



# Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners

## 2016 Summary

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY STREAMS AND RIVERS

**Polluted stormwater runoff is the number one cause of poor water quality in streams and rivers in Northern Virginia.** When it rains, the water runs off streets, yards and parking lots and picks up pesticides, grass clippings, fertilizer, bacteria, and oil from driveways and parking lots. All of this pollution enters the storm drains on the street and is discharged directly to a stream. The runoff is not filtered or sent to a wastewater treatment facility.

To reduce the impacts of stormwater pollution, the Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners came together to change human behaviors through a public education campaign.

### About the Partnership

The Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners is comprised of a group of local governments, drinking water

and sanitation authorities, and businesses working together to inform individuals about the pollution potential of common activities, so that individuals can take direct action to reduce pollution.

To meet this goal, the Partners work together to:

- Identify high priority water quality issues for the region;
- Identify the target audience(s) for outreach;
- Educate the region's residents on simple ways to reduce pollution around their homes;
- Monitor changes in behavior through surveys and other data collection techniques; and
- Pilot new cost-effective opportunities for public outreach and education.

Membership is voluntary and each member pays annual dues to fund

the program. By working together the partners are able to leverage their funds to develop and place bilingual educational products with common messages and themes, thereby extending the campaign's reach.

***Only Rain Down the Storm Drain*** is the motto of the partnership.

The 2016 campaign satisfied MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) Phase I and Phase II permit requirements for stormwater education and documenting changes in behavior.

For more information visit [www.onlyrain.org](http://www.onlyrain.org)



## 2016 Campaign Overview and Accomplishments

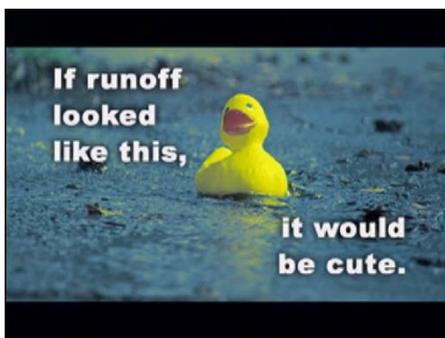
In 2016, the Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners selected the following three high priority water quality issues to focus on for the Campaign:

- bacteria,
- nutrients, and
- illicit discharge of chemical contaminants.

The Partners identified the target audiences for these issues as pet owners, homeowners with a lawn or garden, and home mechanics.

The Campaign used television, print, internet advertising and the Only Rain Down the Storm Drain website to distribute messages linked to specific stormwater problems, such as proper pet waste disposal, over fertilization of lawns and gardens and proper disposal of motor oil.

In addition to the multi-channel media campaign, partners participated in local events to raise awareness and encourage positive behavior change in residents. The television and internet ads featured the well known national symbol of non-point source pollution; the rubber ducky.



<b>16,750,236</b>	Total household television impressions*
<b>1,381,317</b>	Total digital impressions (internet banner ads and in-stream video ads)
<b>41,434</b>	Number of times the ads aired on July 2015- June 2016
<b>37,489</b>	Visits to the <a href="http://www.onlyrain.org">www.onlyrain.org</a> website
<b>500</b>	Online Annual Survey Responses
<b>75%</b>	Percent of target audience reached

*\*Impressions are the number of times an ad appeared on a single television or computer screen.*

Throughout the campaign year, the Partners made the following efforts to educate the public and promote awareness of stormwater pollution:

- From July 2015 through June 2016, aired four Public Service Announcements on 32 English language cable TV channels, and four Spanish speaking channels a total of 41,434 times. The ads featured messages on the importance of picking up pet waste and general household stormwater pollution reduction measures aired
- The campaign also featured banner ads on Xfinity.com and Cox.com websites that promote the same messages as the cable TV ads.

- Featured two full day, full page ads for Only Rain on the sign-in pages for Xfinity.com.



