



Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners

2018 Summary

WORKING TOGETHER FOR HEALTHY STREAMS AND RIVERS

WWW.ONLYRAIN.ORG

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, driveways, yards and parking lots and picks up pesticides, grass clippings, fertilizer, bacteria, and oil. 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 peoples' behavior through a public education campaign.

About the Partnership

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

and sanitation authorities, and businesses that share the common goals to keep Northern Virginia residents healthy and safe by reducing the amount of pollution from stormwater runoff that reaches local creeks and rivers, and empower individuals to take action to reduce pollution.

To meet these goals, 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 makes an annual contribution 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 2018 campaign helped to satisfy 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



2018 Campaign Overview and Accomplishments

In 2018, 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 and do-it-yourselfers.

The campaign used television, print, internet advertising and the [Only Rain Down the Storm Drain](http://www.onlyrain.org) website to distribute messages linked to specific stormwater issues, such as improper pet waste disposal, over fertilization of lawns and gardens, and improper 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. Television and internet ads featured the well-known national symbol of non-point source pollution; the rubber ducky.



5,299,360	Total household television impressions*
966,169	Total digital impressions (internet banner ads and in-stream video ads)
17,922	Number of times the ads aired from July 2017- June 2018
18,848	Visits to the www.onlyrain.org website
500	Online Annual Survey Responses
>75%	Percent of target audience reached
1	New Outreach Strategy Piloted

**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 2017 through June 2018, aired four Public Service Announcements on 31 English language cable TV networks, and five Spanish speaking networks a total of 17,922 times. The ads featured messages on the importance of picking up pet waste and general household stormwater pollution reduction measures.
- Placed digital ads on Premium Digital Video 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.



- In 2018, the Partners piloted a creative new strategy aimed at raising awareness about stormwater pollution called **"Write as Rain"**. The effort used stencils and an eco-friendly rain resistant spray (called RainWorks) to blanket the region's sidewalks, streetscapes and

thoroughfares with fun and educational motivational messages about stormwater that appear when the surfaces are wet. The goal of the effort was to raise public awareness about the environmental impacts of storm water pollution.



- 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.



Findings in the 2018 survey include:

- 15% of respondents recalled seeing the ad on TV after watching the video clip in the survey.
- Of those who recalled seeing the ads, 49 percent state they already take action to protect clean water, 24 percent state they now pick up their pet waste more often, 12 percent state that they now properly dispose of motor oil, and 23 percent state they plan to fertilize fewer times per year.
- When shown the Only Rain Down the Storm Drain logo, 59 percent of the respondents recognized it compared to 54 percent in 2013. This increase indicates that awareness of the logo has increased over time.
- More than half of respondents feel at least somewhat confident that they would know where to report potential water pollution but, only 42 percent would report water pollution if they saw it. This suggests there is a need to encourage residents to speak up and report if they see something.
- One in five respondents stated they don't know they need to take action around their home to protect clean water.
- About four in ten respondents felt they were

most prevented to take action to protect clean water because they don't know what to do.

- The majority of respondents (64%) indicated that email newsletters with reminders and quick tips and/or online resources would help them take action to protect clean water.

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.

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 was the second most common reason in 2018.

78% of lawn and garden owners fertilize their lawns at least once per year. Among those who fertilize once a year, 18 percent fertilize in the spring and only five 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, 75 percent have never had or were not sure if their soil had been tested for fertility or pH and fifty five percent reported using a slow release fertilizer.

In a new question for 2018, after reading a description of a rain barrel, rain garden, and conservation landscaping, respondents were asked if they had implemented these features at their home or had heard about them. Seven percent reported having a rain barrel, while four percent reported having a rain garden, and 11 percent reported having conservation landscapes in their yard.

Consistent with the past seven years, the majority of respondents take their vehicle to a service station for oil changes (82%) or take used oil to a gas station or hazmat facility for recycling (11%). 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

www.onlyrain.org

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2018 Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners

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Town of Dumfries | Doody Calls | Northern Virginia Regional Commission | George Mason University | Virginia
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Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District



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