



Massachusetts Municipal Association

MMA BEST PRACTICES SERIES

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MMA Policy Committee on Energy and the Environment

Best Practice Recommendation: Stormwater Public Awareness and Public Education

BEST PRACTICE: Use resources available to municipalities to educate residents and businesses on stormwater pollution and how they can help maintain water quality. This practice is a companion to the 2016 best practice: Join a Stormwater Management Coalition (January 2016, Volume 1, Number 14).

The recently released Massachusetts Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System General Permit, known as the MS4 permit, will regulate stormwater in approximately 260 municipalities. The MS4 permit requires communities to provide outreach materials about stormwater to four different audiences: residential, commercial, developers and industrial. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has provided educational materials that can be customized by cities and towns to meet the requirements of the MS4 permit. Educational materials are also available from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and stormwater coalitions.

In addition to meeting the requirements of the permit, it can be helpful for communities to consider how they can educate the public on the overall issue of stormwater runoff and find ways to involve residents in stormwater management. To comply with further stormwater permits, municipalities will have to allocate more funds toward stormwater and general water infrastructure costs. Municipalities may struggle to get buy-in from residents who do not have a clear understanding of stormwater runoff and the problems caused by stormwater pollution.

Municipalities should consider the following strategies to educate the public about stormwater and to get residents involved:

- Develop a stormwater education campaign to educate various audiences and communities about stormwater pollution, its causes, and how those audiences can help to improve water quality. Some states and cities have conducted stormwater education campaigns that can be used as models. The city of San Diego and state of Maine used the "Think Blue" campaign to educate various audiences and communities in a simple and effective way about stormwater pollution, what causes it, and how they can help to improve water quality. Municipalities may want to enlist the assistance of the town's cable television department, local colleges, or vocational schools to work on projects related to stormwater, such as creation of a public service announcement, educational programs and mapping.
- Develop and promote educational programs in schools. Students could be educated through reading materials, field trips to learn about the work done by local DPWs, or a project such as making a video about stormwater.

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- Partner with others working on stormwater education through statewide organizations, regional stormwater coalitions and nongovernmental organizations.
- Identify and share the work being done by departments in your community related to stormwater, and start an interdepartmental working group. These steps can help to accurately determine costs and share materials. This information is important to ensure full awareness by all departments working on the issue, and will allow local taxpayers to better understand that stormwater issues have cost implications across many municipal departments.

Resources:

Department of Environmental Protection: Stormwater Outreach Materials to Help Towns Comply with the MS4 Permit
www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/wastewater/stormwater-outreach-materials-for-ms4-permit.html

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: Background on Massachusetts Small MS4 General Permit
www3.epa.gov/region1/npdes/stormwater/MS4_MA.html

National Association of Clean Water Agency's National Stormwater Advocacy Network
www.nacwa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=382&Itemid=100

National Municipal Stormwater Alliance: <http://nationalstormwateralliance.org>

Think Blue Maine Campaign: www.thinkbluemaine.org