

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) provided the following public education and outreach programs in 2023 to improve stormwater and surface water quality.¹

Adopt a Drain Program

Program Description: The Adopt a Drain program is a 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

2023 accomplishments:

- Recruited 150 new volunteers to care for 246 storm drains and collected 4,705 lbs of debris
- Conducted focus groups and a survey to inform a new Spanish Language digital campaign
- Collaborated with regional jurisdictions and partners to grow Adopt a Drain membership to 19 jurisdictions and 1,357 adopters across the region

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.

2023 accomplishments:

- Delivered 115 spill kits to businesses and trained employees on their use
- Provided wastewater site assessment assistance to 200 businesses, including flushables stall signage to 152 businesses
- Provided FOG site assessment assistance to 432 businesses, including FOG Best Management Practices to 121 businesses

¹ Some of the Programs also operate in non-MS4 areas of the City. Due to staffing changes, SPU was unable to initiate the Infrastructure Tours pilot-program that was described in the 2023 SWMP Plan. While we do not expect to roll out that program in 2024, the City continues to implement a range of other programs designed to build general awareness about addressing and reduce impacts from stormwater runoff.

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.

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.

2023 accomplishments:

- Delivered stormwater field programs to 4,145 students
- Engaged 65 schools in salmon rearing through Salmon in the Schools program
- Hosted 10 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

2023 accomplishments:

- Distributed 108,700 Mutt Mitt pet waste bags, including supporting 4 volunteers to distribute 45,600 bags
- Supported community-led efforts to reduce pet waste adjacent to Thornton Creek through workshops and engagement tables
- Installed educational yard signs at 15 public locations, including off leash dog areas, as well as 15 giardia-focused pet waste signs at all off leash dog area kiosks

RainWise²

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

2023 accomplishments:

- Completed 31 installations, capturing over 53,857 sq feet of roof area
- Reached 27,288 prospective customers through varied channels
- Worked with community partners to plan methods to recruit racially diverse & low-income participants through SPU’s Utility Discount Program
- Supported multicultural contractors and customers through translation service and an in-language orientation for contractors with English as a second language

² Rainwise operates outside of the MS4 area; however, the Program was included in the 2023 SWMP Plan and is therefore being reported in the 2023 Annual Report for completeness. Rainwise has been excluded from the 2024 SWMP Plan.

Salmon Stewards

Program Description: The Salmon Stewards partnership trains community volunteers to provide outreach and interpretation to thousands of Carkeek park visitors annually. Topics focus on salmon ecology and the impacts of pollutants on water quality. Salmon Stewards is based at one of Seattle’s most publicly accessible salmon runs.

Target audience: General public (including school aged children and overburdened communities)

Subject areas: General impacts of stormwater on surface waters, including impacts from impervious surfaces

2023 accomplishments:

- Trained 38 community volunteers as docents, including skill building in equitable interpretation
- Engaged 7,630 park visitors
- Recruited 2 multilingual Salmon Stewards

STORM / Puget Sound Starts Here

Program Description: Stormwater Outreach for Regional Municipalities (STORM) is a coalition of 80 jurisdictions working to comply with NPDES stormwater permits and make a difference for water quality. The Puget Sound Starts Here (PSSH) campaign takes a collaborative impact approach. Partners include STORM members, public agencies like counties and municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and businesses dedicated to protecting Puget Sound. In 2023, the Puget Sound Starts Here digital campaign focus was on automotive care to help prevent water pollution.

Target audience: General public

Subject areas: BMPs to prevent non-point source pollution

2023 accomplishments:

- Implemented a multilingual tire inflation campaign for Puget Sound Starts Here Month resulting in 8.5 million media impressions regionwide and 285,146 video completions in Seattle
- Participated on steering committees for both STORM and Puget Sound Starts Here

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

2023 accomplishments:

- Engaged 369 volunteers in stenciling 704 storm drains
- Integrated storm drain stenciling with Adopt-a-Drain, Adopt-a-Street, and Stormwater in the Schools through lesson plans, outreach events, and logistical support
- Supported 12 community partnership events

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

2023 accomplishments:

- Engaged 6,085 residents on topics related to sustainable landscaping
- Participated in 175 classes or events for residents, 60% of which were designed specifically for BIPOC communities and/or disadvantaged populations
- Reached 11,409 residents via 1,396 volunteer hours from Master Composters / Sustainability Stewards
- Reached 1,754 landscape professionals at 22 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

2023 accomplishments:

- Planted 1,000 trees with residents on residential property and school campuses
- Added 90,000 square feet of shade at maturity in high-heat neighborhoods
- Supported 35 engagement and stewardship events
- Engaged 620 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 when issues are identified by the public. This program ensures more water quality issues will be reported quicker which improves the effectiveness of the City’s response program. The Water Quality Hotline phone number and link to the online form can be found here: <https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/protecting-our-environment/seattle-clean-city/report-pollution>

Target audience: General public, Business

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution

2023 accomplishments:

- Provided 24/7 hotline availability responding to 624 calls
- Water quality complaint response was within 3 business days of intake for 98.73% of calls received via hotline

Youth Service Learning³

Program Description: SPU engages closely with local youth corps and service learning organizations to engage middle and high school aged youth in conversations and stewardship activities related to stormwater. Projects and lessons are tailored to the organization's needs and requests. Youth are empowered to bring their learning back to their communities by participating in events such as neighborhood festivals and gatherings. Potential stewardship activities organized with the youth can include storm drain stencil design and installation, fall drain clearing and leaf bag distribution, and water quality monitoring.

Target audience: School age youth

Subject areas: General impacts of stormwater on surface waters; BMPs to prevent non-point source pollution

2023 accomplishments:

- Provided 40 lessons/fieldtrips to 128 youth in 3 priority areas
- Worked with Duwamish Valley Youth Corps to present stormwater information at 3 community events
- Organized and led 5 storm drain stenciling events for youth organizations

³ Not included in the 2023 SWMP Plan because the Program was in a pilot phase. The Program has now been fully-adopted and will appear in 2024 SWMP Plan.