

# Outline of Stormwater Education Messages

## STATEWIDE MEDIA OUTREACH MESSAGE

Stormwater runoff is polluted.

Supporting messages:

- When it rains, water landing on driveways, roofs, roads and other surfaces picks up pollutants and carries it directly to wetlands, streams, ponds and the Bay without treatment.
- Water entering stormdrains is not treated – it all goes directly to nearby wetlands, streams, ponds and eventually the Bay without treatment.
- Stormwater pollution is responsible for beach/shellfish closures and threatens drinking water supplies.
- Rainwater seeping into the ground is naturally filtered and recycled to groundwater to replenish drinking water supplies and keep streams flowing between storms.

## SPECIFIC MESSAGES - GENERAL PUBLIC

### Stormdrain Marking

- Stormdrains carry water away without any treatment – any stormwater, fertilizer, leaves and trash entering a stormdrain flows directly to nearby wetlands, streams, ponds and eventually coastal waters without treatment.
- Never dump anything down stormdrains.
- Keep fertilizer, lawn clippings and leaves, pet waste and soapy water and pet waste from getting into stormdrains. Also keep these contaminants away from driveways, sidewalks and drainage ways where it can flow into stormdrains.
- Check to make sure you don't have any connections to a stormdrain that might carry wastewater or polluted stormwater. (some towns might prohibit connections to stormdrains from sump pumps, foundation drains, etc. even though permitted under RIPDES)

### Used Oil and Household Hazardous Waste

- Don't dump used oil.
- Bring used oil to your municipal recycling center or the Eco-Depot.
- Bring household hazardous waste to the Eco-Depot. Call the RI Resource Recovery Corporation at 401-942-1430 x231 to schedule a drop-off appointment or find out when there will be a hazardous waste pick up in your area.

### Pet Waste

Pick up your pet's waste:

- Carry a bag with you,
- Put the waste in a bag and seal it,
- Throw it away in the trash, not stormdrain.

Supporting Reasons: Pet waste pollutes, it's the law, it's common courtesy.

## **OTHERS TOPICS**

Consistent messages and education strategies to be developed on the following topics:

### **Lawn and Landscape Care**

1. If you apply fertilizer in the spring, do so after the grass is actively growing. (Or, Don't fertilize in the spring until you have mowed the lawn three times.)
2. Keep fertilizer, pesticides, irrigation, and grass clippings off hard surfaces (including frozen ground). Sweep product back onto the lawn to prevent it from entering storm sewers.
3. Mow at the highest setting on your lawn mower (to conserve water and to mitigate weeds);
4. Leave your grass clippings on the lawn to improve its health and quality.
5. Water wisely. (Many species of turf grass go naturally dormant during hot, dry summer months and do not need to be watered when dormant. If you must water, water less often for longer lengths of time and put no more than 1 inch of water on the lawn/week.)
6. Treat all lawn products with equal care – whether organic or inorganic – follow the manufacturer's directions for application rate and timing.
7. Hand pull or pick weeds and insects. If you must treat a weed or insect pest, spot treat versus applying pesticide to the entire lawn.
8. If you use a lawn care company, ask about their environmental program and certifications (CRMC certification program in development – could be expanded to other areas).

Note: Basic lawn and landscape care education strategies will be developed to link with existing URI outreach: URI Healthy Landscapes, Greenshare, Winterschool, Plant Pro, Master gardeners, public programs and telephone hotline. More elaborate education strategy will be needed to encourage public and municipal use of certified landscape care providers.

### **Yard Waste**

- *Keep soil, leaves or grass off your driveway, sidewalk and street, don't let it wash into the street or stormdrain.*
- *Sweep pavement clean, do not hose off*
- *Don't stockpile leaves, grass clippings and brush in wetlands or surface waters.*
- *Compost yard waste and use as mulch.*

### **Outdoor water use and conservation**

**Managing wetlands and shoreline buffers on your property** (focus on homeowner do's and don'ts for home buyers and property transfers where property is subject to state or local wetland buffers.)

**Discouraging waterfowl?** (Link to DEM brochure with outreach focused on local problem areas)

### **Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems**

Basic info on keeping system maintained, checking for improper connections to stormdrains. Link to existing URI Cooperative Extension information.

### **Auto / Boat Care**

#### **Car washing at home**

- Use a commercial wash
- If you must do your own, wash car on grass so water soaks in.
- Keep soapy water from entering street and stormdrains.

Is there a need to address fund raising car washes?

Is there a need to address boat maintenance at home or marina?

## **SPECIFIC MESSAGES – BUSINESS POLLUTION PREVENTION & ILLICIT DISCHARGE CONTROL**

### **General**

- Complying with (new or proposed) municipal pollution prevention ordinances is simple, it's the law, and necessary to protect our local water resources.
- Businesses can make small, low-cost changes around their property to reduce stormwater pollution that help make big improvements to local water resources.

