.

(This story was compiled from EPA and CBS 11 news releases and the project's Web site.)