



## Water Pollution Reporting Hotline Promotion

### Focus Groups

Prepared for

Kitsap County Surface & Stormwater Management



And the West Sound Stormwater Outreach Group

Cities of Bainbridge Island, Bremerton, Gig Harbor, Port Angeles, Port Orchard, and Poulsbo

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# 1. Project Overview

## Background

The NPDES Phase I and II municipal stormwater permits require jurisdictions to publicize a local telephone number for public reporting of spills and other illicit discharges. The public, however, regularly travels across jurisdictional boundaries, which requires knowing and finding phone numbers for each individual jurisdiction. Kitsap County, in partnership with several cities in the area, decided to utilize the County live call center (Kitsap 1) for the centralized regional water pollution reporting hotline number to serve all residents of the county, including the cities.

The results from a 2011 phone survey (*Residential Stormwater Survey Public Attitudes, Awareness and Behavior, 2011*) showed that 40% of the Kitsap Peninsula population knew to call either the Kitsap 1 Spill Hotline, 911, or a local city hall. The results also showed that about 25% would either do nothing, or not know where to report the spill, which indicated a need for more educational outreach to encourage use of the hotline. The other 35% would either call EPA, the State Department of Ecology or other entity.

Kitsap County conducted two focus groups in 2008 to better understand how to publicize their stormwater reporting hotline (*Stormwater Hotline Focus Groups, 2008*). The focus groups conducted in 2012 build on the information gained during the earlier focus groups.

A Background Research Report was conducted as the first task of the project. The purpose was to research and document methods used by other Phase I and II jurisdictions across the country to publicize their reporting hotlines. The research revealed that jurisdictions are advertising their reporting hotline on their website, but for the most part, are only meeting the minimum requirement to post the hotline number. The results of this background research were used to inform the discussion guide for the focus groups.

## Goals & Objectives

The main goal of the hotline focus groups was to inform an upcoming pilot campaign that will increase citizens' awareness of spills and discharges that can impact water quality and the tools and messages needed to encourage them to report the spill for further investigation. The focus groups were designed to explore preferences for effective messaging, graphic concepts, website features and outreach methods.

## Focus Group Recruitment and Participation

The focus group discussion guide was designed by Ellen Cunningham. The two focus groups were moderated by Patricia Glazer of Gilmore Research Group. The focus groups were held at the Haselwood YMCA, Silverdale, WA, December 1, 2012, 10:30 a.m. – noon and 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. Participants were paid \$75 as compensation.

The participants were recruited by The Gilmore Research Group by phone using a database of Kitsap County registered voters. The recruiters screened for a gender balance, mix of ages 24-70, and representation from cities and unincorporated Kitsap County. Since our target audience is citizens who would be willing to report water pollution if they knew where to call, we included a hypothetical question to screen out the people who said they would not be very likely to report pollution.

The two sessions included 21 participants ranging in age from 27 to 65, 8 males and 13 females, and representing the following jurisdictions:

- Unincorporated Kitsap County – 12
- City of Bainbridge Island – 1
- City of Bremerton – 5
- City of Port Orchard – 0
- City of Poulsbo - 3

## 2. Key Findings

### Awareness of the Storm Drain System and Spills

- Participants could identify the storm drain and collection system correctly. The majority knew that stormwater flows to water bodies without being treated.
- Participants would be more likely to report if they saw someone dumping a suspicious looking fluid down a storm drain rather than seeing something in a waterway where it is obscure and diluted. They were also more likely to report spills with foul odors and oil and other fluids from vehicles.
- Suds in the street were not a large cause for concern. Participants thought they should not report vehicle washing since it is not an illegal activity, occurs on private property, and some perceived that safe soaps are used and cause no harm.
- Participants were very reluctant to report a neighbor's activity. Being able to report anonymously was an important feature of the hotline.
- No one recalled or could correctly identify "Kitsap 1" and the name was confusing to them.
- Only a couple of participants could recall an instance where they might have called a reporting hotline if they had known it existed. Two participants had ever called about a spill or illegal discharge; one was their own failed septic system and the other was about someone dumping motor oil on the road.

### Website Features

- Most of the participants had used the County website and it was a familiar place to search for information.
- Participants reacted favorably to all 11 website features. The features that received the highest average ratings were: 1) providing examples of spills, 2) live hotline operator, 3) ability to remain anonymous, 4) simple phone number, 5) clickable online report, and 6) positioning the hotline number on the County home page rather than burying in departmental pages.

