

Section 11: EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

INTRODUCTION

Education and public awareness is essential to effective water resources management. The 2003 Wastewater Management Plan developed an education and public awareness program that has made significant progress in reaching the Metro Water District population with its messages on wastewater and septic system maintenance over the last five years.

The Metro Water District education and awareness program is specifically designed to:

- Raise public awareness of water issues and needs to foster support for solutions
- Educate the public and identified target groups in order to increase awareness and encourage behavioral changes
- Coordinate with other public as well as private entities to maximize the visibility of the Metro Water District and its messages

The Metro Water District education and public awareness program is comprised of two elements: a regional program managed by the Metro Water District staff; and education activities undertaken by local governments. The Metro Water District provides a regional education and public awareness program, through the Clean Water Campaign. The Clean Water Campaign works through the Education TCC to expand upon the key wastewater management themes identified in this plan and develop mass media content and educational tools. The local government's role in the education and public awareness program is to reach out to specific groups in their community, provide education materials and share knowledge of subject matter with the public through specific education and outreach activities. Without local implementation of the education program the full potential of this plan cannot be realized.

The following pages outline key messages, the identified targeted audiences and the various delivery techniques. This is followed by an overview of the Metro Water District's regional education and public awareness program and activities. The final part of this section includes the local education and public awareness requirements.

EDUCATION & PUBLIC AWARENESS APPROACH

WASTEWATER MESSAGES

The Metro Water District along with the Wastewater TCC has created central messages, identified below, for both the regional and local wastewater management education and public awareness program.

- The Metro Water District places a priority on protecting our water resources through advanced levels of treatment, through best technologies, and the careful placement of effluent discharge.
- Wastewater is a valuable resource that needs to be recycled to meet the growing water demands.
- Consolidation and creation of large wastewater facilities may allow for more efficient and reliable wastewater treatment.
- Education is necessary on management of septic systems to maximize their effectiveness while minimizing the negative impacts on the environment. This needs to be accomplished through proper siting, installation, maintenance, and monitoring of septic systems.
- A continuous sewer system inspection and maintenance effort will substantially reduce spills and overflows to property and streams.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Identifying stakeholders helps in tailoring messages and education materials. While regional wastewater messages will be consistent, specific information may be more applicable to certain audiences. The Metro Water District has identified the appropriate target audiences for the Wastewater Management Plan in Table 11-1.

TABLE 11-1
Education Focus for Target Audiences

Target Audience	Education Focus
Homeowners	Homeowners must be educated about what not to put in the toilet or down the drain. This includes education on proper grease disposal to prevent sewage blockages in their home's plumbing system as well as the city's / county's collection system. Proper pharmaceuticals disposal is another area that homeowners need to be educated about because it is easier to reduce the initial source of these chemicals to the environment than remove these chemicals through water or wastewater treatment processes.
Septic System Owners	Both commercial and residential owners of septic systems need to be educated on ways to preserve the life of their septic system. This includes education that they have a septic system and are not on a sewer system. This group also needs to be educated about the need for regular maintenance as well as every day steps that need to be taken to preserve the effectiveness of their septic system. An example of this would be to know where the drainfield is located and not drive vehicles over it, build anything on top of it or plant any large vegetation over the drainfield.

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Restaurant / Food Service Industry	The education for this group needs to focus on the effect grease can have on a sewer collection system and the water quality problems associated with sanitary sewer overflows caused by grease blockages.
Water Professionals	Metro Water District Wastewater Management Plan goals and requirements.
Local Government Staff	This audience requires recurring messages due to the changes in personnel. Because they are influential figures, members of the community will contact them with questions and suggestions. They are also in a position to spread information regarding Metro Water District activities.
Local Elected Officials / Governing Boards	It is important that elected officials understand the importance of managing and maintaining the sewer collection system and the need for future sewer / septic system area planning. This education should also include the water quality problems that may occur when sewer collection systems and septic systems are not properly managed. Importance of promoting and sufficiently funding the implementation of the Metro Water District's wastewater management measures.
Builders / Developers / Septic Installers	It is important to educate this group on the effect initial site design and installation has on long-term septic system performance.
Industrial Pre-Treatment	Education is needed on the effect that a strong wastewater effluent has on a local government's wastewater treatment facilities performance.
County Board of Health	The education for this group needs to focus on coordination with other local government personnel and departments. This group should be used as a resource for assisting in identifying septic system critical areas and should be kept informed of the educational materials available from the Metro Water District on septic system maintenance. This group should be utilized to refine the messages used to educate homeowners about proper septic system use and maintenance.

