

Citizen Opinions Regarding Water Quality, Pollution Prevention & Stormwater

City of Superior Focus Group Research

Prepared for:

City of Superior, Wisconsin
Environmental Services Division
Department of Public Works

Prepared by:

Zenith Research Group, Inc.
Duluth, Minnesota 55804

Contents

1. Executive Summary	.....	ES-1
2. Background	.....	1
3. Participant Selection	.....	2
4. Group Profile	.....	3
5. Key Findings		
A. Panel Introductions	.....	5
B. Panel Non-Prompt Response	.....	6
C. Panel Stormwater Specific - Group Survey	.....	8
D. Public Awareness	.....	16
E. Rain Garden Specific	.....	18

Executive Summary

Participants in the focus groups did not have strong awareness or understanding of the City of Superior water quality, pollution prevention or stormwater control efforts. The lack of information about such projects and programs indicate a general need for more community outreach and education. Some participants mentioned a City of Superior fee that is charged to homeowners, but even those who were aware of that fee were not clear about how the money was used or what the purpose of establishing the fee might have been.

Residents were frustrated at what they felt was a lack of good information available about issues of water control, stormwater, and other water related matters being dealt with by the City. There was a strong interest in learning more, but it seems evident that the current methods of relaying such information are not effective.

Because there is a fee associated with water issues in the City of Superior, there was some immediate skepticism about the value returned to the home owners who pay the fee. Participants did not appear to have a great deal of confidence that the money is being spent well, or that the problems related to water issues are even clear. While a negative reaction to a fee might be expected, the lack of general information appears to exacerbate the frustration level. In the current political climate, there is a certain amount of resistance to fees and taxes. However, a better informed public is more likely to accept such fees when they understand the importance of the project being supported by the fees.

Overall, participants expressed an interest in the topic of water quality, pollution, and the problems created by stormwater run off. Residents, for the most part, expressed a desire to learn more and to better understand the issues. Even those more vocally opposed to the fee concept, agreed that water related issues are serious and must be addressed by local, state and federal entities. The support for such programs seems to exist within the community, but community awareness needs to be increased.

It is reasonable to accept that efforts to build public awareness about water quality and pollution have been effective; particularly to residents living along the shores of Lake Superior, there is wide spread support for continued efforts to protect fresh water resources. Based on this general acceptance, it is also reasonable to expect that a renewed public awareness campaign designed to enlighten residents about the water projects being undertaken by the City of Superior would be effective, as the desire to learn more was evident in all the discussions.

The participants clearly had a strong interest in not only City run projects, but in gaining access to information regarding measures and actions residents might take to assist in preventing pollution or improving water quality. There were several examples mentioned of situations or specific questions that relate to water issues, but the overall assumption was that there is no place to go for answers.

Executive Summary

The participants expressed some disappointment over their sense that even when there are clear examples of a homeowner or renter in their neighborhood involved in activities that contribute to pollution problems, there is no real enforcement of current regulations. Those who were aware of specific incidents or practices that are not allowed did not know how to stop or prevent such things from continuing. The issue of public awareness also related to this concern, as some participants assumed that people who were creating the problems likely didn't realize it because they simply didn't know any different.

Innovative ways to educate the public should be explored. Residents have an interest in learning more about water quality protection and actions they can take in their daily lives. While the group had little knowledge or understanding of rain gardens, once explained by those familiar with the projects there was interest in rain gardens, and support for City involvement in creating rain gardens and assisting property owners in building rain gardens.

The challenge appears to be building public education and awareness. There is little resistance to the concept that water quality is a serious matter. There is a desire to learn and to act on better information. However, traditional means of relaying such messages do not seem to be working. Better use of electronic media and improving the resources available on the City of Superior web site would be of value in the effort to build public knowledge. Community or neighborhood meetings are popular; provided they are well promoted and offer useful information. Making a newsletter available in grocery stores or coffee shops; places that people might visit several times a month seemed to be a more attractive way to deliver a newsletter than as a bill stuffer or direct mail piece.