- Participants liked the idea of using 311 as a reporting hotline number since it is memorable and more likely to be used.
- A downloadable smart phone app that allows the public to take a photo of a spill, fill out some information and send it electronically appealed to the participants because it is immediate and convenient, and does not require memorization of a hotline number.
- The Kitsap County website was the preferred choice to learn more about spills and water quality. Participants would not intuitively go to the Department of Ecology or Puget Sound Starts Here websites to learn more about spills.

## Terminology and Messages

- *Help Protect Our Waterways* as a tagline for the reporting hotline generated the most discussion and positive comments.
- *Only Rain Down the Drain* also received positive comments.
- Participants did not like the term “Report”.
- *It’s Your Call* was the least popular tagline when shown as a stand-alone tagline. The tagline had more meaning when used in the context of a photo showing pollution and reporting hotline number.

## Messengers and Graphic Concepts

- Participants reacted most favorably to a graphic that advertised a hotline for both illegal dumping and spills. They had an emotional response to the images that made them want to take action.
- Ads that have strong photos related to spills and waterways and bold graphics were preferred over ads that have a lot of text and white space.
- Participants reacted favorably to the ad showing the cell phone and hotline number. Many thought a downloadable app for smartphones was a good idea.

- Participants had a mixed reaction to the testimonials of Hotline Heroes. Some liked the ad featuring the inspector but were less positive about the ad featuring a teacher and her students.

## **Outreach Methods and Products**

- The most popular methods and products to inform the public about the reporting hotline were utility bill inserts, bus ads, ferry ads, magnets, storm drain markers, and a direct mail postcard.

### 3. Detailed Findings

#### Awareness of the Storm Drain System and Spills

*The participants were shown a photo of a storm drain grate and a photo collage of storm drain system components, and asked where rainwater goes when it enters the storm drain. They wrote their answers down without discussion.*

**The participants could identify the storm drain and collection system correctly.**

**Storm drain grate**



**Storm drain system collage**



Participants referred to the storm drain grate as a “storm drain” or “street drain”. Only one participant called it a “sewer”. Participants named the storm drain system collage with these terms: “storm runoff”, “storm drainage system”, “retention pond”, “storm water drainage collection points”, and “culverts”.

Of the 21 participants, 16 said that rainwater flows to a water body, including Puget Sound, ocean, bays, creeks, detention ponds, or into the ground/aquifer. The other five participants had this response:

- Reservoir
- Retention ponds with clean chemicals and proper sediment to filter water away from solid matter
- Water treatment or nearest body of water
- To the bay, inlets and water purification system
- Treatment center

The participants were surprised to learn that recent survey research in Kitsap County revealed that only about 50% of residents know that stormwater flows to water bodies without being treated. Many of them knew this because they live in rural areas and would not expect there to be an organized system for handling runoff, especially where storm drains are not present. Some thought people need to be better educated to understand that the runoff is not treated.

*Have you ever seen a spill of suds, oil, paint or sewage? Did you call anyone, why or why not?*

**The participants mentioned oil and other fluids coming from vehicles as the most obvious and visible type of spill.**

Many of the participants had seen suds, oil, or paint on paved surfaces and in ditches and drains, mostly oil and vehicle fluids from roads. One person said her concern about seeing polluted runoff is that it could infiltrate her water supply as she relies on a well for drinking water. Participants would be more likely to report an egregious action, like seeing someone dumping motor oil, than gray water from a washing machine being discharged into someone's backyard.

Two of the participants had called anyone about a spill. One called Kitsap County Public Works about their own failed septic system. Another participant called 911 when he saw someone dumping motor oil on the road.

There was concern about telling on neighbors, but mostly it had not occurred to any of them to report a spill. Some expressed concern about fundraiser car washes, and mentioned reading about this recently in the news. Many think that using "safe soaps" solves the problem. One participant was aware that some of the fundraiser car wash locations drain to the sewer.

