

NPDES Stormwater Education and Public Outreach Workshop



On September 28th the University of Delaware's Water Resources Agency (WRA), a unit of the School of Public Policy & Administration's Institute for Public Administration, hosted a workshop to discuss stormwater education and public outreach. This workshop specifically involved discussion of tools and methods to meet the stormwater-education requirements of the EPA's National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The workshop was funded through an award received from the Delaware Center for Transportation (DCT).

In Delaware there are more than 5,000 miles of roadways to maintain and manage. These roadways are a significant source of stormwater runoff and are thereby regulated by a NPDES permit. The named permittees on the NPDES permit that is the focus of

this grant are New Castle County, DelDOT, and six municipalities (Bellefonte, Elsmere, Middletown, Wilmington, New Castle, and Delaware City). In this permit each of these entities is authorized to discharge stormwater from/through portions of the municipal separate stormwater sewer system (MS4) located in New Castle County, Del. One requirement of this permit is that the permittees must meet specific education and outreach goals related to stormwater runoff.

This workshop was an interactive approach to educate the participants about the tools that are available to help meet the public education and outreach requirements in the NPDES permit. There were 18 participants from a variety of organizations, including DelDOT, New Castle County, the City of Wilmington, Delaware City, the Town of Elsmere, the Town of Middletown, the University of Delaware, and the White Clay Wild and Scenic Management Committee. Eric Eckyl of Water Words That Work, LLC, led the workshop.

The workshop participants learned about several essential components of marketing and educating the public about specific topics that relate directly to the stormwater goals of the permit. Eckyl discussed the importance of creating a focused message and targeting a specific audience or group with this message. Eckyl discussed a multitude of available information sources about the audience one is targeting. For example, he provided statistics on the population of New Castle County, one specific area on which the outreach and education campaign will be focusing. Eckyl noted that according to the U.S. Census, New Castle County's population is 538,479, it is 66 percent white, and the educational attainment of those who are age 25 and older is as follows:

- 32% have earned a 4-year degree or higher.
- 88% have a high school degree or higher.
- 12% did not complete high school.
- The per capita income is \$31,071.
- The home ownership rate is 71%.
- 10% live below the poverty level.

Each of these factors is critical in developing a campaign that will reach and be meaningful to the residents in New Castle County. This type of information was also provided for the State of Delaware, City of Newark, and Town of Middletown.

In addition to knowing one's target audience, Eckyl discussed the importance of making a real impression and changing behavior based on the message one develops. For example, how many people read the newspaper ad or heard the commercial and then volunteered at the event or signed the pollution-prevention pledge? Moving people to act based on an ad or commercial or some other marketing tool is critical to getting the message out and achieving a successful education and outreach campaign.

Following the project workshop, WRA's **Martha Corrozi Narvaez** and **Andrew Homsey** will draft a report to discuss previous research on stormwater education and outreach campaigns, ideas discussed at the workshop, and a plan forward to meet the NPDES stormwater education and outreach requirements of the permit. This will be completed by early Spring 2012.

—by Martha Corrozi Narvaez

photo by Nicole Minni