A public awareness campaign should include simple tips about water quality and pollution prevention, as well as more detailed information, so that residents with any level of interest might be reached. A partnership with a grocery store to print tips on their bags was one suggestion that came out of the discussion on gathering information. Printing flyers that could be taped to pizza boxes that are either delivered or picked up was another idea offered which could easily be expanded to include all restaurants that offer delivery or take out service.

Consistent and constant exposure to information is the key to building better public awareness, and through that awareness, stronger public support. The interest level is there. The broad message about water quality has been accepted. The next step is to improve public awareness, which will lead to increased public support.

Background

Zenith Research Group, Inc., was contacted by a representative of the City of Superior's Environmental Services Division in December 2010, and invited to submit a proposal to conduct focus group research among citizens of Superior concerning water quality, pollution and stormwater related issues. The division of Public Works was particularly interested in understanding how citizens perceived and determined how individual actions impacted water quality, citizen understanding of stormwater's impact and citizen interest in participating in remedial activities.

Zenith Research Group presented its proposal in December 2010. Upon acceptance of the proposal, a contract between the City of Superior and Zenith Research Group was implemented on February 1, 2011.

Zenith Research Group proposed a series of three focus group panels, suggesting citizens would be recruited through an internet-based application and telephone contacts, if necessary, to obtain a representative cross-section of community members. Additionally, it was determined paper applications would be provided at select locations throughout the community for those citizens who did not have access to an internet-linked computer. The application is available for review in the report appendix.

Environmental Services staff prepared a media release which was distributed in early March to local media outlets in Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior announcing the focus group research and participant recruitment process. The media release is available for review in the report appendix. Online application links were provided on the City of Superior and Zenith Research Group websites. A notice was also posted on the Facebook page of Zenith Research Group. The first online application was completed on March 3. The final online application was completed on March 22. No applications were received in paper form. A total of 13 applications were received. Zenith Research Group began telephone recruitment for panelists on March 18 and completed the task on March 24. A total of 45 focus group participants were recruited.

As participant recruitment began, representatives of Zenith Research Group and Environmental Services began the development of the focus group discussion guide. City staff presented a series of suggested topics and also selected printed handouts that would be distributed for review during the focus group sessions. Copies of these materials are available for review at the Environmental Services offices.

A final discussion guide document was approved on March 28. A copy of the discussion guide is available in the report appendix.

The three focus group sessions were held on March 29 and March 30 in the large meeting room of the Superior Public Library. A light meal was available for each participant, and each participant was paid \$35 at the conclusion of their session. Each focus group session lasted 90 minutes and was recorded by a representative of Superior's cable television group. A video copy of each session was distributed to a representative of Environmental Services and Zenith Research Group. This video is not available for public review.

Participant Selection

A decision was made early in the focus group planning process not to segment the focus group participants by demographic characteristics such as age or other criteria, although this information was gathered during the recruitment phase. A complete review of the group profiles appears on the following pages.

Following their application or telephone interview, each of the prospective panelists was contacted by telephone about the dates the focus groups would be held. To assist in scheduling, each was asked to respond with their preferred day and time. Based on the responses, the final selection of panelists was determined.

Of the 45 citizens selected, 40 attended the sessions.

- Group 1 was composed of 15 participants and met at 6:00pm on Tuesday, March 29.
- Group 2 was composed of 14 participants and met at 5:00pm on Wednesday, March 30.
- Group 3 was composed of 11 participants and met at 7:00pm on Wednesday, March 30.