DELIVERY TECHNIQUES

There are a number of ways to reach target audiences in a public education effort both at a local and regional level. Some examples of these delivery methods are outlined below.

Internet

- **Website** – An internet site or page can provide an inexpensive way to foster awareness and education of wastewater management issues at the community or regional level. A website can also serve as an information clearinghouse for other educational materials, and provide resources and additional links for target groups such as the general public, the development communities and various industries.

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- **Email** – Email newsletters can provide information on upcoming outreach events as well as tips on nonpoint source pollution control for targeted audiences and the general public. Email is often the least expensive way to reach a larger number of individuals and entities.
- **Streaming media** – Tools such as streaming audio and video, webcasts, online training workshops and other interactive electronic media tools provide additional opportunities for reaching target audiences.

Printed Materials

- **Brochures & Fact Sheets** – Brochures, fact sheets and other literature can be for general information or provide messages and tips specific to a particular topic or target group. Printed materials often complement other education and public awareness activities such as public outreach events, workshops and on-site inspections of businesses.
- **Bill Inserts** – Printed materials can be designed to accompany utility bills or other correspondence to local citizens and businesses. Inserts can include brochures, newsletters, tips on best management practices and events notices. Bill inserts are an excellent way to distribute educational materials without additional postage expenses.
- **CD / DVDs** – CD and DVD-ROMs are mediums for providing interactive educational material and are especially well-suited for youth and classroom education. In addition, video DVDs can be used to distribute content such as public service announcements (PSAs), video programs and instructional/training videos.
- **Posters** – Wall posters provide a great deal of information quickly to the target audience at a stationary location and can be displayed at locations such as libraries, schools and other public locations.

Mass Media

- **Press Relations** – Both local communities and the Metro Water District can work with the media to ensure coverage of wastewater management issues and activities. This can include both articles and events listings in general circulation newspapers, specialty papers and regional magazines; radio and television interviews; features on radio and television news and public affairs programming; and coverage of events such as septic workshops and grease management training.
- **Television Public Service Announcements** – Television advertising using PSAs provide an immediate impact with a visual message. Broadcast channels reach a wide audience but are high-priced. Cable television offers local communities the ability to target their citizens and even tailor advertising to specific channels and audiences.
- **Radio Public Service Announcements** – Radio PSAs are an alternative to television and provide a less expensive way to reach a large number of individuals with septic and sewer messages and tips.
- **Outdoor Advertising** – Billboards and other outdoor advertising such as bus shelter ads can be a way to reach audiences through a different medium. These outdoor ads are well suited to short theme messages and specific tips on grease management.

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- **Other Advertising** – Other advertising methods that may be considered include movie theater PSAs, paid ads in newspapers and print magazines, and sponsorship of traffic and/or weather spots on radio.

Outreach and Involvement

- **Workshops** – Workshops and seminars are opportunities to provide more detailed information and training to citizens, businesses and industry groups.
- **Speakers Bureau** – A speakers bureau provides an opportunity for government staff and other professionals to address community organizations, business groups, homeowners' associations, church groups and educational institutions on issues related to wastewater management.
- **Events** – Hosting or participation in community events provides an opportunity for the distribution of information and resources directly to target communities. In addition, topic-specific events such as watershed fairs and river/stream cleanups are an important way to involve citizens directly in wastewater management efforts.
- **Kiosks / Exhibits** – A kiosk or exhibit provides a way to present information and educational messages at workshops and other events. Exhibits may be permanent or portable and can have static displays, videos or interactive features. Portable display boards are often effective for use at events or workshops.
- **Promotional Items** – Promotional giveaways such as magnets, pencils and bumper stickers, can be imprinted with wastewater management tips and distributed at community events, schools and workshops.

REGIONAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM

Over the years, the Metro Water District has developed a comprehensive education and public awareness plan that includes all the elements outlined in this section. A regional education and public awareness program has many benefits including reducing duplication of effort, improving cost effectiveness by sharing costs, and expanding the size and scale of education efforts to include mass media such as television and radio advertising.

These benefits were recognized in 2000 by 19 metro area local governments which formed the Clean Water Campaign, a regional stormwater education program. In order to maximize local governments' education funds, the Clean Water Campaign became the Metro Water District's comprehensive stormwater education campaign. The Clean Water Campaign not only focuses on stormwater education, but also water pollution in general. The wastewater messages are closely aligned with the Clean Water Campaign, by educating the public and identified target groups on how to protect water quality by making behavior changes as they relate to sewer and septic discharge. The Clean Water Campaign provides a number of educational resources on wastewater such as brochures, posters, television PSAs, videos and promotional items.