### **Top 12 Actions - Dealing with the dirty dozen**

1. **Eliminate connections to storm sewers.** Make sure that wastewater, spills or soapy water can't flow into a storm sewer by any drain or stormwater flow. Check with your city/ town to determine if clean water discharges to a storm sewer are allowed.
2. **Store hazardous materials properly, inside or under cover.**
3. **Make a current spill response plan and clean up kit accessible.**
4. **Train employees on spill response and good housekeeping practices.** Repeat training regularly.
5. **Use "dry" methods for clean up and spills.** Keep a broom, mop and kitty litter or other absorbent materials handy. Do not use water to rinse off a spill.
6. **Use a mop sink for cleaning floor mats and equipment.** Pour wash water in the sink, not outside.
7. **Ensure dumpsters remain covered and leak-proof.** Locate dumpsters away from storm drains.
8. **Wash vehicles at a commercial car wash.** If you must wash vehicles or equipment outdoors, use water only, or wash on grassy areas and divert soapy water from stormdrains.
9. **Keep parking lot and service areas clean.** Provide trash bins and empty them regularly. Divert water from loading docks.
10. **Keep wetlands and shoreline areas clean and in natural condition.** Keep these areas free of trash, yard waste, and debris that can pollute or obstruct water flow. If possible, allow vegetation to grow into a natural buffer instead of mowing to wetland edges.
11. **Water wisely and limit fertilizer use.** Keep water and fertilizer on the grass, not pavement. Consider replacing some lawn area with low-care plantings.
12. **Design your site to infiltrate, filter or detain runoff.** Divert roof leaders, foundation drains, air conditioning condensate and other clean water to grassy areas, away from pavement and stormdrains.

### **Supporting:**

- Help keep our local waterways and the Bay clean for fishing and swimming by complying with these basic steps. The first 10 actions above are required by law; actions 11-12 are voluntary low-cost changes that can make a big difference in stormwater pollution reaching local waters.
- Make sure you are covered. Certain industrial activities require a RIPDES stormwater permit for "Stormwater discharge associated with industrial activity multi-sector general permit". Check applicability to your industry at [www.dem.ri.gov](http://www.dem.ri.gov).
- If your business is located in northern Rhode Island, schedule a free visit with the Blackstone River Coalition to learn how you can benefit from the "In Business for the Blackstone" program at [www.zaptheblackstone.org/whatwedoing/In\\_Business\\_Program/In\\_Business.shtml](http://www.zaptheblackstone.org/whatwedoing/In_Business_Program/In_Business.shtml).

## **SPECIFIC MESSAGES – MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS**

### **Some basic themes to build public / local officials' support for implementation of Phase II minimum measures.**

- Stormwater pollution is the State's #1 pollution problem. (The state outreach message)
- Stormwater pollution is affecting the Bay and is responsible for a growing number of beach closures and shellfishing bans; it causes flooding, with costly damage to roads and private property; it threatens high-quality drinking water supplies and reduces groundwater recharge vital to groundwater supplies, streams and reservoirs.
- In cities, combined sewer overflows and /or extensive impervious cover contribute to the problem.
- In suburbs, inefficient "spawl" development patterns is driving conversion of forest to subdivisions and shopping centers and increasing impervious cover. The result is increased stormwater pollution, and reduced recharge to groundwater supplies and streams. New pollution sources such as septic systems and fertilizers, and also encroachment on wetland buffers contribute to the problem.
- We need to better manage stormwater runoff to protect high-value water resources - our quality of life, property values and economic health depends on it. (link directly to comprehensive plan goals)
- We need to better manage stormwater to maintain the high quality and amount of drinking water - to meet current and future needs.
- We need to manage stormwater runoff to protect our water resources as we continue to grow.
- Stormwater pollution is a local problem, directly linked to land use - the amount of pavement and other impervious land such as roads, parking lots and rooftops; development methods, and drainage systems.
- Municipal officials have primary authority for land use and are responsible for controlling related impacts.
- New methods are available to better manage stormwater that focus on better site planning and design - these are best applied at the local level to prevent and minimize impacts.
- New stormwater management methods go hand in hand with "smart growth" techniques designed to revitalize urban areas while making more efficient use developing land to of protect open space and create more livable neighborhoods.

### **Basic messages for Post Construction / Low impact development strategies.**

Overall goals – slow and detain rainwater on site, maintain or reduce runoff volume, maintain or restore infiltration/ recharge to groundwater

1. Protect high value resources and natural stormwater functions (wetlands, hydric soils, buffers).
2. Conserve and restore vegetation and soils
3. Design to minimize impervious surfaces
4. Manage stormwater close to the source where rain falls.
5. Control pollution sources – inputs from wastewater, fertilizer, etc.
6. Provide maintenance and education.

Note: these focus on site-level practices and could be expanded with a comparable set of town or watershed scale planning and regulatory strategies

**Education strategies for municipal officials** to promote implementation of Phase II measures and adoption of Post-Construction and Erosion and Sediment Controls are currently in development. Draft outlines to be sent to advisory committee members for review and input in mid October.