

[For more information on the Georgia River Network and Georgia's Get the Dirt Out program, contact Jesslyn Shields, 126 South Milledge Avenue, Suite E3, Athens, GA 30605. Phone: 706-549-4508; E-mail: jesslyn@garivers.org. For more information and permission to use the Get the Dirt Out program materials, contact Jason Ulseth, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, 3 Puritan Mill, 916 Joseph Lowery Boulevard, Atlanta, GA 30318. Phone: 404-352-9828 ext. 16; E-mail: julseth@ucriverkeeper.org. For more information on the Muddy Water Watch, contact Dean Naujoks, Upper Neuse Riverkeeper, 112 S. Blount Street, Suite 103, Raleigh, NC 27601. Phone 919-856-1180; E-mail: dean@neuseriver.org]

Thinking Blue Helps Make Maine Lawns Green

Spring brings warmer temperatures and new growth in lawns and gardens. For some homeowners, spring also brings visions of drinking lemonade in a favorite yard chair while the children and dog play on a lush, green lawn. However, many are not aware that the pesticides and herbicides that they use to create their *perfect* lawn are affecting human and pet health as well as water quality. Maine's Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District's (CCSWCD's) new YardScaping program (www.cumberlandswcd.org/yardscape) aims to alter people's perceptions and convince them to make more environmentally friendly lawn care choices, thereby improving the water quality in local streams.

What are NPDES Minimum Control Measures?

Under the NPDES Phase II regulations, operators of MS4s in urbanized areas and operators of small construction sites (one to five acres) must implement programs and practices to control polluted stormwater runoff. These operators must prepare a stormwater management program containing elements that address the following six technical areas:

- Public Education and Outreach
- Public Involvement/Participation
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Construction Site Stormwater Runoff Control
- Post-Construction Management
- Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping

More information about NPDES Phase II requirements can be found at www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/fact1-0.pdf. A listing of best management practices to address these six minimum control measures is available at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/index.cfm>.

The program developed as a group of communities along Maine's southern coast worked to implement their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permits and address their impaired waters. Fourteen communities in Cumberland and York counties joined together to form the Interlocal Stormwater Group (ISWG). The ISWG provides its members with a forum to collaborate and share costs to implement several of the NPDES minimum control measures (see box). When it was time for the ISWG to address the public education minimum control measure, feedback from municipal staff and communities identified lawn care as a primary target. In fact, from 1995 to 2001, the number of lawn care companies in Maine had tripled, and amounts of yard care pesticides distributed had doubled to 1.8 million pounds. Not surprisingly, water quality monitoring data showed measurable pesticide levels in Casco Bay. In response, ISWG decided to develop an education program promoting environmentally friendly lawn care.

Addressing the Problem

Fortunately, Maine has a statewide YardScaping program (www.yardscaping.org), which offers valuable educational information and resources about lawn care. ISWG decided to use the statewide program as a starting point and build a new, significantly expanded program to meet the needs of its region. ISWG hired CCSWCD to develop a YardScaping program that incorporated social marketing principles to identify and remove barriers to behavior change. To help support program development, CCSWCD secured grant funding from the Maine's Fund for Efficient Delivery of Local and Regional Services and also collaborated with the Casco Bay Estuary Partnership and the Presumpscot River Watershed Coalition for an EPA Targeted Watershed Grant.

As a first step, CCSWCD gathered information to determine the most effective delivery method for the YardScaping message. The group collected information through a telephone survey that helped define the demographics of their target audience, the audience's current practices, and motivations for action or inaction. Of the 388 phone surveys, 18 percent of households hire a lawn care company, 68 percent do their own lawn care and 14 percent do not have a lawn. CCSWCD also looked to lawn care focus groups for information. These groups noted that people look for lawn care information at stores where they purchase their lawn care products. These groups also identified the yellow rubber duck logo from Maine's *Think Blue* stormwater campaign (www.thinkblumaine.org)

Thinking
Blue Helps
Make a Maine
Lawn Green
(continued)

as a recognized brand, which led CCSWCD to incorporate the duck picture into its YardScaping materials. By taking time to gather information, CCSWCD was able to learn more about their target audience, determine where to put their outreach materials and identify what brand would resonate with the public.

Spreading the YardScaping Message

In fall 2007 and spring 2008, CCSWCD offered YardScaping educational classes in all 14 ISWG communities. They also initially posted YardScaping materials in four lawn care stores in South Portland as a successful pilot project; now, they offer the materials in 16 stores, including several major nurseries. Additionally, South Portland included brochures with tax bills, reaching more than 8,900 tax payers. Weekly YardScaping advertisements ran in early summer 2007 in the local *South Portland Sentry* newspaper. CCSWCD arranged for sticky notes with the YardScaping Web address to be attached to 50 *Do You Want a Lush Green Lawn Safe for Kids and Pets?* posters displayed at a variety of South Portland businesses such as doctor offices and health centers.

How Do I Implement Social Marketing Techniques?

EPA's *Getting In Step—A Guide for Conducting Watershed Outreach Campaigns* provides easy-to-follow instructions, case studies and worksheets to organize a social marketing campaign. Download *Getting In Step* at www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/outreach/documents/getnstep.pdf or visit the *Getting In Step* Web-based training module at www.epa.gov/watertrain/gettinginstep.

