

WATER STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

A NON POINT SOURCE RESIDENTIAL BEHAVIOR CHANGE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

Overview

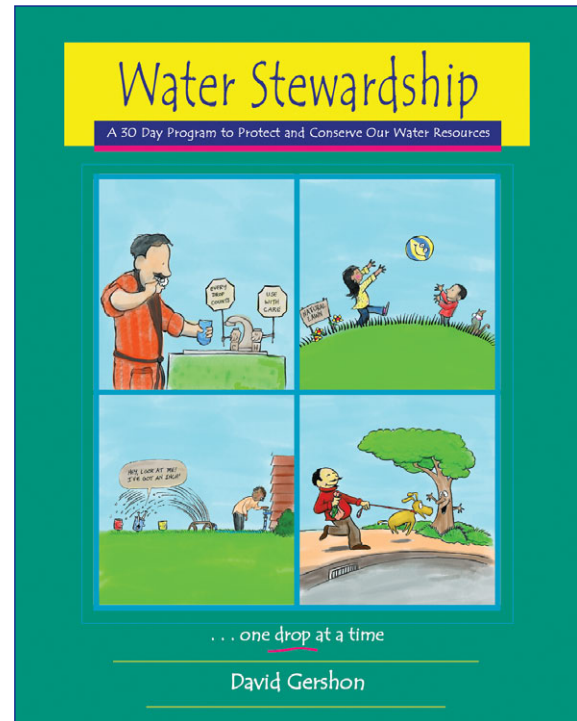
A foundation for the success of any watershed organization or local government involved in watershed protection is reducing household non point source pollution. Indeed, having an effective residential non point source education and outreach program has now become a necessity for communities affected by US EPA's Phase II NPDES Storm Water Requirements. Watershed organizations and local governments need tools that move citizens beyond awareness to behavior change; and generate enough participation to make a measurable difference in non point source pollution in their watershed.

Empowerment Institute (EI) has a proven track record in community-based household behavior change programs, citizen recruitment strategies and management systems. These programs have successfully changed environmental behaviors of over 250,000 people in the US, Canada and Europe. Dozens of local government and non profit organizations have utilized these tools to achieve their program objectives. Studies indicate EI's programs are successful in achieving and sustaining significant behavior change. One major academic study stated these tools are "unsurpassed in changing behavior."

EI has applied this expertise to designing a residential non point source behavior change and outreach program. The long-term goal of this program is to strengthen the capacity of local governments and watershed organizations in implementing an effective residential non point source pollution strategy. The program may be used in a generic format or can be customized to meet the specific needs of the municipality or non profit organization. It is delivered by municipal or non-profit staff who receive program materials, comprehensive training and coaching from EI.

The Program Tools

1. A 65-page workbook entitled: *Water Stewardship: A 30 Day Program to Protect and Conserve Our Water Resources*. This contains 32 behavior change actions and action plans for each of three topics: water quality, water conservation and community volunteering/advocacy. The book can be customized to include a local introduction, community resources and statements from elected officials.



2. A team leader handbook. This provides detailed scripts for neighbor-to-neighbor recruitment, a neighborhood information meeting and team management.
3. A one-day team leader training. In the training, team leaders learn to apply Empowerment Institute's sophisticated, yet easy-to-use program tools of neighbor-to-neighbor recruitment, meeting facilitation and coaching.
4. A capacity building program for local governments and watershed organizations: This is a 1-year program consisting of a 2-day training on the above tools and program implementation with follow-up consulting for the campaign management team and master classes for participating watershed organizations, local government agencies and volunteer outreach coordinators.

How the Program Works

1. This program will help you take the necessary actions to better steward your community's precious water resources.
2. You can do the program either with your household family members or as part of a peer support group of friends, neighbors, co-workers, or members of your faith community or civic organization—an EcoTeam. A good size for an EcoTeam is 5 to 8 households.
3. In either format, the program is designed to be completed in 4 meetings that take place every 10 to 14 days. A team initiator runs the meetings using scripts located in the support section of this workbook. Meetings last 1.5 to 2 hours, with several hours needed between meetings to take the actions selected. If you do the program as an individual household and live with others, turn your household members into a team and adapt the meeting scripts accordingly. If you live alone and choose to do this on your own, use the program's suggested time sequence as a structure to keep you motivated.
4. The first meeting is devoted to team-building. This is the foundation for all the work that follows. You will prepare for the program, build a team, and learn about your current environmental impact and opportunities to make improvements.
5. Before each meeting, you read all the actions from the related workbook pages and decide which ones you will take. Then in the Action Log, located at the beginning of each section, enter the day and time you plan to do them. If you live with others, discuss your plan with them to get their ideas and participation. Bring your Action Log to the meeting along with any requests you might have for team support.
6. At the meeting, you review actions taken over the prior two weeks and share your action plan for the next two weeks. Your team will then help you finetune your plan and provide support and inspiration to carry it out.
7. That's it! Have fun as you make life better for your family, neighbors, and all those who partake in nature's fragile ecosystem.

Quantifiable Results

In its pilot phase, the program achieved the following results. For other communities, these results will vary depending on many factors.

- ▷ 43% recruitment rate in neighbor-to-neighbor outreach
- ▷ 8 households per team
- ▷ 10 actions completed per team member
- ▷ 44% annualized water savings per team
- ▷ 22,000 annualized gallons of water saved per household

A less measurable feature was the social capital built. Program participants met their neighbors and began acting as a community, often for the first time, to build more socially cohesive, safer and healthier neighborhoods. They were transformed from residents to neighbors and from neighbors to engaged citizens.