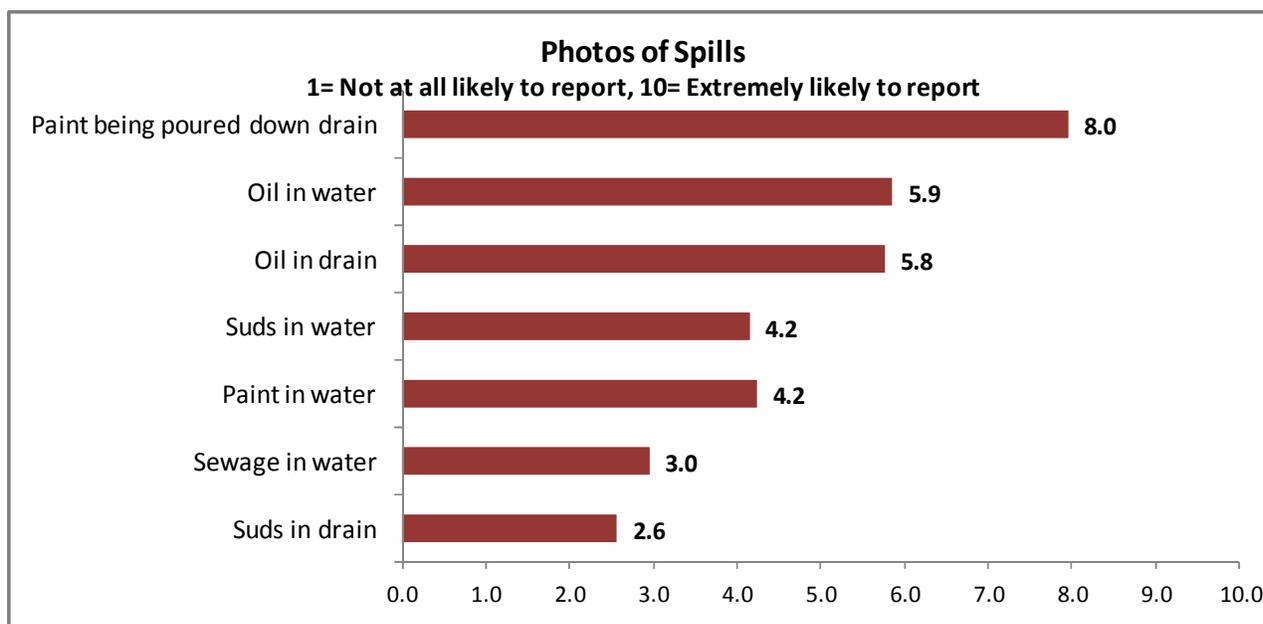
*How likely would you be to call a phone number where you could talk to a person to report a spill or pollution issue like the ones shown in the photos?*

**The participants would be likely to report if they saw someone dumping oil, paint or other toxic-looking fluids, or if they saw or smelled sewage. A spill having an unpleasant or chemical odor would be another clue that the spill should be reported. Participants thought that daily activities, like washing your car and applying lawn chemicals, should not be reported since they are not "illegal" activities and occur mostly on private property.**

The participants were shown seven color photos of different types of spills either being dumped in a storm drain, on pavement heading to a storm drain, or in the water. Some wanted to know exactly what the spill was and mentioned they would call only if there was a foul odor. The spills in the water versus heading toward the storm drain did not seem to be of more immediate concern. Some mentioned that if the spill in the water appeared to be somewhat contained and not extensive they would not be particularly concerned. Others would be concerned only if it was persistent.

The chart shows that seeing the perpetrator of the spill has a large impact on whether one should report it. Oil also had an impact, although many mentioned that they see oil slicks all the time on roads and parking lots and they would not call about that. They also thought that washing cars on pavement and using lawn chemicals was not something to report even if the runoff entered a storm drain.

### Average Ratings for Photos of Spills



#### Person dumping paint into a storm drain

Participants were most likely to call if they saw someone intentionally pour something other than water into a storm drain. Someone noted that the spill and person would be long gone by the time someone came to investigate. One participant thought a spill of latex paint would not be harmful to water quality. If the spill were mineral spirits or paint thinner that would be cause to



report. Another person said they would rather speak to the person and educate them rather than report the spill.

### **Oil in the water**

Seeing oil in a water body received a slightly higher than average rating for likely to report. Participants thought they needed a bigger picture and context to see how widespread the oil sheen was in the stream.



### **Oil heading into a storm drain**

Participants were equally concerned with oily water going down a storm drain.



### **Suds, paint and sewage**

Some participants wanted to know what kind of spills were in the water for the paint and sewage photos. As the moderator pointed out, no one would be available to tell them in real life and they would need to decide for themselves.

