

Q81 – 2025 Public Education and Outreach General Awareness Report

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) provided the following public education and outreach programs in 2025 to improve stormwater and surface water quality.

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. More information can be found here:

<https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/volunteer/storm-drain-care/adopt-a-storm-drain>

Target audience: General public & school age

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

2025 accomplishments:

- Recruited 295 new volunteers to care for 454 storm drains and collected 11,077 lbs of debris
- Transcreated and promoted Adopt a Drain to 22 Mandarin and/or Cantonese speaking groups
- Collaborated with other jurisdictions to recruit 902 new Adopt a Drain participants regionally

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. More information can be found here:

<https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/protecting-our-environment/sustainability-tips/green-business-program>

Target audience: Business

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

2025 accomplishments:

- Provided 142 spill kits to businesses and trained employees on their use
- Provided stormwater best practices training Seattle food service establishments, including in-language as appropriate
- Emailed stormwater BMP flyers to 100 businesses across 10 different sectors that conduct their work in a mobile unit throughout Seattle
- Mailed stormwater BMP outreach postcards to the entire 1800+ stormwater business inspection inventory
- Partnered with wastewater business outreach to engage businesses in a collaborative way

Pet Waste

Program Description: SPU’s Pet Waste program lowers barriers to proper disposal of pet waste by maintaining doggy bag dispensers in locations across Seattle prioritized by equity and impacts on water quality. Focused outreach is conducted in priority areas and with priority audiences to spread awareness about the impacts of pet waste on water quality.

Target audience: General public

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

2025 accomplishments:

- Distributed 36,900 Mutt Mitt pet waste bags, including supporting 4 volunteers to distribute 18,400 bags
- Mailed pet waste awareness materials to 2,472 residents in one priority area
- Conducted public outreach at 1 pet waste hot spot
- Distributed pet waste awareness materials to at least 14,500 residents living within a ½ mile of SPU-owned underground injection control (UIC) sites

Post Secondary Outreach

Program Description: This new body of work will explore developing relationships with post-secondary schools located within the municipal separate storm sewer system. These relationships will help SPU identify messaging and pathways for engaging post-secondary students in relevant stormwater related stewardship activities and behavior changes.

Priority audience: Post-secondary students

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

2025 accomplishments:

- Engaged in activities with the University of Washington and South Seattle College



Above: SPU Stormwater Engagement staff sharing information about stormwater, BMPs, and stewardship opportunities for students at UW Dawg Daze Student Fair, October 2025

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

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

2025 accomplishments:

- Trained 52 community volunteers as docents, including skill-building in equitable interpretation
- Engaged 7,504 park visitors
- Recruited 11 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 campaign is a collaborative impact approach. Partners include STORM members, nonprofit organizations, and businesses dedicated to protecting Puget Sound.

Target audience: General public

Subject areas: BMPs to prevent non-point source pollution

2025 accomplishments:

- Participated in Puget Sound Starts Here Month collective marketing campaign
- 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 instruction for individuals and community groups to raise awareness about stormwater pollution and water quality by stenciling messages next to storm drains. Messages draw a connection between storm drains, water quality, and local waterways.

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

2025 accomplishments:

- Engaged 352 volunteers in stenciling 450 storm drains
- Supported 12 community partnership events
- Supported 3 new partner organizations to lead a stenciling event



