



CHARLES COUNTY

Maryland

PHASE 1

SUMMARY REPORT

Executive Briefing | June 30, 2014

AGENDA

- Project Overview
- Research Objectives & Takeaways
- Key Findings
- Detailed Findings
- Considerations
- Questions & Answers



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Research Approach

- **Primary Research**
 - Online survey of 120 county residents
 - Phone discussions with 32 county residents
 - Waldorf Beautification Project - Discussion with Scarlett Mower, Director Citizens Liaison Office
- **Secondary Research**
 - Social marketing best practices
 - Stormwater outreach best practices
- **Client Discovery**
 - Client kick-off/discovery session
 - Communications audit
 - Google Analytics review

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & TAKEAWAYS



- Gauge awareness of stormwater and/or septic maintenance issues
 - TAKEAWAY: High awareness but believe to be more informed than they really are
- Determine the type of information/education the target audiences requires to understand the hazards of stormwater pollution and/or septic maintenance
 - TAKEAWAY: Residents need and desire research-based information to gauge impact, help curb most damaging actions. and take steps to decrease stormwater pollution
- Identify incentives for motivating the target audiences to adopt and sustain positive behaviors
 - TAKEAWAY: Information is actual motivator although public believes financial incentives are best
- Identify communications channels and techniques to effectively deliver messages
 - TAKEAWAY: Messages need to reach the community through a variety of channels

IN SUM: There is significant opportunity to take multi-layered approach to educate Charles County residents on stormwater issues.



KEY FINDINGS

What Did We Learn?

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING #1: Respondents' self-proclaimed awareness and concern for stormwater issues is high.

- 89% (survey respondents) and 93% (interviewees) said they are fully or somewhat aware of issues surrounding stormwater pollution.
- 75% are concerned with the County's level of stormwater pollution.

HOWEVER

- 72% of interviewees who did not reference "treatment" as the difference between stormwater and household wastewater said they are fully or somewhat aware of issues surrounding stormwater pollution.

Implication: Charles County residents who are "knowledgeable" about stormwater still have an opportunity and a desire to learn more about the issue.

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING #2: There is a high demand for research-based stormwater pollution information.

- Survey respondents and interviewees expressed lack of stormwater pollution information on Charles County government website.
- *For me to better understand stormwater pollution in Charles County, I would need to know more about:*

Research on effects of stormwater pollution (who/where/what)	37%
Best ways to help reduce pollution/ solutions	27%
Causes/contributors of Stormwater Pollution	20%
Charles County progress and projects in works	8%
Local government questions (why can't Charles County....?)	8%
Policies/enforcement	8%
Generally "everything"	6%
Processing	4%
Septic related	2%

Implication: Access to accurate information may facilitate resident action.

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING #3: There is an apparent lack of accountability for stormwater pollution.

- Very few interviewees cited actionable ways they can decrease their contribution to stormwater pollution, stating “I am already doing everything I can.”
- 82% feel they do their part to reduce waterway pollutants.
- 64% said **others** are not doing enough to reduce waterway pollutants.

Implication: The County has the opportunity to convince the public they have a stake in stormwater pollution contribution and remediation.

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING #4: There is low trust in public policies and actions taken to mitigate stormwater pollution.

- Many feel most expensive solutions are being overused and are not the most efficient methods.
- 28% of interviewees wanted to know more about stormwater-related public policy.
 - How tax dollars are spent
 - Residential and commercial development planning

Implication: Transparency around stormwater-related policymaking may increase public trust and engagement.

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING #5: Most are motivated by “right thing to do.”

- 38% of interviewees did not mention the local waterways as a reason why Charles County is a great place to live.
- 68% of survey respondents and 61% of interviewees stated **THEY** would take measures to fight stormwater pollution because “it’s the right thing to do”; in contrast, 12% of survey respondents and 0% of interviewees noted financial incentives as their motivator.
- When asked what would motivate **OTHERS** to take action, the top response of survey and interviewee responses mentioned financial incentives.

Implication: There is a perception that financial incentives are best to motivate others towards stormwater remediation efforts when the “right thing to do” is stated as most important to respondents themselves.

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING #6: Targeted, multifaceted communication approach is essential for effective messaging

- Residents differ in age, location, motivation as well as awareness and understanding of stormwater issues.
- Best practices for stormwater social marketing include diverse efforts such as:
 - Coordination of multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency efforts
 - Targeted messages and outreach with stages of change in mind
 - Inclusion of Cooperative Extension

Implication: There is no single “silver bullet” approach to educating the public on stormwater pollution.



