



## Bring Your Ideas to the Community

No matter who you are, you have the power to educate your community about the benefits of sustainable stormwater best management practices (BMPs). Having the support of other groups can build momentum and help you achieve support to make changes happen throughout your community.

### Before you go public...

#### ***Do your homework***

Before launching your campaign, be sure that you have all the facts at your disposal. Research innovative stormwater management BMPs and other topics that might support your message. Also, know the regulatory requirements of your community as well as any state or federal rules that may impact stormwater management in your area. If you have a particular project in mind, identify how sustainable stormwater BMPs can be integrated into the design and how to work within the existing regulatory framework.

#### ***Define your audience***

Determine which groups you would like to talk to. Different groups will have different resources to bring to the table and can play different roles in beginning or continuing a drive towards better BMP implementation. As you consider different stakeholders, remember that each group has its own approach to and level of familiarity with stormwater management. Keep this in mind as you consider your approach and determine at which point different groups are brought into the conversation.

#### **Stakeholder:**

A person or organization that has a legitimate interest in a project or entity. This person or organization will, or is likely to, be affected by the design, installation, or final execution of the project.

#### ***Develop your communication strategy***

Use what you know about stormwater best management practices and your target audiences to develop a communication strategy for your ideas and projects. If you plan on talking with multiple groups, consider how you might tailor your message to keep it relevant to each party. Talk to as many people as possible to generate interest and support for an innovative approach to stormwater management. This is the time to determine what you want to say, how you are going to say it, and what form your message will take.

As you develop your message, consider the following:

- Quantify benefits – give hard numbers or estimates of cost savings, pollutant reductions, flood mitigation, and other measures of success.
- Use just enough information to get your message across - even if your project is multi-functional and has many aspects, it is not necessary to talk about all of these aspects with every group.
- Determine which phase of the development process is most appropriate to begin the conversation. Are you trying to convince a certain group to implement stormwater BMPs as part of a new project? Has a project already started and you wish to introduce BMPs into the design? Do you want public education to continue beyond the installation phase?

- Use examples – Show photos and describe projects you consider successful. Also show what you're trying to avoid (e.g., unattractive drainage structures, standing water, weeds).

### **Communication Strategies**

- Meet with a group or individual with influence in your community to garner support for your ideas.
- Hold a public meeting to discuss ideas with a variety of stakeholders.
- Build a website that describes your proposed approach or project.
- Go door-to-door to speak with neighbors who might be affected by the project.

Be creative when searching for communication methods. The greater the number of approaches you use, the more likely it is that you will strike a chord with your audience, giving you the vital connection for productive communication.

### **Topics to Address**

As you consider the topics to address in your discussions, consider the possible questions and concerns of your target group. Try to anticipate what information might be most convincing or which aspects of the plan or project might be most relevant. Some possible topics to address include:

- Information about how the BMP can improve water quality and reduce flooding.
- How your project will beautify the neighborhood and offer other benefits, such as recreation.
- How sustainable stormwater practices can be combined with more traditional practices.
- Information about maintenance requirements and how they can be addressed.
- How the BMP will help meet regulatory requirements.
- Examples of successful projects (to show that such projects can be successful and accepted by the community, not necessarily as a blueprint for implementation).

Whenever possible, connect BMP implementation to numbers:

- How much money can be saved?
- How much flooding can you prevent?
- How much less drainage infrastructure will you need?
- How much can you save on long-term maintenance costs?
- What can you save in stormwater utility fees?

### **A word about stakeholder involvement**

Make stakeholders want to feel that they have participated in and contributed to the project. Be sure to listen to the feedback you get from the people you talk with and encourage open dialogue. This will facilitate future communication, bolster feelings of trust and mutual respect, and improve buy-in and support. Remember, your ideas, issues and values may not be the same as those from other groups. It does NOT mean that their ideas are not important or valid.

### **You may also be interested in:**

[The Language of Change  
Benefits of Green Development  
Drivers and Motivating Factors](#)

[What Makes a Project Successful?  
Using Rainwater to Grow Livable Communities](#)