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TABLE 11-2
Educational Materials Available to Local Governments by the Metro Water District

Educational Tools	Description
Brochures	The Metro Water District provides camera ready brochures for local governments to personalize with their own logo and contact information. These files are available for all Clean Water Campaign and septic system educational materials.
CD/DVD	The Metro Water District provides a number of educational materials such as PowerPoint presentations, videos and public service announcements.
Presentations	The Metro Water District provides pre-packaged presentations with speaker's notes on a variety of topics such as Septic Maintenance and Care and Grease Management.
Clean Water Campaign Website	The Metro Water District provides a comprehensive water pollution prevention education campaign, the Clean Water Campaign. The Clean Water Campaign has a website, www.cleanwatercampaign.com . The website provides news articles, an event calendar which includes workshops, training and community events. This website also allows citizens to report water polluters anonymously.
Exhibits	The Metro Water District has a mobile exhibit board and "water drop" costume available to loan to local governments for community events. The mobile exhibit board has facts and tips on water pollution prevention. Local governments can also customize the exhibit board with local information.
Press Materials	The Metro Water District provides templates for press releases, fact sheets, news articles, flyers, mailers and newsletter inserts to be used by local governments.

A large portion of the regional education and public awareness program is the media campaign. The regional media campaign is made up of paid advertising through a variety of outlets such as television, radio, outdoor, theatre and print advertising. In the past, the Metro Water District has partnered with local television stations to air water pollution prevention PSAs and create additional water pollution prevention PSAs with local weather personalities.

Clean Water Campaign messages are also developed into radio PSAs or embedded into traffic reports on nearly 30 radio stations within the Atlanta region. The media campaign has proven successful in educating the public on water pollution prevention. An annual survey is conducted on behalf of the Clean Water Campaign to gauge the effectiveness of the regional education campaign. The survey reveals overwhelmingly that the public are aware of the Clean Water Campaign and its messages.

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In addition to the educational resources of the Clean Water Campaign, additional wastewater educational materials can be found on the Metro Water District website. Information on the website includes wastewater and septic system basics, sanitary sewer management and septic system management information. Wastewater educational materials have been developed by the Metro Water District including:

- **Septic System Status and Issues Working Paper** – This white paper was developed in 2005/2006 to promote a better understanding of the issues surrounding septic systems in the Metro Water District. This document educated local governments, elected officials and other stakeholders on the challenges related to septic systems. The document outlines the background on septic system function and types, the management of septic systems in Georgia, and the results from a septic system survey performed by the Metro Water District.
- **Septic System Maintenance Folder** – Proper management and maintenance of septic systems has been a strong homeowner education message for the Metro Water District. Over 20 percent of the Metro Water District is served by septic systems and proper maintenance is critical for protecting and preserving water quality. The Metro Water District, working with the Septic System Subcommittee, developed a septic system maintenance folder for homeowners to be distributed by the local governments. The folder provides space to record important information and maintenance records for the homeowner’s septic system as well as providing tips for proper use and maintenance.
- **Septic System Maintenance video** – The Metro Water District website includes a link to Georgia DHR septic information including a video that is provided to all homeowners buying new homes on septic systems after April 1, 2007.

The Education TCC, BAC and the Metro Water District have outlined a few topics that should be addressed over the next five years.

- The proper disposal of pharmaceuticals is a new issue identified in the Wastewater Management Plan. Educating the public on the proper disposal of pharmaceuticals and household chemicals is needed. There is a national public awareness campaign sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the American Pharmacists Association, and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America that may be helpful in developing the regional program and messages.
- The proper maintenance of septic systems has always been a message in the Wastewater Management Plan. Homeowners should know whether they are served by septic systems or sanitary sewer and how to properly maintain their septic system.
- The Wastewater Management Plan requires local utilities to develop a grease management program. A component of this is educating the public about the proper disposal of fats, oils, and grease (FOG). The presence of FOG in a sewer collection system continues to present maintenance challenges for wastewater collections personnel as well as causing water quality problems when sanitary sewer overflows occur due to grease blockage.
- There are several types of reuse: non-potable or “purple pipe” reuse; indirect potable reuse; and grey water.

Indirect potable reuse – returning treated wastewater to water supply sources. Indirect potable reuse (IPR) has always occurred, but is now planned to sustain water resources. Positive examples of IPR in the Metro Water District include Clayton County Water

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Authority Constructed Wastewater Treatment Wetlands and Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources' discharge to Lake Lanier.

Non-potable reuse – distribution and reuse of treated wastewater effluent used for irrigation or industrial processes.

