

Q81 – 2024 Public Education and Outreach General Awareness Report

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) provided the following public education and outreach programs in 2024 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.

Target audience: General public & school age

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

2024 accomplishments:

- Recruited 289 new volunteers to care for 484 storm drains and collected 9,571 lbs of debris
- Promoted Adopt a Drain to 3 Spanish language community groups, including through Spanish language media
- Collaborated with other jurisdictions to recruit 533 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.

Target audience: Business

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

2024 accomplishments:

- Delivered 165 spill kits to businesses and trained employees on their use
- Provided stormwater best practices training to 61 Seattle food service establishments, including in-language as appropriate
- Partnered with wastewater business outreach to engage 571 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

2024 accomplishments:

- Distributed 75,300 Mutt Mitt pet waste bags, including supporting 3 volunteers to distribute 27,200 bags
- Mailed pet waste awareness materials to 2,472 residents in one priority area
- Installed 50 educational yard signs at parks, prioritizing parks adjacent to waterbodies and areas identified by crews as pet waste hot-spots

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

2024 accomplishments:

- Trained 43 community volunteers as docents, including skill-building in equitable interpretation
- Engaged 10,141 park visitors
- Recruited 3 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

2024 accomplishments:

- Participated in Puget Sound Starts Here Month collective marketing campaign around tire inflation (multilingual)
- 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

2024 accomplishments:

- Engaged 192 volunteers in stenciling 281 storm drains
- Supported 6 community partnership events
- Worked with a community group in a priority area towards creating a future place-based and behavior-focused storm drain stencil

Stormwater in Schools

Program Description: SPU's Stormwater in Schools (previously K-12 youth education) 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.

2024 accomplishments:

- Engaged 60% of low income elementary/K-8 public schools in at least 1 stormwater education program
- Delivered stormwater field programs to 4,009 students through the formal education system
- Engaged 68 schools in salmon rearing through Salmon in the Schools program
- Led 2 teacher professional development workshops

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

2024 accomplishments:

- Engaged 6,394 residents on topics related to sustainable landscaping
- Participated in 212 classes or events for residents, 74% + of which were designed specifically for BIPOC communities and/or disadvantaged populations
- Reached 12,572 residents via 639 volunteer hours from Master Composters / Sustainability Stewards
- Reached 1,676 landscape professionals at 20 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

2024 accomplishments:

- Planted 1,079 trees with residents on residential property and school campuses
- Directed tree planting application outreach to 997 residents in high-heat neighborhoods
- Supported 29 stewardship events engaging 527 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

2024 accomplishments:

- Provided 24/7 hotline availability responding to 396 calls
- Water quality complaint response was within 3 business days of intake for 98% of calls received via hotline

Youth Service Learning

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. Possible stewardship activities organized with the 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

2024 accomplishments:

- Provided 38 lessons/fieldtrips to 155 youth in 2 priority areas
- Worked with Duwamish Valley Youth Corps to present stormwater information at 3 community events
- Organized and led 2 storm drain stenciling events for youth organizations