DETAILED FINDINGS

Grouped by Research Task

DETAILED FINDINGS

Phone Discussions with Charles County Residents

- High awareness of stormwater pollution and concepts/issues among interviewees (51% fully aware; 38% somewhat aware).
- Most interviewees have educational or occupational knowledge related to stormwater pollution or are associated with the Master Gardener/Baywise Certification.
- Interviewees believe that because they live in a rural area they do not directly contribute to stormwater or septic pollution.
- Interviewees believe that the reasons for stormwater pollution are beyond their control and that they are already doing everything they can.
- Interviewees strongly desire information about stormwater pollution, specifically:
 - Research on contributors and most impactful actions to take
 - Local government actions and policies around stormwater management; more transparency and communication was a common theme

DETAILED FINDINGS

Online Survey with Charles County Residents

- High awareness with concept and issues surrounding “stormwater pollution”; 42% said they were fully aware and 51% said they were somewhat aware.
- Those fully or somewhat aware with stormwater issues learned the concepts by:
 - “Researching it on my own and/or attending educational workshops”
 - “Newspaper/print Public Service Announcement (PSA)”
- To reduce contribution to stormwater pollution, residents are most likely to install something (57%) rather than reduce something (24%), avoid something (13%), or start doing something (6%). These results suggest residents desire using effective stormwater measures that are not disruptive to their day-to-day routine.
- Generally equal high level of agreement by residents on their concern for stormwater (75%) and septic pollution (80%); half strongly agree on their concern for stormwater pollution and 42% strongly agree on their concern for septic pollution.
- Generally equal awareness of programs Charles County provides for septic systems upgrade and stormwater pollution prevention (56% say they are fully or somewhat aware of these programs). However, those fully aware of septic system programs (39%) compared to those fully aware about stormwater programs (17%).

DETAILED FINDINGS

Communications Audit of Charles County's Existing Stormwater Materials

Hardcopy Assets

- Brochures
 - Household Guide to Protecting Our Water Quality
 - How to Choose a Lawn Care Service that's Right for You ... and the Chesapeake Bay
 - Water Conservation in Charles County
- Handbook/Magazine
 - Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping; Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Online Assets

- [NPDES Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit](#) – Stormwater homepage
- [Charles County, MD Chapter 274 - Stormwater Management - ECODE360](#) (summary of ordinance)
- [Stormwater Management Ordinance](#) (full ordinance)
- [SWM Ordinance ESD Design Manual](#)
- [Board of Commissioners Report for Developing in Charles County with ESD](#)
- [Charles County Low Impact Development/Environmental Site Design Ordinance and Design Manual](#)

DETAILED FINDINGS

Communications Audit of Charles County's Existing Stormwater Materials

Strengths

- Variety of topics that are connected to stormwater pollution are covered—from septic pollution, water conservation to native plants.
- Graphically pleasing hardcopy materials in color with images that aid explanations; some online resources are graphically enhanced as well.
- Simplicity of brochures.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Lack of centralized stormwater information for resident consumption
 - Homepage for stormwater management is focused to NPDES Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit and history of bill rather than topic awareness and remediation measures—lack of central information hub.
 - Online information is developer-focused rather than resident focused—difficult to digest due to length and specificity of information.
 - Brochures do not broadly address stormwater issues—possibly *too* focused.
- Lack of Research/"WIIFM"
 - Interviewees strongly desire specific information yet perceive that a void exists.
 - Marketing materials do not convey stormwater pollution as a pressing issue of Charles County that should be top-of-mind with residents.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Secondary Research Findings on Social Marketing: Phases of Behavior Change

1. *Preplanning Phase*

- Marketing mix must consistently support the brand
- General goal setting

2. *Targeting Phase*

- Seek communities, not individuals
- Target audiences with Stages of Change in mind (*different willingness to take action requires targeted messaging to inspire action, e.g. encouraging sampling of low-fat foods rather than an intense diet is more impactful when motivating someone to change their poor eating habits*)

3. *Message Development*

- Provide background
- Provide knowledge and belief objectives
- Empower change agents to lead—address WIIFM (What's In It For Me)
- Decide on different strategies for different segments
- Establish message delivery channel(s)
- Choose strategies w measurable objectives
- Pretest message(s)

4. *Message Delivery and Management*

- Establish a tracking system
- Continue to modify you work based on results

DETAILED FINDINGS

Secondary Research Findings on Stormwater Outreach & Education Program Best Practices

- Inclusion of Cooperative Extension
- Not relying on regulation/enforcement
- Using outcomes-based education
- Audience targeting
- Partnering education with technical expertise
- Incorporating stormwater into natural resources planning processes
- Encourage public participation
- Coordination of multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency efforts
- Continuous evaluation

(Source: Environmental Protection Agency Office of Wastewater Management)



CONSIDERATIONS MOVING FORWARD

CONSIDERATIONS

- Changing County landscape:
 - Population growth
 - Increased development
 - Younger population
 - More commuters
 - Becoming a more suburban vs. rural community
- Increasing preference for the web as a source of information.
- Identifying actions that will yield the greatest impact with the least amount of effort on the part of target audiences.
- Developing metrics for program success.
- Resources and budget for ongoing program promotion, communication, and education.



Questions & Answers