Some participants thought the white, cloudy water (paint) did not look right, and that it is a good idea to call and let an inspector decide. Some thought the suds looked like agitated water from high flow volume.

**Suds in water**



**Paint in water**



Participants were least concerned with suds on the street and did not think it posed much of a threat to water quality. Some said they would only be concerned if this occurred frequently, e.g. daily. One participant said it was not his job to blow the whistle on someone who is doing something legal (washing their car).

The photo of sewage looked like muddy water or runoff after heavy rains to several participants. If they were faced with that situation, the odor would indicate that the spill was sewage.



*Have you ever called the city you live in, Kitsap County, or any government to report something you have seen that you want them to respond to? What was it? Have you heard of Kitsap 1?*

**Most of the participants had never called Kitsap County or any government to report a concern. No one knew what “Kitsap 1” was or referred to.**

One participant had called Kitsap County about their failing septic system and another called 911 when he saw someone dump oil on the ground. Another participant called about a neighbor (no subject mentioned) and then became labeled as the “neighborhood rat”. One participant was familiar with the term “Kitsap 1” but thought it was a water district.

## Website Features

*Have you visited a city or Kitsap County website in the last 6 months or so? For what reasons?*

**The participants had visited a city or Kitsap County website, but for issues not related to water quality. Five of the participants did not have a home computer.**

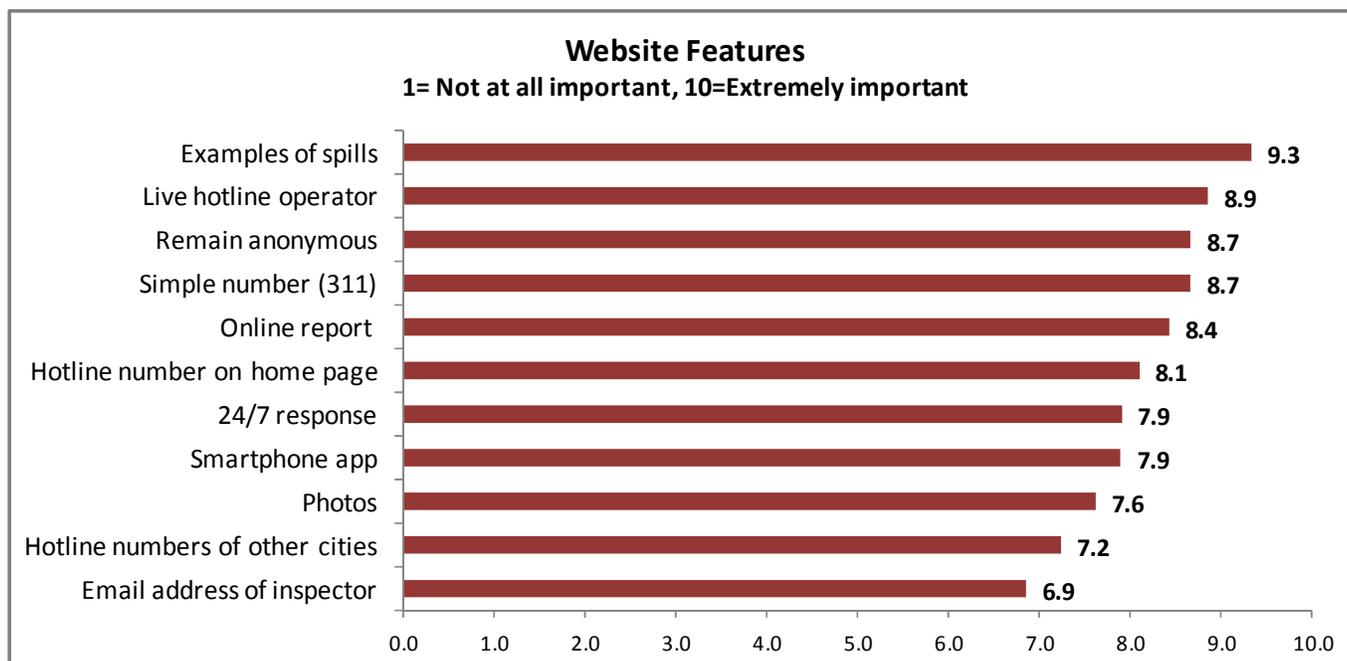
Most everyone had visited a city or County website. Common reasons for visiting the city or county websites were to conduct parcel searches, tax assessor records, locator maps,

information on solid waste disposal and recycling, election results, parks and recreation activities, land use regulations, and information about construction projects.