Group Profile

Neighborhood	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Neighborhood	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Allouez	1	0	1	Itasca	0	0	0
Billings Park	5	6	1	Midtown	2	1	1
Central Park	1	1	0	North End	0	2	1
Downtown	0	3	0	South Superior	1	1	3
East End	1	1	5	University Area	4	0	3

Sex	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Male	5	9	4
Female	10	6	11
Age			
18 to 24	0	1	2
25 to 34	1	2	3
35 to 44	5	3	1
45 to 54	2	3	4
55 to 64	5	3	1
65 to 74	1	2	3
75 or older	1	1	1

Race	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Caucasian	15	15	15
African-African American	0	0	0
Asian-Asian American	0	0	0
Hispanic-Latino	0	0	0
American Indian-Native American	0	0	0
Home Ownership			
Own Home	13	6	11
Rent	2	9	4
Previous Home Owner			
Yes	0	3	0
No	2	6	4

Community Involvement	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Very Involved	1	1	0
Somewhat Involved	1	2	2
Not Very Involved	3	3	2
Not At All Involved	7	9	7
Unaware of Association-Group	3	0	4
Attend-View-Listen to City Council			
Very Often	1	1	0
Sometimes	2	4	2
Rarely	7	5	3
Never	5	5	10

Registered to Vote	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Yes	15	15	15
No	0	0	0
Vote November 2, 2010			
Yes	14	15	15
No	1	0	0

Group Profile

Length of Residency	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Less than 1 year	0	0	0
1 year to 2 years	0	0	0
3 years to 5 years	3	5	0
6 years to 10 years	3	2	4
11 years to 15 years	1	2	0
16 years to 20 years	0	0	1
21 years to 30 years	2	0	3
31 years to 40 years	2	2	4
41 years to 50 years	3	2	0
More than 50 years	1	2	3
Household Size			
One	3	4	3
Two	7	4	6
Three	3	2	3
Four	2	2	0
Five or More	0	3	3
Children Under 17			
None	10	9	10
One	3	4	1
Two	2	2	1
Three	0	0	3
Four	0	0	0
Five or More	0	0	0
Marital Status			
Never Married	3	2	4
Married	8	8	7
Engaged to be Married	0	0	0
Partner/Committed Relationship	0	1	0
Divorced	4	3	3
Widowed	0	1	1

Education	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
No High School Diploma	0	0	1
High School Graduate	2	5	7
2-year College-Technical Degree	3	3	3
4-year College Degree	6	6	3
Master's Degree or Higher	4	1	1
Occupation			
Administrative	1	2	1
Business Owner	1	1	0
Laborer	0	1	0
Clerical Worker	2	0	0
Homemaker	0	0	0
Professional	3	2	3
Retired	1	4	4
Sales-Marketing	2	2	0
Self Employed	2	0	0
Student	0	1	1
Service	0	1	1
Unemployed	2	1	2
Household Income			
Less than \$25,000	1	3	5
\$25,001 to \$35,000	2	2	2
\$35,001 to \$45,000	2	2	1
\$45,001 to \$60,000	2	5	1
\$60,001 to \$75,000	2	1	3
\$75,001 to \$90,000	2	0	0
\$90,001 to \$100,000	1	0	0
\$100,001 to \$125,000	1	0	0
\$125,001 to \$150,000	1	1	0
More than \$150,000	0	0	0

Not all columns will equal 15 because of blank responses

Key Findings

The key findings within the report are presented by question and/or topic as each was discussed within the groups, generally coinciding with the outline of the discussion guide. Where appropriate, significant comments will be labeled by the group within which they were made. Each focus group session began with an introduction by Zenith Research Group facilitators Duke Skorich and Patty McNulty who explained the purpose of the focus group, and the guidelines under which the session would be conducted. There were no questions prior to the introduction of panel members. Each participant was asked to introduce themselves, identify the neighborhood in which they lived, and to identify how long they have lived in Superior.

Panel Introductions

What one word comes to mind when you think of the city of Superior?

There was some consensus of opinion with some recurring themes, but responses were also varied and sometimes reflective of comments offered by other members of the individual panels.

