

# Effectiveness of Public Education and Outreach for Reducing Impacts of Stormwater on Rivers and Streams

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# Questions from the Stormwater Work Group

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3. Does public education decrease pollutants in stormwater?
9. Does public education increase awareness and change behavior?
16. *Does public education of lake property owners reduce summer algae blooms?*
17. *Does drain stenciling increase awareness about untreated stormwater?*

## 9. Does public education increase awareness and change behavior?

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Yes. Dramatic changes in awareness and behavior documented in Puget Sound.

Puget Sound residents very aware of issues and ready to do more.

Best to focus on specific behavior changes and on barriers.

Documented behavior changes

Fertilizer use: 84% → 11%, King Co

Pesticide use: 74% → 16%, Kitsap Co

Pet waste disposal – mixed results

Small businesses do better with simple messages about desired behavior; awareness less important. “Give us stickers”

### 3. Does public education decrease pollutants in stormwater?

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Difficult to connect change in human behavior with reduction in pollutants or increase in salmon or B-IBI. Need 1) objective measures of behavior change, and 2) evaluation of impact on receiving waters.

Nutrients reduced? A few studies in other areas detected decline in fertilizer

Pesticides reduced? Puget Sound study found a decline of some pesticides in an urban creek; but not linked to a specific education campaign

Spill hotline used? Education increased reporting in Kitsap Co.

Fundraiser car washing? Attitudes changing, fewer wash on street, unknown if fewer car washes, or if stormwater improved

# Recommendations

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1. Recognize the enormous potential of public education: this is source control
2. Partner with existing education campaigns to assess effectiveness, e.g., STORM car leaks campaign. What methods work best? What are objective measures of behavior change?
3. Consider expanding public ed. beyond pet waste, lawn care, and automobile leaks, what are other priority problems for stormwater?