Above: Community members marking around a stormwater catch basin in 2025

Stormwater in Schools

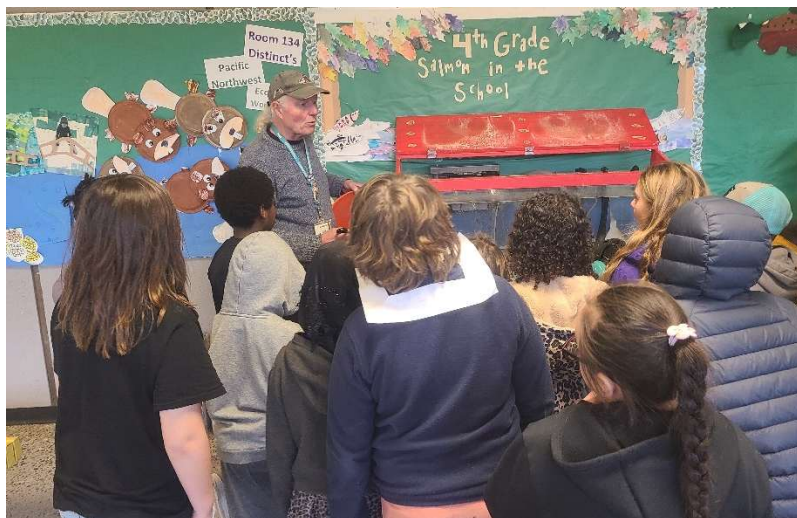
Program Description: SPU's Stormwater in Schools program partners with schools to engage students in learning about stormwater issues, including by raising and releasing salmon; field trips on the Duwamish River, and field trips to view salmon returns.

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.

2025 accomplishments:

- Delivered stormwater field programs to 4,487 students through the formal education system, with 42% of participating classes from low income schools
- Engaged 70 schools in salmon rearing through the Salmon in the Schools program
- Led 2 teacher professional development workshops
- Hosted 12 South Seattle classes on the Duwamish River Experience Field Program



Above: Sharing information with youth as part of the Salmon in the Schools program

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, which helps prevent irrigation runoff to the drainage system.

Topics for residents include alternatives to fertilizers and pesticides; soil health; right plant for the right place; and landscape elements for stormwater control.

Topics for professional landscapers include CESCL training on compost-based BMPs and post-construction soil quality & depth requirements, stormwater control for landscape architecture students, IPM seminars, and ecoPRO professional landscaper training on soil.

More information can be found here: <https://www.seattle.gov/utilities/protecting-our-environment/sustainability-tips/landscaping>

In addition, SPU is a key partner of the Saving Water Partnership (<https://www.savingwater.org/>) which provides tips for reducing water use including on lawns and gardens, helping to prevent discharges of irrigation runoff to the MS4. SPU's Water Line of Business also provides other public education and outreach resources to conserve water, such as: <https://atyourseattle.seattle.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2023/10/SPU-VoluntaryWaterReduction-Multi-Language.pdf>

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

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

2025 accomplishments:

- Answered sustainable landscaping questions for 6,200 residents through the Garden Hotline
- Participated in 210 natural yard care classes or events for residents, 70% of which were designed specifically for BIPOC communities and/or disadvantaged populations
- Reached 7,7403 residents via 630 hours of volunteerism from Master Composters / Sustainability Stewards
- Reached 2,300 landscape professionals at 21 events

Trees for Neighborhoods

Program Description: Trees for Neighborhoods engages residents in stewarding Seattle's urban forest. Trees for Neighborhoods 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. More information can be found here: <https://www.seattle.gov/trees/>

Target audience: General public & school age

Subject areas: Urban forestry, green stormwater infrastructure

2025 accomplishments:

- Planted 1,000 trees with residents on residential property and school campuses
- Directed tree planting application outreach to 763 residents in high-heat neighborhoods
- Supported 37 stewardship events engaging 489 volunteers in 1,509 hours of stewardship

Water Quality Hotline

Program Description: SPU provides a dedicated phone number for the public to report water quality concerns to facilitate prompt SPU response. This is in addition to the SPU Operations Response Center phone number which is intended for immediate threats to safety and the environment. The Water Quality Complaints / Reporting Line creates an easy channel for the public to communicate water quality concerns, which ensures water quality issues are reported quickly, improving the effectiveness of the City's response program.

Target audience: General public, Business

Subject areas: Preventing surface water pollution

2025 accomplishments:

- 24/7 complaint line availability and SPU response within 3 business days of intake

Youth Service Learning

Program Description: SPU works 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. Youth are empowered to bring their learning back to their communities by participating in events such as neighborhood festivals. Possible stewardship activities with youth 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

2025 accomplishments:

- Provided 26 lessons/fieldtrips to 115 youth in 2 priority areas
- Worked with Duwamish Valley Youth Corps to present stormwater information at 3 community events