Responses included:

“ Quiet, eclectic, pleasant, friendly, small town, value, rural, reputation, family-oriented, homey. Community, home, opportunity, flat, high taxes, Lake Superior, cold, rundown, dumpy looking, spread out, business, under-rated, good, dying, terrain, potential, boring, cold, ignored, beautiful, outdated.

What’s important to you about living in Superior?

While many participants in each of the groups offered similar responses about a sense of community, small town feel, friendly neighborhoods and an overall sense of safety, there were also those who believed increased attention to the tax climate and job creation were important items of consideration for Superior’s leaders. Although the topic was meant to generate a sense of issues that related to their satisfaction with the community, others determined the topic should be more of a discussion of items that were important for attention or change. Each group determined a different factor to be most important:

“ Group 1 rated jobs as the most important. Other notables were safe neighborhoods, education and programs for youth.

“ Group 2 judged Lake Superior and good schools as most important to them. This group also offered the widest variety of issues for consideration, ranging from satisfaction with community size, low crime and recreation opportunities to concerns about adequate housing, high taxes and a depressed business climate.

“ Group 3 presented the least amount of items for review with most relating to safety and friendliness. There was limited discussion about the need for lower taxes and better paying jobs.

What should the City of Superior's priorities be for you, its residents?

The issue of cleaning up the community was on the minds of many participants, who suggested a stronger program to either rehabilitate sub-standard housing or remove blighted properties and junked or abandoned automobiles. There was concern, however, that the city not destroy historic buildings. There was a brief conversation about the need to protect the area's water quality with a suggestion the area could benefit from an effort to attract green+industries, including use of the water resources for power generation. Taxes and fiscal responsibility were briefly discussed with one participant suggesting citizens must also ask what they have personally done to improve overall conditions. The panelist indicated that while the city has been very responsive to issues he had presented, it was also important for citizens to participate in limiting the requests for city assistance.

What do you think the City of Superior is doing best?

One of the groups was unanimous in its opinion: snow removal. Others suggested city efforts to clean up neighborhoods, revitalize the city's business climate and increased efforts to promote tourism and industry. Some participants were complimentary of the city's response to citizen requests for information and assistance, and the cooperation between citizens and elected officials at both the city and county government levels.

Panel Non-Prompt Response

We're going to talk about water – water quality, pollution prevention and stormwater. We'd like to know specifically if there are projects or programs you believe the City of Superior already offers to residents or is involved in. What specific projects or programs come to mind?

In general, there was only casual awareness about projects or programs undertaken by the city. There was considerably more confusion about the topic, with most members in one of the groups unaware of what stormwater even was. There was a single mention of stormwater back-valves or back-flow preventers. There was a brief discussion in one group about the storm-sewer separation and collection system in South Superior. The same group also discussed a new water tank in that part of the city, but there was confusion about its purpose and whether it was a water source, water treatment plant or only for increased fire protection. Only one participant appeared aware of legislation approved in the 1980's requiring sewer and stormwater separation, and the participant was critical of politicians who have consistently delayed implementation of regulations. The discussion about stormwater was generally centered around the city fee and confusion about its purpose, how the fee is determined and why homeowners not tied into the system are assessed the fee. One participant expressed concern that the fee had prevented growth in the community because it was viewed as another tax.

Which of these programs or projects do you think are the most important, and why?

Because there were few programs identified, there was little discussion about importance. There was limited discussion about the benefits of controlling stormwater run-off and the need to eliminate the use of salt on roadways and sidewalks. Again, there was as much conversation about the need for a better explanation of the stormwater fee and how the money generated is being used.

How to you measure whether the city is doing a good or poor job with the programs you've mentioned?

