STORMWATER AWARENESS: THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

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Introduction

- Stormwater is a major source of pollution
- And, two management practices are public education and engagement
- But, stormwater infrastructure is not frequently seen
- Therefore, it is challenging to raise awareness

Research Question

What are best practices used in public education and engagement programs that increase public awareness of stormwater pollution?

Internship and Methods

- I interned with Seattle Public Utilities' Pollution Prevention Community Engagement team
- Assisted in workshops and lead a group through a neighborhood drainage exercise
- Developed and administered a pre- and post-survey to youth participating in workshops to design a stormwater awareness mural
- Conducted a literature review of current research on outreach and engagement programs

Results

Education Programs

- Literature suggests small to moderately sized groups in classroom style teaching
- Interactive group activities
  - “Make and use art, murals, and sculptures” - Survey response
- Survey results suggest developing skills to influence change in personal lives and communities is most desired
  - “Tell them about the issue, tell them about possible rewards and benefits” - Survey response
  - “Showing them what to do” - Survey response

Engagement Programs

- Literature suggests using:
  - Exercises that expose individuals to the infrastructure in their neighborhood
    - “Make a separate sewer and make sure only stormwater can be in it” - Survey response
  - Participating in infrastructure projects that are directly influenced by participants
    - “Talk to the community on social media” - Survey response
  - Expert guests working directly on projects related to pollution in the local area

Significance

- The importance of this research is understanding the impact stormwater awareness has on young minds
- Increase the amount of engagement opportunities within a community
- Creating young leaders in a community with skills to make change
- Further application is the urgent education of the public in areas affected by seasonal flooding events in our region (Figure 2)

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