



Social Marketing Outreach Strategies

By
Julia B. Hillegass
Public Information & Community Affairs Administrator
Hampton Roads Planning District Commission

May 19, 2011

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission!

Today I would like to give you a brief overview of our region-wide environmental social marketing efforts.



In 1994, representatives from water utilities from both the peninsula and southside approached HRPDC about conducting regional water conservation awareness efforts.

Since that time, additional environmental education efforts in stormwater, litter control and recycling and most recently fats, oils and grease abatement have been added as regional initiatives.

The consistent message and economies of scale make this approach a smart choice in times of limited budgets. These four committees have worked on special areas of emphasis with great success.

Joint Efforts

- Limited Print Ads
- Publications
- Mini-Grants

save money, save resources



Out and About

- Purchase items in recyclable packaging and in bulk. Buy Recycled!
- Reuse old bags or use reusable bags for extra savings at participating stores.
- Visit household chemical collection stations and events to dispose of household hazardous wastes and oil.

At the Home or Office

- Recycle! You can also donate gently used clothing and household items to local charities.
- Use ceramic mugs, metal utensils, and/or glasses instead of disposable products.
- Save water by washing clothing and dishes in full loads only.
- Save money and water by turning the faucet off when brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Secure all trash in bags, even in a container, before putting out to the curb to prevent litter.
- Use a grease can. Never pour grease or cooking oil down the sink drain or into the toilet. Instead, pour grease and oil into a can. You can store the can in the freezer until it's full. Then, just toss it in the trash.
- Scrape dishes before washing. Scrape grease and food scraps from pots, pans, and plates into the trash.

In the Yard

- Leave grass clippings on your lawn. Mulch Mow!
- Water the yard in the early morning or late evening. Lawns only need an inch of water a week - either by Mother Nature or irrigation systems.
- Plant native plants that do not require as much maintenance when landscaping.
- Keep ditches and storm drains free of litter, leaves, and other yard debris.



757.420.8300 hrgreen@hrpdova.gov Twitter: @HRGreen YouTube: HRGreenVA

They have also collaborated when appropriate.

Now What?

- Umbrella Brand
- Research
- Testing

HRGreenBlog.com



4

Pooling committee resources and expertise, this effort has evolved into HR Green.

While still functioning as separate committees on the technical aspects of their respective missions, representatives of the committees now meet regularly to discuss strategic messaging under the HRGreen umbrella brand.

To ensure effective delivery, market research and message testing has been conducted and I'd like to share with you some of those key results.

Research: Objectives

- **Determine the core drivers of environmental stewardship for Hampton Roads residents**
- **Identify barriers to adopting ideal environmental behaviors**
- **Inform messaging tone and content**



The objectives were straight forward:

- Determine what motivates residents to act in an environmentally responsible manner
- Identify barriers to the desired behaviors
- Test messages that resonate with residents to encourage behavior change
- Research was conducted using both focus groups and survey techniques

Research: What Did We Learn?

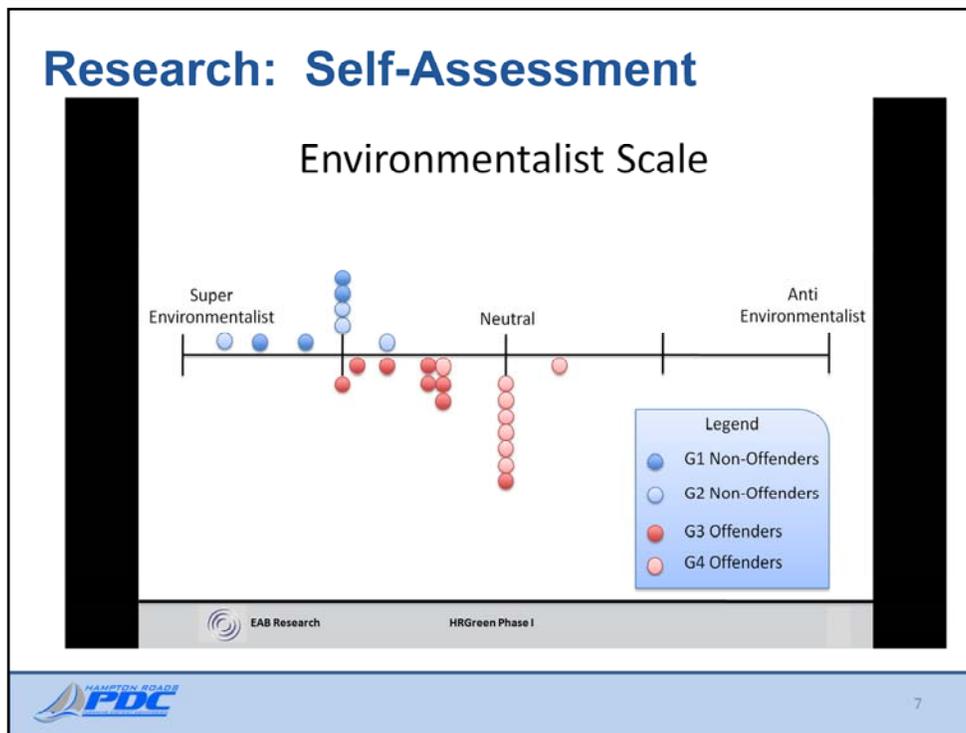
- Offenders do not define themselves as such and fail to see connections
- Non-offenders see connection between personal behavior and broader environment
- Desire to be more environmentally responsible, BUT . . .



