

Seattle Public Utilities provides the following public education and outreach programs to improve surface water quality and reduce stormwater runoff.

Adopt a Drain Program

Program Description: The Adopt a Drain program is a social science-based behavior change program that asks residents to adopt a nearby storm drain and keep it clear of debris. This program is part of a storm drain care approach that connects and promotes best practices for upstream pollution prevention behaviors like picking up pet waste, maintaining vehicles, and natural yard care practices.

Target audience: General public & school age

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution and BMPs to prevent non-point source pollution

2022 accomplishments:

- Recruited 131 new volunteers to care for 262 storm drains and collected 3,823 lbs. of debris
- Engaged 2 historically underserved communities
- Collaborated with 13 other Puget Sound jurisdictions to grow Adopt a Drain membership

Automotive Maintenance Program

Program Description: Prior to the pandemic, this program provided workshops for Seattle residents to learn to change their cars' oil and identify leaks. Historic low attendance, covid restrictions, and staffing changes forced the cancellation of these workshops and a rethinking of how to offer stronger automotive programs moving forward.

Target audience: General public & school age

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution and BMPs to prevent non-point source pollution

2022 accomplishments:

- Review of future staffing and priority work areas underway and continuing in 2023
- Participation in Puget Sound Starts Here tire care campaign; see below

Green Business Program

Program Description: SPU'S Green Business Program promotes SPU's Community-Centered, One Water, Zero Waste vision by engaging businesses to meet and/or exceed environmental and health requirements through education, training, and technical assistance. This program also recognizes businesses who incorporate sustainable business practices through the EnviroStars program. The program provides spill kits, training on spill prevention and stormwater best management practices, education on Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOG) and 'what to flush', and technical assistance with environmental compliance.

Target audience: Business

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution and BMPs to prevent non-point source pollution.

2022 accomplishments:

- Delivered 140 spill kits to businesses as well as employee training on their use
- Provided wastewater site assessment assistance to 224 businesses, including flushables stall signage to 79
- Provided FOG site assessment assistance to 299 businesses, including FOG Best Management Practices

K-12 Youth Engagement

Program Description: SPU's K-12 youth education program partners with schools to engage students in learning about stormwater issues and raising and releasing baby salmon. In 2021, this program adapted to meet the covid restrictions by providing virtual opportunities and holding events outdoors on school campuses instead of field trips to salmon bearing creeks or local parks.

Target audience: School age children

Subject areas: General impacts of stormwater on surface waters, including impacts from impervious surfaces and hazards associated with illicit discharges and improper disposal of waste

2022 accomplishments:

- Delivered stormwater field programs to 3,354 students
- Engaged 60 schools in salmon rearing through Salmon in the Schools program
- Hosted 9 classes on the Duwamish River Experience Field Program
- Led 2 teacher professional development workshops

Pet Waste

Program Description: SPU's Pet Waste program lowers barriers to proper disposal of pet waste by maintaining doggy bag dispensers in various locations across Seattle. SPU engages with volunteers to support the program by regularly refilling dispensers.

Target audience: General public

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution and BMPs to prevent non-point source pollution

2022 accomplishments:

- Distributed 79,300 Mutt Mitt doggy bags
- Supported 4 volunteers to maintain Mutt Mitt dispensers
- Maintained ongoing relationship with Seattle Conservation Corps

RainWise

Program Description: RainWise is a rebate program offered jointly by SPU and King County that helps private property owners manage stormwater by installing cisterns and/or rain gardens on their properties. These systems absorb or slow the rate of stormwater entering the sewer system, prevent flooding, provide attractive landscaping, and offer water for summer irrigation. The RainWise program also provides a business opportunity for local contractors interested in landscaping and green stormwater infrastructure.

Target audience: General public & school age; business; engineers, contractors, developers, land use planners.

Subject areas: Stormwater flow reduction, preventing surface water pollution

2022 accomplishments:

- Completed 54 installations, capturing over 82,126 sq feet of roof area
- Identified platform for access to contractor training materials through a self-serve online module
- Conducted onsite inspections of 46 past RainWise installations, data analysis underway

Spill Kits

Program Description: SPU provides 5-gallon bucket sized spill kits to businesses with a risk of environmental spills, especially to the MS4 stormwater system. Spill kits contain a collection of spill cleanup materials and are provided along with technical assistance in developing a spill response plan.

Target audience: Businesses

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution

2022 accomplishments:

- Provided 140 spill kits

STORM / Puget Sound Starts Here

Program Description: Stormwater Outreach for Regional Municipalities (STORM) is a coalition of 80 jurisdictions working to comply with NPDES and make a difference for water quality. The Puget Sound Starts Here (PSSH) campaign is a collaborative impact approach. Partners include STORM members, tribes, nonprofit organizations, and businesses dedicated to protecting Puget Sound. In 2021, the Puget Sound Starts Here digital campaign focus was on automotive care to prevent water pollution.

Target audience: General public

Subject areas: BMPs to prevent non-point source pollution.

2022 accomplishments:

- Developed and implemented a new, multilingual BMP campaign for Puget Sound Starts Here Month resulting in 339,949 video completions
- Participated on Steering Committees for both STORM and the Puget Sound Starts Here campaign

Storm Drain Stenciling

Program Description: SPU's storm drain stenciling program is a volunteer-based stewardship program that provides stencil supplies and hands-on instruction for individuals and community groups to stencil dumping awareness messages next to storm drains.

Target audience: General public & school age

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution including impacts from improper disposal of residential and commercial discharges into storm drains and catch basins

2022 accomplishments:

- Engaged 129 volunteers in stenciling 592 storm drains
- Analyzed program delivery model including supply pickup locations, shifting to new structure
- Supported 3 community partnership events and fostered relationship with 3 community groups

Sustainable Landscaping

Program Description: This program engages and educates residents and professional landscapers in sustainable landscaping practices to improve soil drainage function and to reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Target audience: General public & school age; Engineers, contractors, developers, land use planners

Subject areas: Landscaping best practices, integrated pest management, infiltration, and erosion control

2022 accomplishments:

- Engaged 5,335 residents on topics related to sustainable landscaping
- Participated in 265 classes or events for residents, 61% of which were designed specifically for BIPOC communities and/or disadvantaged populations
- Trained 29 new Master Composter/Sustainability Steward volunteers
- Reached 12,139 residents via 791 volunteer hours from Master Composters / Sustainability Stewards
- Reached 2,307 landscape professionals at 29 events

Trees for Seattle

Program Description: Trees for Seattle engages residents in stewarding Seattle’s urban forest. Trees for Seattle ensures that Seattle's urban forest is healthy, vital, and growing by planting new trees with residents, supporting volunteer stewardship of the urban forest, tree-related awareness outreach, and in-person tree-appreciation events like Tree Walks.

Target audience: General public & school age

Subject areas: Urban forestry, green stormwater infrastructure

2022 accomplishments:

- Planted 1,100 trees with residents on residential property and school campuses
- Added over 230 trees and 90,000 square feet of shade at maturity in high-heat neighborhoods
- Supported 47 engagement and stewardship events
- Engaged 428 volunteers

Water Quality Hotline

Program Description: SPU provides a hotline for the public to report Water Quality concerns to facilitate prompt SPU response. This creates an easy channel to communicate water quality concerns to increase reporting when water quality issues are seen by the public. This program ensures more water quality issues will be reported more quickly which improves the effectiveness of the City’s response program.

Target audience: General public, Business

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution

2022 accomplishments:

- Provided 24/7 hotline availability responding to 40 calls
- Water quality complaint response was within 3 business days of intake for 97% of calls received via hotline