Participant Feedback

“Our team consisted of a condominium complex in the Falls Church, VA area. We all really enjoyed the program and thought it was very worthwhile. We got to know each other while learning about things we could do right now to have a positive impact on our watershed. As the head of the Grounds Keeping Committee, I was able to instruct the grounds keeping crew to discontinue using pesticides and herbicides, start composting, and cut the grass higher.”
– *Sandy Tarpinian*

“My team of neighbors joined for a wide variety of reasons. One teammate decided to join because ‘the program was so well laid out and fun, why wouldn’t I want to join?’ Another teammate was very interested in the individual actions that he could take. A third teammate said she wanted to take water stewardship actions, and that the support network would help her follow through. Our team rated getting to know each other better very highly. We also felt a strong desire to help out with other issues, so we contacted the Department of Transportation about a water retention pond near us that was not working properly.

My husband and I have also embarked upon a low impact development residential lot retrofit. With assistance from a grant we received, our lot is being “made-over” with a rain garden, infiltration swales, and new water-friendly landscaping. The yard makeover is making our yard more attractive, as the rain garden and swales will be nicely vegetated and mulched.”
– *Stacey Churchill*

“We enjoyed getting to know each other better. We all had a strong appreciation for the individualized nature of the program, which encouraged us to choose the actions each of us wanted. We found the workbook easy to use and take the actions because they were laid out step-by-step. At one of our meetings, we invited the City arborist as a guest speaker to help us implement some of our actions. One household on the team was awarded a small grant to transform their yard to a more water-friendly environment. They uncovered a stream, removed grass and added native plants.”
– *Laurie Huber*

“My neighbors responded very enthusiastically to the invitation to join a Water Stewardship Team and were ready to move into action immediately. Our team of 10 neighbors was very diverse, with renters and homeowners alike answering the call.

Everyone on the team expressed an interest in installing rain barrels. Our team also enjoyed the community building aspect, and held a clean-up of the alley behind our row house one Saturday. All 16 households in the row house participated, staying all day to clear debris, plant grass and herbs, and build communal gardens in the courtyards that had previously silted with storm water runoff. With all the chaos in the world right now, it’s so nice that we can do something positive on our own.”

– *Kate Watters*

“Our team lives in a rural area where everyone is on wells. The big issue for our neighborhood is shallow wells that run dry under drought conditions. Our team was very interested in how we could use water wisely so we aren’t left high and dry in the summertime. In addition, two of our team members were teenagers, who were very interested in experimenting with nontoxic cleaners in their homes. All of my team members reported that they enjoyed their team experience...especially the brownies I served at each meeting.”

– *Jane Bailey*

“Our team consisted of 5 condo dwellers. They enthusiastically embraced the concept that there were things they could do individually and collectively to protect our watershed. We applied for a mini-grant to plant trees around our building. We also made a long-term plan to install a rain barrel and consult with our grounds crew on creating a rain garden.”

– *Scott Knudsen*

Government and Watershed Organization Partners Feedback

“Our river conservation group has struggled for years to develop an effective way to engage and motivate citizens in NPS control activities. The Water Stewardship Program is the first tool we have found that really works. The Program’s focus on neighbor-to-neighbor interaction, along with its highly structured approach makes it much more than just another book with good ideas. We believe this program holds great promise for helping communities develop concrete programs for achieving quantitative NPS reductions. In particular, communities seeking to respond to Phase II Stormwater requirements should be able to use this approach both to meet educational goals, and to secure additional pollutant reductions.”

– *John Tippet, Executive Director, Friends of the Rappahannock*

“Measuring the impact of outreach about NPS pollution is a challenge, especially for local governments whose budgets for education/outreach are often limited. And even if we can measure how many people have seen or heard our message, how do we know if they have made any concrete behavioral changes as a result? Empowerment Institute’s Water Stewardship Program has allowed us to track exactly what changes people made in their lifestyle, and estimate the pollution reduction that results from those changes. It’s definitely an exciting new tool for behavioral change. And one of its unique features is how much fun people have getting together with their neighbors while working on these issues.”

– *Aileen Winquist, Environmental Planner,
Arlington County Department of Environmental Services*

“A lot of the people we reached were new to the concept of watershed management. This program is a great way to help people build a connection to their local environment, as well as to each other.”

– *Annette Mills, Recycling Coordinator, City of Falls Church, VA*

“Creating watershed stewardship teams has been a powerful outreach tool for our community. It has been exciting to observe the teams in action as they complete projects in their homes, yards, and neighborhoods. In addition, I was struck by the program’s ability to successfully attract Team Leaders. Team Leaders, in turn, indicated the program provided them multiple benefits including the leadership skills of coaching, group facilitation, project management and community organizing.”

– *Elenor Hodges, Executive Director, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment*

“The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is excited about Empowerment Institute’s Water Stewardship Program. Our tributary strategies workgroup, which I co-chair, recognizes the critical role of behavior change in both meeting our nutrient and sediment goals, and in maintaining them over time. This program will help us quantify the water quality impacts of behavior change, which has been so elusive up to now. We will inform local governments of this program and how they can apply it to fulfill their watershed management and NPDES objectives. This program can serve as an essential component of their watershed plan.”

– *Lauren Wenzel, Deputy Director Education, Bay Policy, and Growth Management Unit, Maryland Department of Natural Resources*

About Empowerment Institute

Empowerment Institute is the world’s premier consultancy specializing in the methodology of empowerment. Its core competencies are program design, organizational capacity building and implementation of large-scale transformation projects that require behavior change and scalability. Its clients consist of public sector agencies, non-profits and corporations. For information on our Water Stewardship Capacity Building Program for local governments and watershed organizations contact us.

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