- Conducted an online survey of 500 Northern Virginia residents to determine the effectiveness of the ads, aid in directing the future efforts of the campaign, and to reveal any changes in behavior.
- Continued to update and maintain the Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners website.

# Annual Survey Highlights

Findings in the 2016 survey include:

- 16% of respondents recalled seeing the ad after watching the video.
- Of those who recalled the ads, 18 percent state they now pick up their pet waste more often, eight percent state that they now properly dispose of motor oil, and 14 percent state they plan to fertilize fewer times per year.
- When shown the Only Rain Down the Storm Drain logo, 61 percent of the respondents recognized it compared to 54 percent in 2013. This increase is statistically significant and indicates that awareness of the logo has increased over time.
- The two channels that were most strongly associated with recall of the ad were Cartoon Network and Animal Planet. In fact, the highest numbers of impressions (2.8 million) were delivered on Cartoon Network.
- In a new question for 2016 to understand the barriers to taking action, 40 percent of the respondents felt they were most prevented from taking action to protect clean water because they didn't know what to do.
- In another new question added in 2016, approximately one-third (34%) indicated that email newsletters with reminders and quick tips and/or online resources would help them take action to protect clean water.
- Interestingly, the number of respondents who prefer to receive information from online sources has decreased from a high of 57 percent in 2012 to 40 percent in 2016. Television (19%), newspaper and community newsletters were equally preferred information sources. This suggests that a future outreach effort might include reaching homeowners through their Community Associations.

## Understanding Behaviors

In addition to capturing responses to questions regarding the effectiveness of the campaign, this year's survey honed in on the current behaviors and attitudes of Northern Virginia residents as they relate to pet waste management, lawn care, and motor oil disposal. Responses to these questions support the development of future messages and targeted promotion.



### Main cause of water pollution...

Survey respondents ranked fertilizers and pesticides as the #1 cause of water pollution.



### Where stormwater goes...

79 percent of residents surveyed stated that stormwater goes to the Potomac River, the Chesapeake Bay, or to local streams.

**90%** stated the actions of individuals are important in protecting water quality in local streams, the Potomac River, and the Chesapeake Bay.

**70%** would be more likely to take actions to reduce the amounts of pollutants they personally put into storm drains, after learning that polluted water runoff is the number one cause of local water pollution.

**95%** believe it is important for local governments to spend more money on protecting water quality.

The most important reason dog owners are motivated to pick up their pet's waste is because "It's what good neighbors do". The number of respondents choosing "It causes water pollution" as the most important reason to pick it up has fluctuated but remains the third most common reason.

Consistent with the past five years, almost a third of lawn and garden owners fertilize their lawns two or more times per year. An equal number never fertilize their lawns. Among those who fertilize once a year, 18 percent fertilize in the spring and only seven percent fertilize in the fall. This suggests that there is room to educate residents of Northern Virginia that fertilizing in the fall is better for local waterways.

About half of the respondents reported using an herbicide to treat weeds in their lawn or garden.

Among those who fertilize their lawn, 70 percent have never had or were not sure if their soil had been tested for fertility or pH and fifty nine percent reported using a slow release fertilizer.

Consistent with the past five years, the majority of respondents take their vehicle to a service station for oil changes (79%) or take used oil to a gas station or hazmat facility for recycling (13%). Three percent of Northern Virginians reported storing used motor oil in their garage, placing it in the trash or dumping it down the storm drain.



**Only Rain  
Down the  
Drain**

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### 2016 Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners

- Fairfax County | Arlington County | Loudoun County | Stafford County | Fairfax Water |  
City of Alexandria | Loudoun Water | City of Fairfax |
- Town of Herndon | City of Falls Church | Town of Leesburg | Town of Vienna |
- Town of Dumfries | Doody Calls | Northern Virginia Regional Commission | George Mason University | Virginia  
Coastal Zone Management Program | Northern Virginia Community College | Fairfax County Public Schools |  
Prince William County Public Schools | Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District

