

CHAPTER 10 PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Introduction

The Utilities Department has developed numerous programs to educate citizens, protect local natural resources, and meet federal requirements. Bellevue citizens have been working with the City to protect water quality and aquatic habitat since the 1970s.

Program elements have evolved over time based on current needs and best available science, but the goals and objectives of education and outreach programs have generally remained the same. Surveys, focus groups, regional recommendations, and state and federal mandates help determine which programs are needed and are adapted over time based on requirements and evaluations.

State and federal regulations include requirements for stormwater outreach. Those requirements are implemented in Bellevue as follows:

- **City's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and State Waste Discharge General Permit for Discharges from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewers in Western Washington (the NPDES Permit), issued in January 2007.** The City provides public education and outreach aimed at a variety of customer classes, including residents, businesses, industries, elected officials, policy makers, planning staff, and other employees. The goal is to reduce or eliminate behaviors and practices that cause or contribute to adverse stormwater impacts; to that end, programs are designed to achieve measurable improvements in the targeted audience's understanding of the problem and what they can do to solve it.
- **Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 90.48 (State's Water Pollution Control Law).** The City works to maintain the highest possible standards to ensure the purity of all waters of the state consistent with public health and public enjoyment, including the protection of wildlife, birds, game, fish, and other aquatic life. The goal is to educate the general public that it is unlawful to throw, drain, pour, or otherwise discharge pollutants into any of the waters of this state, or to cause, permit, or suffer to be thrown, poured, drained, allowed to seep or otherwise discharged into the state's waters any organic or inorganic matter that causes or tends to cause pollution of such waters.
- **Federal Water Pollution Control Act (the Federal Clean Water Act); Title 33 United States Code, Section 1251 et seq.** The City's goal is to educate the general public and raise awareness to eliminate the discharge of pollutants of any kind into the nation's waters and to improve water quality in order to provide protection of fish, shellfish, and wildlife, and for recreation in and on the water.
- **Local Hazardous Waste Management Program Grant.** Every year the City enters a contract with the Seattle-King County Department of Public Health where they return funds collected from Bellevue solid waste customers to the City to be used for hazardous waste prevention outreach, education, and technical assistance. While the specifics of each annual grant contract vary somewhat, the City provides targeted programs similar to the following
 - **Pollution Prevention Outreach and Technical Assistance.** A variety of outreach and technical assistance methods are used to encourage Bellevue area residents and businesses to seek appropriate alternatives to, and/or proper handling and disposal of, hazardous waste, including the purchase and placement of storm drain markers to encourage residents to protect lakes, streams, and wetlands from pollutants.

- Used Motor Oil and Household Hazardous Waste Research, Outreach, and Technical Assistance. Used motor oil generated in the City is tracked, and do-it-yourself motor oil changers are educated about options for recycling used motor oil and reasons not to dump it down neighborhood storm drains. This project also includes determining the recycling and proper disposal options available to local residents for household hazardous waste, as well as educating residents and working to expand these options, so that household hazardous waste do not end up in the surface or waste water system.
- **Public Outreach Actions.** The Cedar/Sammamish/Lake Washington Watershed (Water Resource Inventory Area [WRIA] 8) team recommends public outreach actions including increasing public involvement in stewardship activities, providing information to streamside landowners, and raising awareness about pollution prevention. The City adopted the Cedar/Sammamish/Lake Washington Watershed (WRIA 8) Salmon Recovery Plan in 2005 as a response to the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Goals and Objectives

There has not been a formal process for identifying the Utilities Department goals and objectives for public education and outreach. The following goals and objectives were developed to address regional and local issues, including NPDES and other requirements.

Goals

- Teach every citizen that runoff in storm drains flows directly into local water bodies;
- Help citizens understand that stormwater is not treated before being released into open water, like wastewater is;
- Educate every citizen on choices and tools that can be used to prevent stormwater pollution; and
- Increase community involvement in activities that help protect habitat and water quality.

Objectives

- See “Stream Team” and “Pollution Prevention” Performance Measures for specific objectives that are being measured regarding the goals stated above;
- Comply with state and federal requirements;
- Work in partnership with regional groups to foster consistent messages and leverage time and funding; and
- Engage residents in habitat restoration, monitoring, and stewardship through volunteer and educational programs.

Current Programs

Current programs include a variety of forums and topics, from general messages about storm drains and the stormwater system, to more in-depth programs where citizens attend classes or participate in field projects to learn about topics such as natural yard care practices and local salmon.

Education and outreach on stormwater issues is vital to protecting and improving water quality. Everyone has a role and responsibility for keeping stormwater clean. Bellevue’s programs reach a variety of audiences including single-family, multi-family, businesses, and schools. Outreach topics focus on the behaviors that citizens can adopt to protect water quality and prevent pollution. Key behaviors and messages include:

- Nothing but rain down the storm drain;
- Pet waste—scoop the poop, bag it, and place it in the trash;
- Car washing—use a commercial car wash or waterless car wash product;
- Natural yard care—use fewer lawn and garden chemicals; and
- Proper storage and disposal of hazardous materials.

Table 10-1 provides examples of current Utilities Department programs to achieve stormwater outreach goals and objectives.