So what did we learn?

Most people think they are acting at some level of environmental responsibility, but most don't see connections to many of their actions and the larger environment.

Many are consistent in certain environmentally conscious behaviors, but only to a point. Once it becomes inconvenient, they stop.

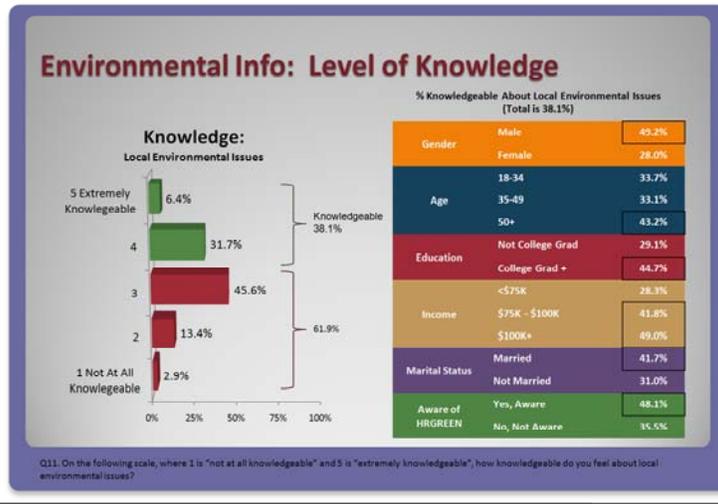


The first step in our research was to get an idea of how people saw themselves. An overwhelming majority of respondents in our focus groups felt that they exhibited standard environmental behaviors, whether or not they truly did.

“Offenders” were characterized as those who routinely exhibited behaviors we want to discourage, such as littering, using a garbage disposal, accepting plastic bags at retailers, buying bottled water or not picking up after their pets.

“Non-Offenders” were those respondents who exhibited behaviors we hope to encourage such as recycling, taking their own reusable shopping bags, soil testing before apply fertilizer or properly disposing of fats, oils and grease in the kitchen.

