



Northern Virginia
Clean Water Partners
Annual Summary of Results
July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

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 mixes with pesticides, grass clippings, fertilizer, bacteria, and oil. All 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 can 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 2020 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



2020 Campaign Overview and Accomplishments

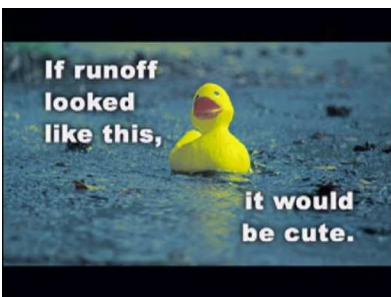
In 2020, the Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners selected the following three high priority water quality issues to focus on for the Campaign:

- bacteria,
- nutrients, and
- 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, Facebook, Twitter, and the [Only Rain Down the Storm Drain](http://www.onlyrain.org) website to distribute messages linked to specific stormwater issues, such as proper pet waste disposal, responsible fertilizer use on lawns and gardens, and proper disposal of detergents, paints, stains, and auto fluids.

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

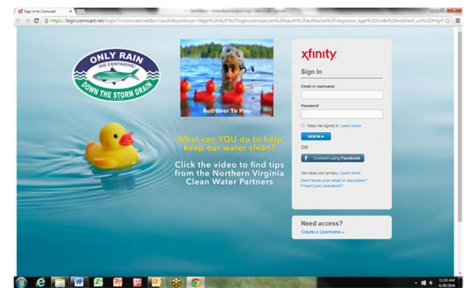


2,242,313	Total household television impressions*
544,812	Total digital impressions (internet banner ads and in-stream video ads)
118,055	Total social media impressions (Facebook and Twitter)
18,262	Engagements with social media posts (Facebook and Twitter May-July 2020)
7,220	Visits to the www.onlyrain.org website
500	Survey Responses

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

- From July 2019 through June 2020, aired four Public Service Announcements on 20 English language cable TV networks, and five Spanish language networks a total of 7,175 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.

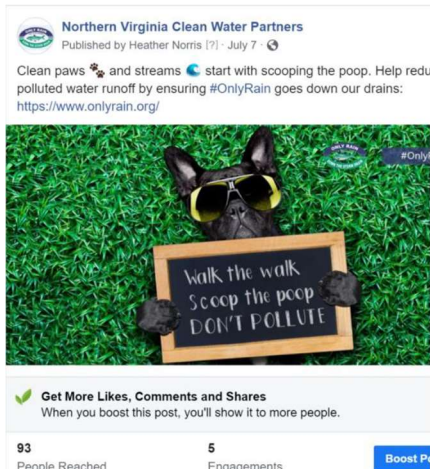


As a new strategy in 2020, the Partners contracted with a digital communications firm to develop and implement a social media campaign on Facebook and Twitter. The results so far have shown that these platforms are an effective way to engage with the target audiences.

- Since May 1, 2020 the Facebook page has gathered

46 page likes, 52 follows, and reached 99,095 people.

- During this time there were 49 posts, 17,943 post engagements, and 14 posts clicks



- Since the creation of the Twitter page on May 13, the page has gained: 18,960 impressions, 319 total engagements, 28 post link clicks, and 27 followers.
- We have tweeted 88 times leading to: 56 retweets and 64 likes.
- Two paid Facebook advertising campaigns were conducted from 07/06– 07/30 resulting in 15,879 clicks through to the website.
- 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 2020 survey include:

General Awareness

- Nearly half (46%) of respondents either don't know where storm water ends up or believes that it goes to a wastewater treatment plant. This is a significant increase from 2019.
- 22% of respondents recalled seeing the ad on TV, Facebook, or Twitter after watching the video clip in the survey which is an increase from 2019. This indicates that adding social media to the campaign had a positive impact on the recall rate.
- Of those who recalled seeing the ads, 36 percent state they already take action to protect clean water, 48 percent state they now pick up their pet waste more often, 15 percent state that they now properly dispose of motor oil, and 35 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 indicates that **awareness of the logo has increased over time.**

- Even though more than half of respondents feel at least somewhat confident that they would know where to report potential water pollution, only 48 percent would report water pollution if they saw it. This suggests **there is a need for education on what pollution may look like and to encourage residents to report it 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.
- **The majority (67%) of respondents indicated that they were aware their locality has a specific place to drop off household hazardous waste.**
- 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 (71%) indicated that they had not seen or received information about reducing water pollution in the past 12 months from any source which indicates a need to continue with public outreach.

Understanding Behaviors

In addition to questions regarding the effectiveness of the campaign, the survey asked questions about 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 main reason has fluctuated and was the fourth most common reason in 2020.

78% of lawn and garden owners fertilize their lawns at least once per year. **Among those who fertilize once a year, 19 percent fertilize in the spring and only six 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.

Among those who fertilize their lawn, only four percent of respondents indicated that they fertilize based on results of a soil test. Slightly more than one-third (35%) in 2020 leave their grass clippings on their lawn, while 40% bag their grass clippings for disposal.

Homeowners were asked if they had implemented or had heard of or installed a rain barrel, rain garden, or conservation landscaping. Five percent reported having a rain barrel, while two percent reported having a rain garden, and eleven percent reported having conservation landscapes in their yard. This indicates there is a significant opportunity to continue to promote these practices to homeowners.

Consistent with past years, the majority of respondents take their vehicle to a service station for oil changes (73%) or take used oil to a gas station or hazmat facility for recycling (11%). Approximately ten percent of Northern Virginians reported storing used motor oil in their garage, placing it in the trash or dumping it down the storm drain, sink or on the ground.



Only Rain Down the Drain

www.onlyrain.org

For more information:

Corey Miles
Senior Environmental
Planner
703-642-4625
3040 Williams Drive, Suite
200
Fairfax, VA 22031
cmiles@novaregion.org

2020 Northern Virginia Clean Water Partners

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Town of Dumfries | Dooey Calls | Northern Virginia Regional Commission | George Mason University | Virginia
Coastal Zone Management Program | Fairfax County Public Schools | Prince William County Public Schools |
Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District



Summary prepared by NVRC on behalf of the Partners

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