Table 10-1. Current Utilities Department programs to achieve the City’s stormwater goals

Program	Audience	Description
Stream Team	Schools, volunteers, streamside property owners, general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restoration projects and educational programs and workshops, which include volunteer programs, such as Salmon Watchers, Peamouth Patrol, Arbor/Earth Day habitat restoration, and macroinvertebrate collections. • Targeted outreach to streamside property owners and residents within specific watersheds. • Presentations to school groups in the classroom, at science fairs and at community events. • Presentations to community groups such as Rotary and Bellevue Downtown Association. • General outreach activities, such as the Stream Team newsletter, brochures, displays, and signage.
Storm Drain Marker Program	General public	Storm drain markers are brightly colored plates with the message “nothing but rain down the storm drain” to prevent people from discharging pollutants into storm drains. Interns and volunteers have marked all public storm drains and are now filling in missing markers and reaching out to private property owners and managers to mark storm drains on their property.
Natural Yard Care Programs	Single-family residences	Includes workshops and provides educational resources to teach residents about natural yard care practices such as natural pest, weed, and disease control, which reduces the amount of toxics used in landscape management.
Fundraising Car Wash Program	Businesses where car washes are held, groups that commonly hold fundraising car washes	Educates businesses where car washes are commonly held, along with schools and groups that hold car washes, on alternative options to raise money and prevent pollution. Informs groups about the opportunity to sell car wash coupons from local vendors. Provides car wash kits to groups holding fundraising car washes. The kits collect and redirect the wastewater from the car wash to a drain connected to the sanitary sewer system or a location where the wastewater will soak into the ground and not flow into the local storm drains.
Used Motor Oil Recycling Program	Do-it-yourself oil changers	Promotes the proper management and recycling of used motor oil and used oil filters by residents who change their own motor oil, and educates residents on reasons not to dump motor oil down the neighborhood storm drains.
School Programs	4th grade biology and AP environmental science classes	Provides a pollution prevention workshop entitled “Be the Solution” that is integrated into all high school-level biology classes, and works with high school environmental science teachers to integrate pollution prevention messaging and information into their courses. Classes on salmon, pollution prevention, and macroinvertebrates offered to Advanced Placement environmental science. Salmon cycles class available to all 4th grade classes, which includes pollution prevention messages.

Table 10-1. Current Utilities Department programs to achieve the City’s stormwater goals

Program	Audience	Description
Commercial Source Control Technical Assistance	Local businesses	Provides educational materials and on-site technical assistance to commercial and industrial customers on best management practices (BMPs) to keep pollutants from the storm drainage system.
Posters, Displays, Outreach Materials, such as Brochures, Theater Ads, and Newspaper Ads	General public	Promotes BMPs for vehicle washing; cleaning up spills; properly disposing of wastewater; natural pest, weed, and disease control; and other current pollution prevention measures.
News Stories	General public	Developed for inclusion in the City’s newsletter “It’s Your City” and the Bellevue Reporter to help readers identify the issues and what they can do to help prevent pollution.
Interpretive Signs	General public	Provide stormwater outreach at various City facility and community park sites.
Public Service Announcements	General public	Produced for use on the City’s website, BTV Channel 21, and used on the internet to help viewers visibly understand the issues involved with pollution of City waterways and the ways they can prevent pollution.
STORM (Stormwater Outreach for Regional Municipalities)	General public	Multi-jurisdictional stormwater public education campaign that the City actively participates in to support regional messages, leverage time and money, and meet NPDES requirements. The website pugetsoundstartshere.org is the major effort of STORM.
SOGgies (Stormwater Outreach Group)	General public	Small multi-jurisdictional stormwater outreach group comprising east and north King County cities that collaborate on projects such as surveys, focus groups, and bus ads in order to leverage time, funding, and reach of messages.
Floodplain Outreach	Residents and businesses within floodplains	Outreach including website, city newspaper, and targeted mailings provided to meet Community Rating System (CRS) protocols to make residents in floodplains eligible for insurance discounts.
Private Drainage Inspection	Businesses with private storm drain systems	Outreach is one-on-one with businesses when assistance is requested or concerns are observed on site by staff. Education is always the first step to helping solve pollution concerns. Businesses receive follow-up letters and appropriate brochures.
Private Drainage Assistance	Property owners with drainage concerns	Outreach is one-on-one with private property owners when assistance is requested. “Drainage Around Your Home” brochure is commonly provided.

Recommendations

Outreach efforts should evolve over time to meet needs, mandates, and most current issues that need to be communicated based on science, program evaluations, and research. The program must be tailored to available staff time and budget. Recommended efforts for the future include the following measures:

- Develop a current “Stormwater Outreach Guide” that explains key messages, identifies sources of facts, summarizes research, and details the programs, audiences, and level of effort.
- Identify outreach opportunities and local demonstration sites for natural drainage practices that encourage stormwater retrofit and the implementation of low impact development (LID) techniques.
- Continue ongoing survey and evaluation efforts to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of outreach efforts.
- Research barriers, motivations, and incentives for streamside landowners to be better stewards of their properties to create effective targeted outreach material.
- Develop regional outreach to mobile businesses such as landscapers, carpet cleaners, and other contractors who work throughout the region.
- Continue to educate customers about the difference between public and private drainage systems, legal aspects, and private property owners’ responsibilities.
- Educate stakeholders about viewing stormwater as a resource and a potential way to address societal issues, like climate change.
- Continue monitoring public attitudes and knowledge about stormwater and stormwater management. Target messages to address shortcomings and meet goals through surveys and other techniques.