Grey water reuse utilizes water from showers and lavatories. Grey water reuse inside the home is currently not allowed due to restrictions within the current plumbing code. Using grey water to flush toilets is currently being considered at the state level, but until the plumbing code is revised, it is not a recommended element of the Wastewater Management Plan.

- Minimizing inflow and infiltration (I/I) and overflows through proper system maintenance is an important component of the Wastewater Management Plan. Education on the proper use of the sewer system such as items that should not be flushed or the impacts of vandalism on the system. Missing manhole covers can increase I/I problems as well as present a safety concern so the public should be enlisted in reporting missing covers. Additionally, educating the public on the identification and reporting of sanitary sewer overflows can help improve response time.

The Metro Water District will continue to work through the Education TCC and the Metro Water District Staff to create educational resources to support these topics. The success of both the regional and local education and public awareness programs can only be successful if the Metro Water District and the local governments continue to partner to reach the identified targeted audiences with the outlined key messages.

LOCAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM

The goal of local education programs is to achieve awareness of wastewater management issues with the goal of building public support for local actions and activities as well as changing behaviors that leads to the long-term protection of our water resources. Involving the public in local wastewater efforts is crucial because it promotes broader public support, helps create an ethic of stewardship and community service and enables the public to make informed choices about water resources management. Changes in basic behavior and practices are necessary to achieve maximum, long-term improvements in water quality.

On a local level, Metro Water District communities are responsible for developing their own local education and public awareness programs that help both individual citizens as well as business and organizations to become aware of their role in water pollution prevention. This includes general information on wastewater management and issues as well as ways to prevent common sources of water pollution.

LOCAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

When developing a local education and public awareness program, communities are required to include both public education and outreach, as well as public participation and involvement activities:

- **Education and outreach activities** are designed to distribute educational materials and messages, and perform outreach to inform citizens and target audiences.

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- **Public participation and involvement activities** provide opportunities for citizens to participate in programs and active implementation of watershed protection programs, such as community events and speaking engagements.

Communities in the Metro Water District are required to implement a minimum number of education and outreach, and public participation and involvement activities annually as part of their local education program as shown in Table 11-3. Table 11-4 provides some examples of activities that could be considered as public education and outreach versus public participation and involvement. To provide support in meeting the local public education requirements of the Wastewater Management Plan a list of additional public education resources are outlined in Table 11-5. These minimum education and outreach programs may be in coordination with other Metro Water District communities, local water/wastewater providers, Keep Georgia Beautiful affiliates, or other local education partners.

TABLE 11-3
Minimum Local Education/Outreach and Public Participation/Involvement Requirements

Population	Education and Outreach Activities	Public Participation and Involvement Activities
All communities	1	1

TABLE 11-4
Wastewater Example Education/Outreach and Public Participation/Involvement Activities

Education and Outreach Activities	Public Participation and Involvement Activities
Bill stuffers or Newsletters	Community Workshops
Brochures at local government facilities	Wastewater treatment facility tours
Website with wastewater education information	Water festivals
Speakers bureau presentations	Citizen advisory group
Local TV station programming	School classroom education
Other innovative education and outreach activities	Other innovative public participation and involvement activities

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TABLE 11-5
Wastewater Public Education Resources

Public Education Resources	
Materials	Materials Description/Resource Location
Metro Water District Materials	
Clean Water Campaign Resources	Various water resource and pollution prevention printed media, audio and video and teachers resources. http://www.cleanwatercampaign.com
Georgia EPD Materials	
Pollution Prevention Assistance Division	Fats, oils, and grease educational materials http://www.p2ad.org
Georgia Project Wet	Water Education Resources for Teachers http://gaprojectwet.org
Adopt-a-Stream	Volunteer Water Sampling and Monitoring Program http://www.georgiaadoptastream.org
River of Words	Poetry, Writing and Art program for K-12 http://gaprojectwet.org
Rivers Alive	Annual Volunteer Waterway Cleanup http://www.riversalive.com
Georgia Outdoors	Public Broadcasting Television Show to inform about preserving Georgia's Natural Resources http://www.gpb.org
Georgia DHR	
Georgia DHR	Education materials on proper septic system design, installation, use and maintenance. http://health.state.ga.us/programs/envservices/index.asp
Other Public Education Materials	
Georgia FOG Alliance	http://www.georgiafog.com/
Georgia Association of Water Professionals	Student and Teacher Resources link to materials websites all water resources http://www.gawponline.org/resources.htm
UGA Urban Agriculture	Various resources on septic systems. http://ugaonsite.com/