With reference to judging job performance, one of the panelists summed up much of the conversation by the participants saying, "we knew what we were talking about, that would be an indication of a good job." There was widespread dissatisfaction expressed about the lack of information provided which participants said was to blame for a lack of awareness on their part. "We only hear about problems. It's communication that's needed and it hasn't been good or effective or thorough enough," said one participant, with another adding "I don't know if it's good or not, because I don't know about it." Once again, some of the participants talked about the city's fee. "I don't know what it's for, if it's paying for stormwater I don't know about things. We just get bills." The groups agreed there should be a renewed effort by the city to inform citizens how what's being done is of benefit to all residents. One participant said meetings that were once held dealt mainly with price and not about overall benefits. "It's the city's fault for not doing a good job in advance." There was some reference to personal experience as a factor in judging performance, whether that be awareness of city work crews or news about a stormwater or sewage overflow as a result of a heavy rain event. "I think they do a good job if I don't have to think about it," said one participant, adding that if beaches aren't closed because of bacteria and there's no trash in the water or in city streams then things are generally being done well.

Of the programs and projects you've listed, which do you think the city does best, and why?

There was virtually no conversation about this topic as the conversation drifted more towards limited financial resources, the desire for the city to spend its resources more efficiently and effectively, and the lack of education to alert the public to what's being done and why. Not everyone was critical. "They're trying their best with the limited money there is," said one participant who noted Superior's clay foundation throughout most of the community.

Let's turn our attention to programs or projects you believe the city should be offering, some that aren't currently available. Which can you think of?

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, no one in any of the three groups suggested a new program, returning once again to the issue of fees, spending and the need for more information. Typical of the comments were one participant who said, "People don't know what they should and should not do, and what is being done. Just listening, I realize I don't know much." Also, one person added, "I think the city needs to share information better about how it's spending money. Few people are aware of these issues." Another participant added, "Based on history, I have a concern that there won't be any follow through on any programs." One of the panelists had recently purchased a new home and said he was surprised that no one involved in the sale had bothered to mention any issue related to stormwater. There was one suggestion that the city should adhere to zoning changes. "The planning is done and then ignored, especially on our waterfront." Many in the group agreed citizens and city leadership would benefit from a new round of public hearings dedicated to stormwater, during which the discussion could include new business growth and business retention efforts.

(Because of limited discussion previously, the following question not asked)

If implemented, how would you determine whether these efforts were a success?

If these projects or programs became part of the city’s overall policy, how supportive would you be to continuing them?

With only limited conversation, one panelist suggested that the community would support any initiative if it was of sufficient quality. We have to look at the before and after information, but we need more information.

Panel Stormwater Specific – Group Survey

What do you believe is the number one threat to water quality in Superior’s rivers, streams and Lake Superior?

There was some group consensus that run-off carrying pollution from industry and chemicals generally associated with lawn care was the primary threat to water quality. While some participants shared a belief that it was not possible to blame any one thing, others were more specific. Murphy Oil was cited for its numerous violations over several years and how it is subject to continual monitoring for water and air quality. One participant suggested it is important for the region to monitor and protect the area’s clean water because of concern it may eventually be sold to arid areas in the country.

How many of you believe you can tell us what stormwater is and how many believe it’s a threat to water quality?

While no one participant offered a definitive description, there was general agreement that stormwater was most often associated with a significant rain event, which eventually mixed with elements on the ground before draining or seeping into the soil or area water. No participant was able to clearly state where stormwater discharged, and there was some confusion about whether it was treated after being separated and before it was eventually discharged. There was general agreement that stormwater is a threat to water quality, but that the public is only now beginning to realize this. We never knew it was a threat until we had some discovery of the dangers it presented, said one panelist. Nobody knows what’s in it and, unfortunately, we can’t control what people add to it, said another. A participant suggested citizens have a vested interest in controlling their behavior regarding recycling and pollution and that it was frustrating that others aren’t responsible for their actions.