*How important do you think these website features are in making it easy for citizens to report pollution?*

**The participants rated most of the website features highly. Six features received an average rating of 8.0 or higher out of 10.**

### Average Ratings for Website Features



The most important features of a website educating the public about spills and the hotline were:

- **Providing examples of spills** – they all voiced concern about needing to know what to report and having specific examples.
- **Live hotline operator**- they thought a live person answering the hotline shows that the county (or city) is genuinely concerned about spills and prepared to respond in a timely manner. One participant was concerned about the cost of providing that service.
- **Ability to remain anonymous** – this was important in order to avoid retaliation from the person responsible for the spill or discharge and would make many more comfortable about calling the hotline.

- **Simple, memorable number** – 311 is any easy number to remember. No one would write down the Kitsap 1 number (360) 337-5777.
- **On-line clickable report** – they liked the convenience of this feature, which would allow one to fill out the form online and send it electronically.
- **Hotline number on website’s home page** – this prevents having to search the website to find the phone number.
- **Hotline with 24/7 response** – this was popular because everyone preferred to speak with a real person and know that action would be taken quickly. It would also be convenient to check with a person to see if what they saw was a reportable concern.
- **Downloadable app for smartphones** – they liked the instant transmission of proof, convenience, and immediacy of being able to take a photo and send a report at the point of seeing the spill. Some were concerned that this is not available to all residents.

None of the website features participants were asked to rate were unpopular, but were considered to be of less importance. Photos alone without descriptions were considered to be less important than the list of examples, with or without photos, because they had already experienced the difficulty in discerning what the photos actually showed when we passed around the photos earlier in the session.

*How likely would you be to get more detailed information about spills and water pollution from these websites (Kitsap County, Department of Ecology, Puget Sound Starts Here?)*

**The participants would prefer to get more information from the Kitsap County website.**

Initially, no one had heard of Puget Sound Starts Here (PSSH) and did not think the name revealed what it was about. Upon further discussion and reflection, a retired painting contractor remembered hearing about Puget Sound Starts Here since he received information about materials handling from Ecology. Another participant thought she had seen a PSSH ad on TV. The term “Department of Ecology” drew a blank from many of the participants, as if they had never heard of the agency before. A few mentioned that looking at Ecology’s website might make sense now that it was brought up, as a second source to refer to, but they preferred the Kitsap County website overall.

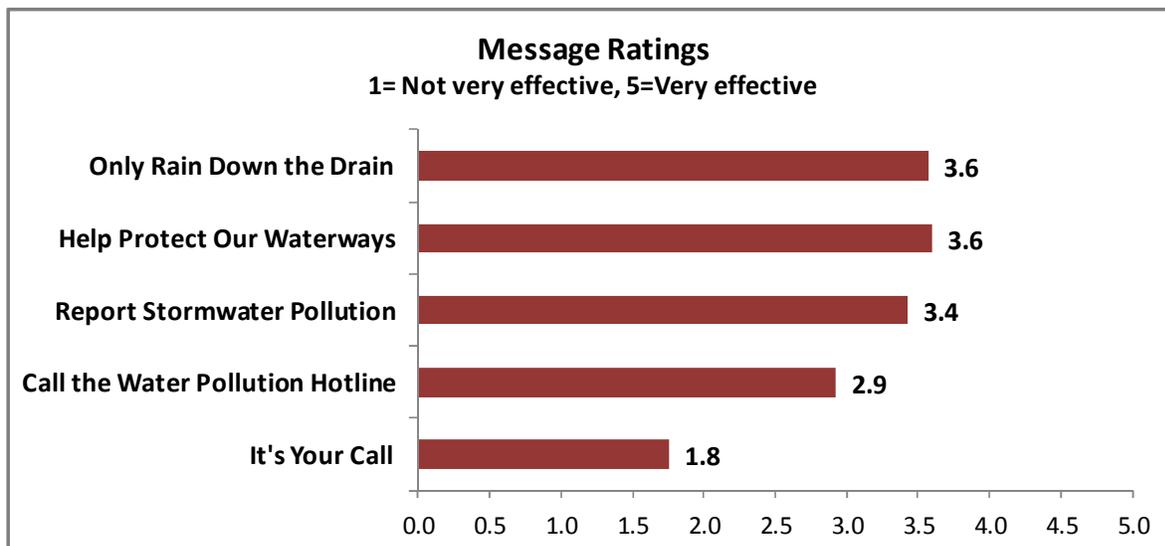
## Terminology and Messages

*How would you rate these slogans and headlines to make the reporting hotline memorable?*