Research: Knowledge

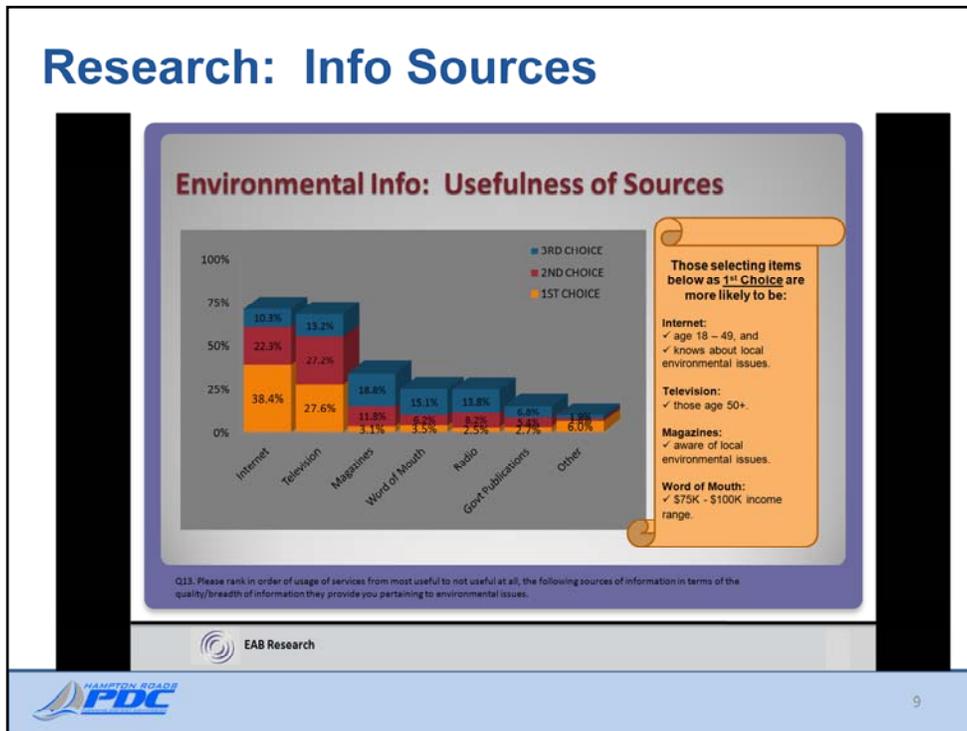


EAB Research



Our survey data indicates that over 1/3 of the population considers themselves pretty knowledgeable about the environment.

Research: Info Sources

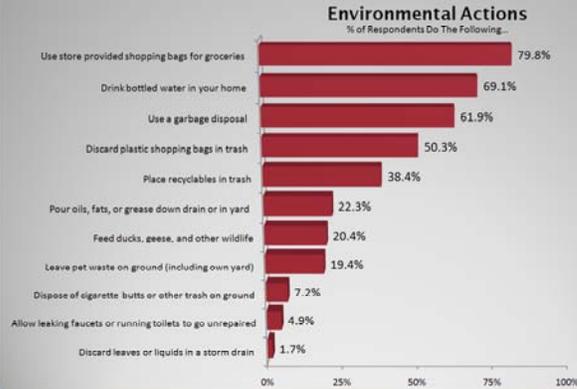


When judging the usefulness of sources of information on environmental issues, the majority of respondents rely on the internet and television.

Of the various online resources available, an overwhelming majority prefer news sites.

Research: Personal Behavior

Behavior: Participation in Specific Actions



Q14. Do you ever do any of the following? Select as many as applicable, even if you do them only occasionally.

EAB Research



10

Focusing again on behaviors, we asked respondents if they **ever** engaged in a variety of what we termed offending behaviors.

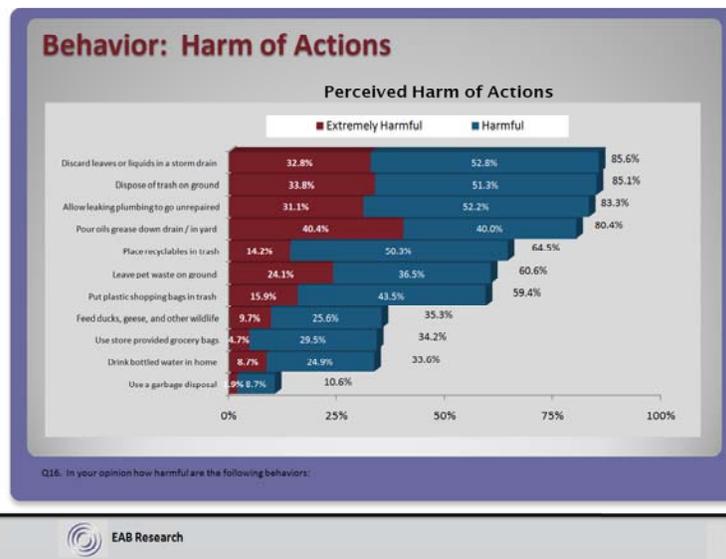
Nearly 80% of respondents use grocery bags provided by the retailer and almost 70% drink bottled water at home. Over 60% use their garbage disposal.

Improper recycling habits remain a problem, with 50% of respondents disposing of plastic shopping bags in the trash, rather than reusing them or recycling them at the store. And over 38% of people place recyclable items in the trash.

Interestingly, few respondents admitted to discarding things down the storm drain or throwing trash on the ground, with less than 5% admitting to leaving leaky faucets or toilets unrepaired.

Of the offending behaviors catalogued, an overwhelming majority admitted to doing these behaviors frequently or sometimes.

