

**Tool: Collaboration on Public Education Programs**

Development of common public education materials and programs with the long-term goal of informing the public on stormwater issues and convincing them to change their behaviors accordingly. In addition, the program would be designed such that all public education requirements of the NPDES Phase II stormwater permit would be met or exceeded.

**What is a potential Task Force recommendation for implementation of this tool at the conclusion of this process?**

Numerous studies show that simply providing information, as is typical for many local governments in Wake County, rarely results in the desired behavior change. A concept known as “community-based social marketing” provides a framework to understanding how to promote behaviors that are environmentally sustainable. This concept includes five important steps that should be followed to set the direction of the collaborative program:

1. **Assessment** – Effective education and communication places a priority on first listening to people about their perspectives, habits and needs. In response, the Task Force recommended the development and implementation of a County-wide Stormwater Survey. An initial survey (preferably by phone) would be conducted to gauge existing public behaviors, understanding, and awareness of stormwater issues. The survey would also include an evaluation of desired services.
2. **Plan and Design the Program** - The information gathered during the assessment phase would then be used to make decisions during the planning and design of public education strategies, materials, and messages. It was recommended that these public education programs and strategies be coordinated with the Clean Water Education Partnership (CWEP), North Carolina Cooperative Extension and other local agencies where appropriate. Responsibilities for developing some of the materials could be delegated to individual municipalities to “spread the burden” and then shared among the participants. In addition, the overall program designed to distribute the information should identify a theme or catch phrase that can be used to publicize the program throughout the County.

While citizen survey data is not available at this time, the Task Force members were provided the opportunity to vote on a variety of stormwater issues and programs that they deemed a priority based on their own day-to-day experiences. The following sections summarize these voting results and can be used to set early priority targets for the program:

**Public Education Tools for Municipal Audiences** - Three education efforts were identified by the Task Force as priority activities for public education for municipal audiences and are listed below. These activities would be targeted for the Streets Dept., Facilities/Vehicle Maintenance Dept., Building Inspections and Public Utilities. Mandatory workshops and staff-level communication would be the desired delivery

methods. Workshops would be held twice per year.

1. Inter-department cross-training to identify, report, and address stormwater management concerns
2. Training for the inspection, installation, and maintenance of sediment and erosion control devices
3. Training for hazardous and non-hazardous materials management

**Public Education Tools for Residential Audiences** - Three education efforts were identified by the Task Force as priority activities for public education for residential audiences and are listed below. These activities would be targeted for adults, homeowners & associations and high-school aged children. Desired delivery methods will include TV/radio spots, presentations to home owners associations, website postings, and school curriculum materials. Messages would be distributed twice per year.

1. Self-performed lawn care management education – fertilizer application, yard waste disposal, etc.
2. Drainage system signage and stenciling to increase awareness
3. Methods and benefits of reducing the volume of runoff from property

**Public Education Tools for Non-Residential Audiences** - Three education efforts were identified by the Task Force as priority activities for public education for non-residential audiences. These activities would be targeted for contractors, employees, developers and property owners. Desired delivery methods will include a certification process, mandatory training, and trade group materials. Messages would be distributed twice per year.

1. Mandatory certifications for sediment and erosion control installers
2. Lawn care management practices for commercial landscape management companies
3. Strategies to reduce or control runoff volume from impervious surfaces

3. ***Pre-test and Revise*** - It is often difficult to undo the impression made by a misguided campaign. Therefore, upon completion of the education plan, strategies, materials and messages should be pre-tested with a small focus group to ensure that the program meets the public's needs. Feedback from the focus group should be used to revise the plan before implementation.
4. ***Implementation*** - Once the materials and messages have been revised based on suggestions from the focus group, the program may be implemented.

5. **Monitor and Evaluate** - Monitoring and evaluation provide vital information to design, refine, and fine-tune strategies, messages, and materials. Therefore, success indicator should be developed based on the initial survey and the desired outcome of the program. To monitor success, additional surveys would be performed every 2-3 years to assess the effectiveness of current programs and changes in public perception/behaviors.

**What problems identified by the Task Force (Objectives) does this tool address?**

Public education programs can be tailored toward multiple audiences, including municipal, residential and non-residential groups. As such, the public education tools can be used to address a wide variety of topics which include structural flooding, nuisance flooding, water quality and sedimentation. As developed within this recommendation, this tool addresses 10 of the 14 Task Force objective statements.

**What is the minimum regulatory requirement, if any, for this tool?**

Per the NPDES Phase II rules, the minimum regulatory requirement for the majority of jurisdictions in the County is the establishment of an education program, an informational website, and materials targeted at various audiences. For public involvement, each jurisdiction must hold a public meeting to review their stormwater plan, establish a volunteer community involvement program, and set-up a citizen's group for stormwater.

**How is this tool currently applied within Wake County?**

At varying degrees, each jurisdiction in Wake County provides education to the public on stormwater management. Most jurisdictions also participate in the Clean Water Education Partnership (CWEP), which is an organization aimed at providing mass media, brochures and a website to local partners.

**Is there an opportunity for collaboration on the implementation of this tool?**

At present, 11 of the 13 jurisdictions in Wake County are required by permit to implement a public education campaign. Currently, these jurisdictions have already developed a level of collaboration through participation in the Clean Water Education Partnership (CWEP). It should be noted, however, that the CWEP program alone does not provide full compliance with the minimum measures of NPDES Phase II. However, these relationships can be expanded to include the services described above.

**What is the expected outcome of this potential recommendation?**

A collaborative effort to provide common stormwater public education materials to residents living in Wake County which strives to change negative behaviors and also complies with regulatory requirements.