**The participants did not react very positively to any of the 5 suggested taglines. Collectively, they thought 3 of the taglines were somewhat effective.**

The chart shows that 3 of the taglines received a slightly above average ratings of 3.4 to 3.6. The tagline developed in the social marketing workshop, *It's Your Call* received the lowest rating of 1.8.

### Average Ratings for Messages



**Help Protect Our Waterways** – This tagline generated the most positive comments and discussion. Some liked the reference to waterways and thought it was broader than referring just to drains. Other positive comments were they liked the word “help” and told you what your call will do, and that it tugs on one’s conscious. The tagline helps people feel connected to the water around them, and gave a positive spin to calling the hotline. One person thought there was a similar federal slogan. A couple of people thought the tagline was not specific to spills and calling the hotline and did not spell out what the waterways should be protected from.

**Only Rain Down the Drain** - Catchy, easy to remember because of the mnemonic device used. This tagline was favored less by rural residents since they do not connect with the image of a storm drain and do not think they are contributing anything to a storm drain. Rural residents did feel connected to streams and creeks.

**Report Stormwater Pollution** – This tagline received 12 high ratings of 4 and 5 because it was simple and straightforward, but these were offset by low ratings of 1 and 2. Some liked that this tagline told you what to do without any room for interpretation. Some did not like the term “report”.

**Call the Water Pollution Hotline** – This was a less popular tagline and generated little interest or discussion.

**It’s Your Call** – The tagline did not resonate with the group. Only 2 gave it a 4 or 5 rating, and the majority (14 participants) gave it a rating of 1. One person liked this because it conveyed an aspect of personal responsibility.

A few participants thought that having a mascot might be helpful in making the reporting hotline stick with the public, but not everyone was in agreement. Some thought a mascot would trivialize the issue and message.

## Messengers and Graphic Concepts

*For each concept discuss what you like and do not like about one?*

**The participants were most favorable about the ad that includes both illegal dumping and the spills. Photos and minimal text were favored over the use of icons and text heavy ads.**

### Hotline for Both Illegal Dumping and Spills

The ad was included to test the concept of providing the public with a single hotline phone number for reporting both illegal dumping and spills. The ad also relies on four large photos and minimal text.



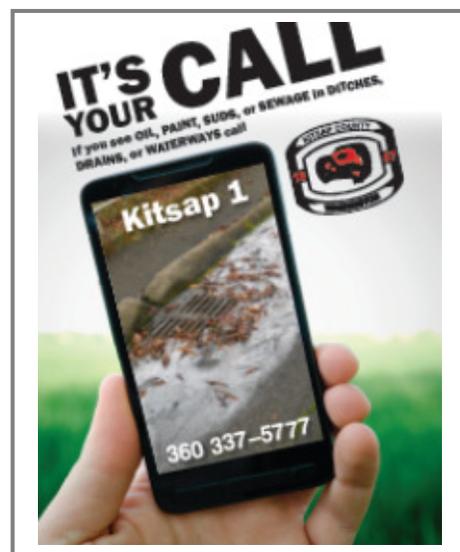
**Likes:** Participants liked the visual examples of reasons to call the hotline, emotional appeal of the photos, minimal text, and the single hotline number covering both illegal dumping and spills. Many thought the tagline It's Your Call made sense with this ad.

**Dislikes:** Several disliked the sideways text and the smaller text of "(360)". Some thought the ad needed a photo of a waterway.

### Using Smartphones for Reporting Spills

The concept is that citizens with smartphones can download an app that integrates the phone camera, GPS coordinates and a reporting form. For those who do not have smartphones, the ad provides the phone number to call, which they can put into their contact list for future reference.

This ad was included to test the appeal of a downloadable app for smartphones, the text and graphic at an angle, and photo of runoff contaminated with paint heading into the storm drain.