Research: Beliefs

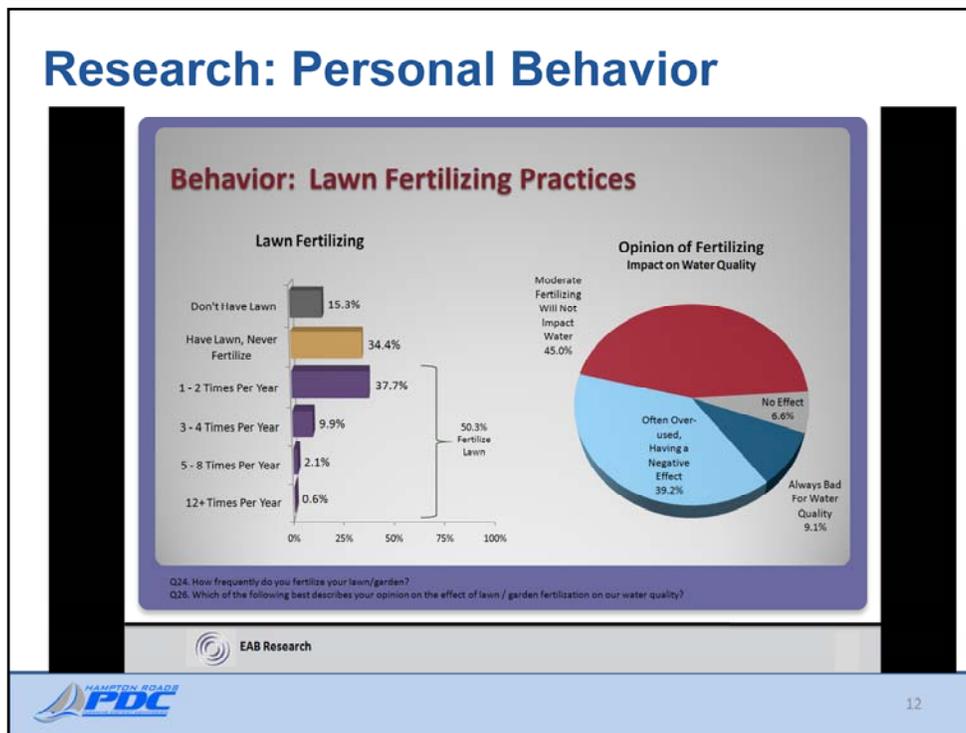


While many people were able to properly categorized offending behaviors as harmful or extremely harmful to the environment,

they were unable to connect environmental impacts to feeding wildlife, using plastic bags from retailers,

drinking bottled water or using a garbage disposal.

Research: Personal Behavior

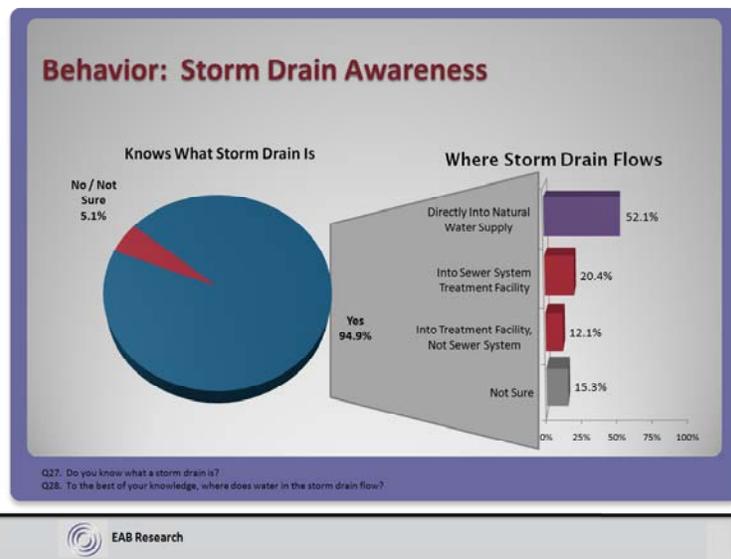


Focusing now on lawn fertilizing, while only 50% of respondents say they fertilize their lawns, just under 50% of those recognize the potential impact on water quality.

Along these same lines, only 20% of people had ever had their soil tested at their current residence

This is certainly important information as we look at ways to approach stormwater permits and the Chesapeake Bay TMDL requirements.

