

Executive Summary

Runoff from Fundraiser Car Washing

A Situational Analysis

Fundraiser car washes are a popular way for local Kitsap County groups to raise money. However, studies show that runoff from car washing can have a negative affect on local waterways and habitat. Kitsap County has a responsibility under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II permit (NPDES Phase II) issued in February 2007 to ensure that discharges from the county-maintained stormwater system do not negatively impact local waterways and habitat. Under this permit, runoff from car washing is classified as an illicit or non-stormwater discharge and must be addressed through education and/or enforcement. In addition, local commercial car wash owners are required to invest in and maintain costly treatment systems, yet owners/operators of properties that allow fundraiser car washes—a similar activity—are not held to the same water quality standard. This Situational Analysis reviews and summarizes the issues and past solutions. It will be used as a tool to determine the best approach to address runoff from fundraiser car washes in Kitsap County.

Since 1994, Kitsap County has been working to address the issue of runoff from fundraiser car washes. Various programs and alternatives have been implemented. Through this work, staff has learned that:

- Staff availability to provide car wash kits that redirect car wash runoff from fundraiser car washes is costly, difficult to implement due to varying schedules, and limited to only 3-4 events throughout the county per day.
- Providing car wash kits to certain sites requires periodic inspection to ensure the equipment is being installed and used properly.
- Providing car wash kits provides no guarantee or incentive for property owners or fundraising groups to choose this alternative if traditional parking lot car wash fundraisers are still allowed.
- Even if car wash kits are used vigilantly, many locations do not have adequate access to sewer. Instead, runoff from car washing is directed to pervious areas, which are usually small landscaped areas. Pollutants may build up on these landscaped areas and be released during intense rain events.
- Attempting to identify groups and discuss available alternatives is made difficult due to the varied groups who hold fundraiser car washes.
- As an alternative to parking lot car washes, many local commercial car wash operators have agreed to accept coupons sold by fundraiser groups for a basic car wash.
- According to Kitsap County Code, property owners are responsible for the maintenance of their stormwater system and prevention of non-stormwater discharges, also known as “illicit discharges” per County Code, so property owners are a natural choice for addressing this issue.
- Although the exact impact of each illicit discharge is unknown, the cumulative impact of these discharges has the potential to severely degrade stream and nearshore water quality and habitat.

Recommended Solutions

Runoff from car washing has received local and regional media attention in 2009. Car washing, both fundraiser and residential, is a “hot-button” issue which can interfere with the education process. The selected approach to prevent runoff from car wash activity from entering the storm drainage system is

educating property owners and managers. Kitsap County Surface and Stormwater Management Program (KCSSWM) will:

- Perform an illicit (non-stormwater) discharge education campaign targeting commercial and residential property owners. The campaign will focus on: 1) prevention of non-stormwater discharges, 2) the impacts of non-stormwater discharges to Puget Sound, and 3) solutions to preventing the most common non-stormwater discharges.
- Include runoff from car washing (residential, fleet, courtesy, and fundraising) as a component of the illicit (non-stormwater) discharge education program.
- Raise awareness that stormwater flows to surface waters with little or no treatment.
- Integrate the education and awareness messages with existing educational programs such as Local Source Control, Water Pollution Hotline, Drain Marker Project, Commercial Property Inspection Program and Youth Education Program.

KCSSWM will create an Illicit Discharge Education and Outreach Plan for implementation in 2010. The plan will incorporate these recommended solutions.

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