**Likes:** Most people have a cell phone with them when they are away from home. Being able to call from a cell phone makes reporting convenient. The angle of phone and text is eye-catching and draws your attention. The ad could be improved by including a quick response (QR) tag so that the public can download the app when they see the ad. Another improvement would be to show the actual scene in the background to show the person is taking a picture. Some thought this would also be an effective bus ad.

**Dislikes:** The photo could be improved by showing a spill of more concern. A better photo would have an oil sheen and no leaves. Some did not like "Call" being cut off.

### Testimonials by Hotline Heroes

The idea of a local messenger grew out of a social marketing workshop held with Nancy Lee. These two ads were developed to test the concept of having a local spokesperson with a story about how calling the hotline made a difference.

**Likes:** There was general agreement that these would only work if posted in a place where people are standing around and would spend the time to read them. These ads might work best

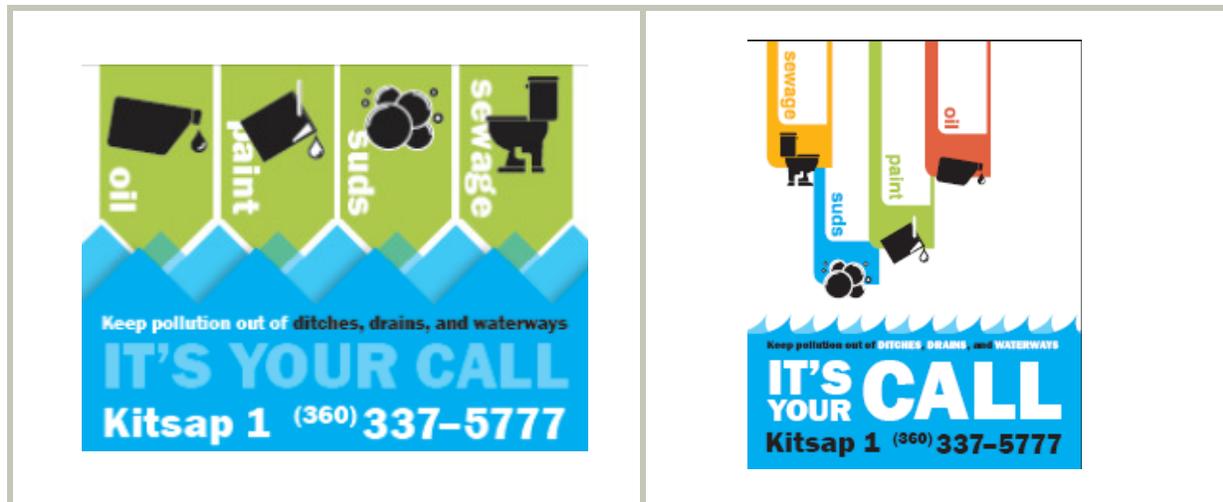
on TV or in a magazine. Some participants liked the water quality inspector testimonial and thought it gave the impression that something will be done to clean up spills.

**Dislikes:** Most of the participants did not like the teacher. They thought it was confusing because there was no visual reference to water bodies and the presence of children made it look like a health care ad, or something to be posted in a school.



### It's Your Call with Icons

Participants had a mixed reaction to the ads with an edgier design. These two ads were included to test for the use of icons versus photos, and the prominent tagline and hotline number.



**Likes:** Some participants liked the categories and icons and which made it clear the pollutants of concern. The ad on the right where *It's Your Call* is reversed (white on blue) catches your eye and easy to read compared to the text in the ad on the left where the contrast between text and background is low (blue on blue).

**Dislikes:** Some thought the ad on the right had too much white space compared to graphics and text. While they liked the visibility of *It's Your Call*, it was more difficult to read the black text on blue. They were confused about Kitsap 1 and it was not clear that it is the hotline phone number.

### **Pristine or Polluted: It's Your Call**

This ad shows the viewer there are two states our waterways can be: polluted or pristine, with a photo that corresponds to each condition. The ad gives guidance as to what type of spills to call about, the county and local city website and phone numbers, and the option to call 911 in the case of an emergency.

This ad was included to test the tagline, inclusion of the 911 emergency phone number, the side-by-side county and city websites and phone numbers, and the Puget Sound Starts Here logo and website.

**Likes:** Participants liked the photos and the prominence of the phone numbers and websites. Including "polluted or pristine" and photos provided context for the tagline *It's Your Call*.