Research: Knowledge



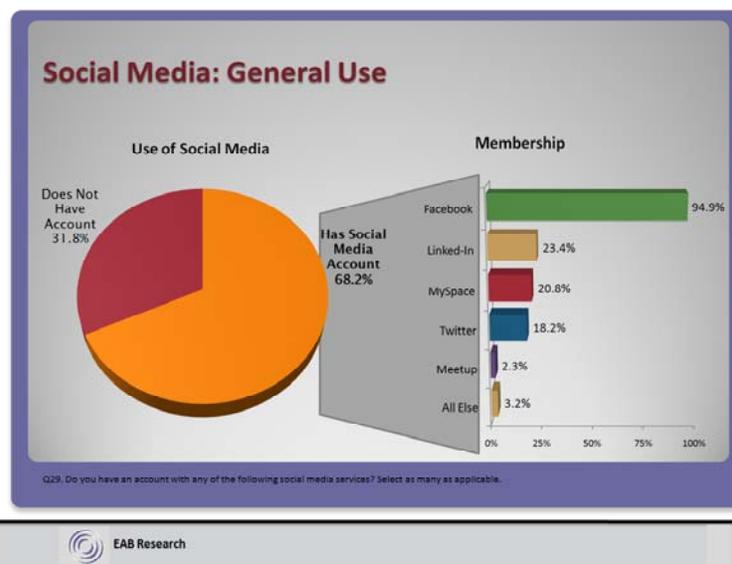
13

And what about where all the runoff goes?

Though nearly 95% of respondents said they knew what a storm drain is,

when further questioned nearly half of them didn't realize that stormwater goes untreated into area waterways!

Research: Use of Social Media



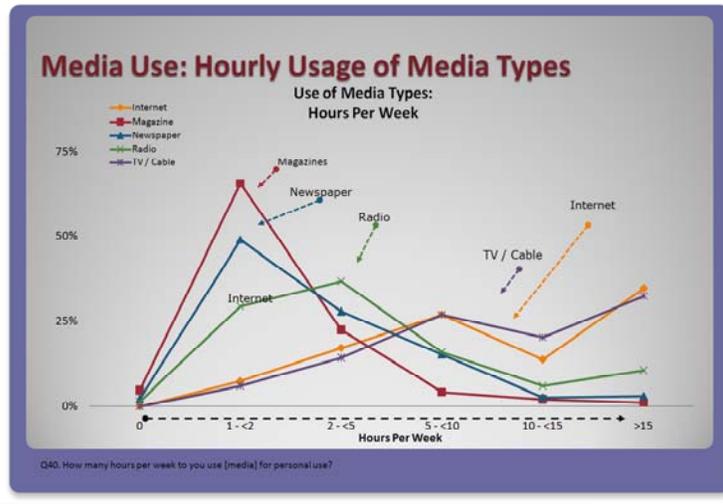
14

So how do we best reach our audience?

Clearly, the majority of Hampton Roads is social, with nearly 2/3 of respondents having some type of social media account, the vast majority of those utilizing Facebook.

Just over 80% of our respondents were avid to moderate users of social media, with a majority of those accessing social media via mobile devices.

Research: Use of All Media



EAB Research



15

But much like the rest of us, our respondents are getting information from a variety of sources, with internet and television at the top of the list.

Though we view a variety of information sources, in Hampton Roads, we spend the most time online, which has slightly outpaced television in hours of usage per week.

Recommendations:

- **Enhanced social media presence**
- **Educate, but gently**
- **Implying ignorance will alienate**
- **Connect individual behavior to individual consequences**
 - **Sewer back-ups in the home**
 - **Value of tap water**
 - **Food/Water Supply implications**
 - **Other cost-related issues**



16

So, what does that mean for delivering our environmental messages?

Our messages will benefit from an enhanced social media presence, ideally with news partners.

People don't want to be made to feel guilty or ignorant, but they do want to understand the environmental connections and greener options.

Connecting individual behaviors to consequences is key—many surveyed wanted to do better, but didn't know how or wanted to change their behavior when they were provided an easy alternative.

Next Steps

- Unveil Website
- Strategic Campaign



visit us at
HRGreenBlog.com



HAMPTON ROADS
PDC

17

In the coming months we will unveiling an overall strategic plan that keeps our environmental messages in the forefront of the regional consciousness.

This effort has begun through our blog—hrgreenblog.com, which is also sent to our HRGreen facebook page and will be further enhanced via a new website as well as online and traditional advertising.

So join in the conversation on our blog, sign up for our RSS feed, become a fan of HRGreen and stay tuned for more exciting news and information!