CCSWCD continues to hone the YardScaping message and delivery methods. For example, originally the group had envisioned YardScaping socials (i.e., a gathering in someone's home with friends and neighbors to share YardScaping information) as a key method of message delivery. However, YardScaping socials proved to be unsuccessful. CCSWCD learned that while many wish to learn more about how they should care for their lawn, it is a personal decision, and a social event in someone's home was not the right setting.

In 2008 they plan to distribute 5,000 door hangers in targeted neighborhoods, set up displays with handouts in every municipal center and most of the communities' libraries, and distribute more than 10,000 bookmarks with a *Six Easy Steps to a Healthy Lawn* message at community fairs and garden and home shows. CCSWCD hopes that their diverse methods of sharing the YardScaping message will pay off. "Outreach is needed on many levels for people to see our message multiple times in many places. Our budget is small, so we struggle to do as much as we believe is ideal," noted CCSWCD's Tamara Lee Pinard.



CCSWCD incorporated Maine's well-known *Think Blue* yellow duck into the YardScaping campaign for ISWG communities.

CCSWCD also uses the Web to reach and educate people. Their YardScaping Web site offers slide shows, articles, fact sheets and a listing of upcoming public workshops to help citizens implement these techniques. The site includes a pledge page for homeowners promising to adopt YardScaping techniques. Homeowners that pledge to YardScape are eligible to receive a free, weather-resistant Maine YardScaping yard sign (www.yardscaping.org/involved.htm) or a CCSWCD YardScaping yellow rubber duck flag (<http://cumberlandswcd.org/yardscap/pledge.htm>). CCSWCD encourages homeowners to proudly display these in a visible location where neighbors will notice and ask questions—thereby creating another avenue to get the Yardscaping message out to the public. The pledge program has been very popular—CCSWCD is currently developing a system to track the total number of people that have pledged to YardScape so far.

Tracking Behavior Change

The group is also beginning a project to follow-up with past participants to assess how the YardScaping program has influenced behavior change. Homeowners who completed a YardScaping class or participated in an outreach event during the past year usually filled out a survey asking what environmentally friendly lawn care practices they intended to adopt in their yards now that they knew more about them. This summer, CCSWCD will ask many of these same individuals to fill out a follow-up survey to see which practices they actually adopted, explained Pinard. "The survey results will allow us to better assess how well our program has influenced people's behavior over time." Results are expected later this year.

The program's future looks bright, as requests for more YardScaping educational classes continue to pour in from garden clubs, homeowner associations and condo associations. CCSWCD also plans to target additional outreach at specific neighborhoods that they have identified as high priority. They intend to approach larger-scale lawn product businesses in the future—relying on experience with their current target group of 16 stores and nurseries to guide their efforts. Feedback and survey results will help lead CCSWCD staff members as they work to find new ways to promote their “YardScaping for a healthy Maine” message.

[For more information, contact Tamara Lee Pinard, Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District, 35 Main Street, Suite 3, Windham, ME 04062. E-mail: tamara@cumberlandswcd.org; Phone: 207-892-4700; Web: www.cumberlandswcd.org.]

Reviews and Announcements

Benefits of Low Impact Development Outlined in New EPA Report

EPA has published *Reducing Stormwater Costs through Low Impact Development (LID) Strategies and Practices*, a new report that highlights 17 case studies from across North America that show the economic viability of LID practices. The report found that, in almost all cases, using LID practices in lieu of conventional development and stormwater management practices reduced project costs while improving environmental performance. Total capital savings in each case study ranged from 15 to 80 percent, with a few exceptions in which LID project costs were higher than conventional stormwater management costs. For a copy of the report, see www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid/costs07.

Country's Largest Permeable Parking Lot Unveiled

The Illinois Sports Facilities Authority (ISFA), developer, owner and operator of U.S. Cellular Field in Chicago, recently unveiled the first environmentally friendly permeable paving parking lot to be used by a Major League sports facility. The new parking lot spans more than six acres and is the largest permeable paving parking lot in the country. The permeable paving system allows water to infiltrate and collect below the paving surface, substantially reducing or eliminating the amount of water entering the city's stormwater system and reducing localized flooding. The detained water is eventually absorbed into the subgrade below the surface and released naturally back into the environment, filtering out most contaminants. For more information, see the April 8, 2008 ISFA press release at www.isfaauthority.com.

EPA Launches New Smart Growth Podcast Series

In June 2008 EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds posted *From Gray Funnels to Green Sponges*, its first podcast in a planned series of audio programs about smart growth and green development. Hosted by EPA's Jamal Kadri, this program features a discussion with EPA's senior urban designer and smart growth expert Clark Wilson on how communities can more effectively manage rainwater and snow melt where it falls. Green streets can make great places, preserve water quality and restore our nation's waterways. These and other practices such as rain gardens and green roofs are helping many urban communities (e.g., Portland, Chicago, and Washington, D.C.) manage stormwater runoff as well as provide aesthetic benefits. In addition, green streets and other environmentally friendly landscape designs can help minimize the urban heat island effect, reduce a community's carbon footprint, and cool the planet. To access the podcast, see www.epa.gov/owow/podcasts.

EPA also offers archived versions of Watershed Academy Webcasts as podcasts (see www.epa.gov/watershedwebcasts).