**Dislikes:** Participants thought there was too much text and would not take the time to read it. Some were confused by the reference to muddy runoff, yard waste, and trash. They thought muddy runoff occurs during heavy rains and is a naturally occurring event that does not require investigation.

They would prefer to see a photo of an oil slick than an old tire, which makes it seem like an ad for stream clean-up. Some were also confused by the reference to 911. They thought that showing a photo of a storm drain would provide better context for spill issues. The inclusion of the Puget Sound Starts Here.org website did not mean anything to them and they would not be driven to that website. Some did not realize that it was a website and thought it was a sponsor.



## Outreach Methods and Products

*What are the best ways to convey information about the reporting hotline?*

**The participants generated many ideas to better inform the public about spills and need to call the reporting hotline.**

Participants were asked what they thought were the best ways to get the message out about the reporting hotline. Afterwards, the moderator asked about specific methods that they had not already mentioned by the group. Several participants thought a multi-pronged approach would be most effective.

### Most popular outreach methods and products

- **Utility bill inserts** – They thought this was a relatively inexpensive way to reach all households (except those on auto bill pay). Some thought it would be important to fold the insert inside the bill in order to be seen, versus a separate piece of paper that falls out of the envelope and gets recycled without being examined.
- **Storm drain markers** – Most of the participants recalled seeing storm drain markers with the fish symbol and message saying it drains to the bay (or other water body). They thought the hotline tagline and phone number would be effective in getting the message out to the public. A couple of participants expressed concern that the stencils wear over time and need to be replaced.
- **Downloadable app for smartphones** – Although this was discussed with the messengers and graphic concepts, they noted that the cameras in the smartphones make reporting pollution simple and convenient.
- **Bus ads** – Most thought bus ads are an effective media tool. This would be most effective with the cell phone ad and a prominently displayed hotline number that was memorable. They did not think that people would write the phone number down, but would become aware of the hotline after multiple exposures to the ad, and would then be able to do an internet search to locate the number. If the number were simple, e.g. 311, they thought the public would remember the number.
- **Ferry ads** – Most people in Kitsap County use the cross-Sound ferry service. They thought the ads on the ferry were effective in messaging to the public.

- **Magnets** – They liked the idea of receiving a magnet in the mail or on the phone book with the hotline number and reason to call. Some wanted something useful on the magnet, like a calendar, rather than just the hotline number.
- **School education programs** – Those with kids understood how effective it is to educate the kids who then educate their parents. This could be combined with booths at public events where magnets or flyers are distributed, such as Kids Day and the Water Festival.
- **Direct mailer** – This large postcard on heavy cardstock could be mailed from the County to all households with information on the reporting hotline. Of interest was the fact that one participant recalled receiving the pet waste mailers, and another the Watershed Newsletter, but no one recalled receiving the Waste Wise Communities Newsletter.
- **Signage on docks in marinas and parks** – They thought this was a good idea as long as the message was brief and the phone number displayed prominently. A few people suggested putting posters in public restrooms.
- **Ads in newspapers** – Ads in newspapers and online media was suggested by several participants.

#### **Mixed reaction to these outreach methods and products**

- **Ads on local TV station (BKAT)** – Only a few of the participants watch the local TV station.
- **Wallet cards with hotline number and ferry schedule on the back** – There are some logistical issues as there are 3 ferry runs and some runs change their schedule each quarter. Also, some thought people already had too many wallet cards to keep track of.
- **Videos or ads posted on social media sites** – Some participants liked this idea. Others did not think that many residents would be likely to see them. Participants had a mixed reaction to ads embedded in sites, such as Facebook.
- **Digital photo frames** – The key would be placement and whether people would pay attention to this.

### **Least popular outreach methods and products**

- **Stickers in windows of restaurants and businesses near the waterfront** – While a couple of participants had noticed EnviroStars stickers in business windows, most participants did not think this would be an effective approach to advertising the hotline.
- **Door hangers** - The participants had a strong dislike for these. In addition, those who lived in rural areas said a door hanger would never find its way to their house.

## **4. Recommendations**

- Take a multi-pronged approach and develop a suite of products and placement options to test in the pilot campaign.
- Increase the focus group participant gratuity to \$100 or \$125 for any future focus groups in Kitsap County. The \$75 gratuity seemed to preclude professional working residents from participating in the two focus groups. This should result in participants who are representative of the County demographics.