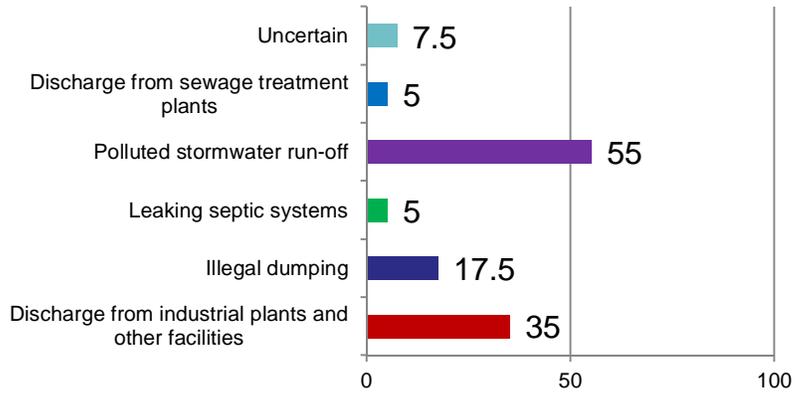
What do you believe is the number one contributor to stormwater pollution?

There was no one agreed upon primary contributor, but general agreement that chemicals associated with lawn care, lubricants, pet waste, salt, household hazardous waste and human generated waste were all contributors to the problem. One participant did suggest the issue and concern was most directly tied to a lack of natural buffer zones along rivers and streams that allow waste to go unfiltered into the water.

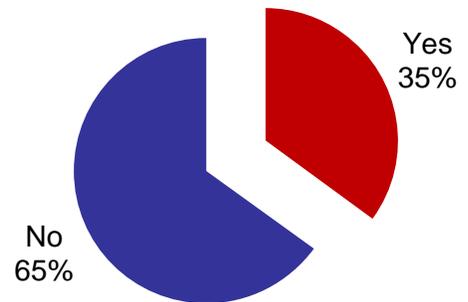
All participants were provided with a 4-page survey to complete. Results are included in the following pages. A copy of the survey instrument is included in the report appendix.

Group Stormwater Survey Results

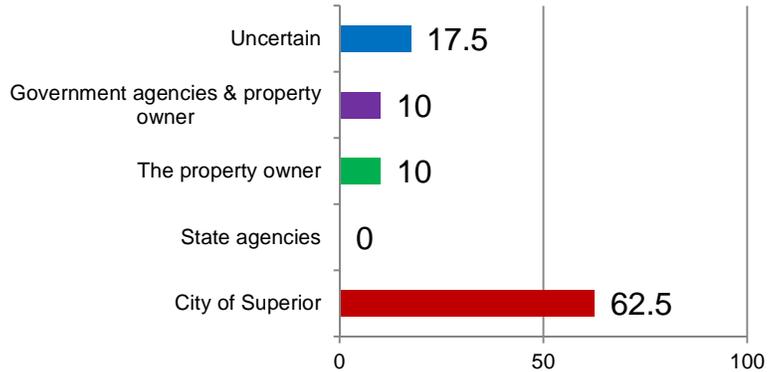
Which of the following do you think is the leading cause of polluted waters in the United States?



To the best of your knowledge, does stormwater flow to a wastewater treatment plant?

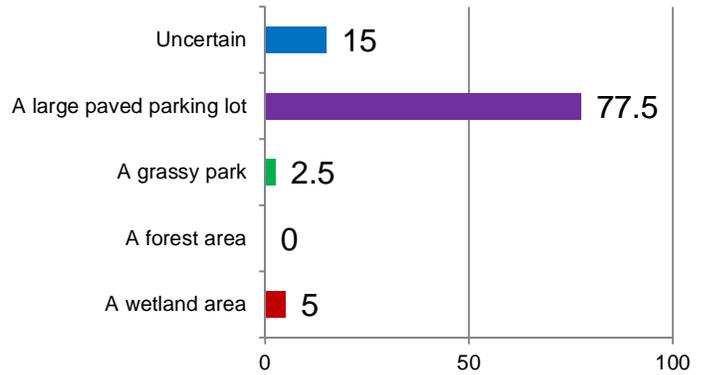


Which of the following is responsible for managing the stormwater that flows from your property?



Group Stormwater Survey Results

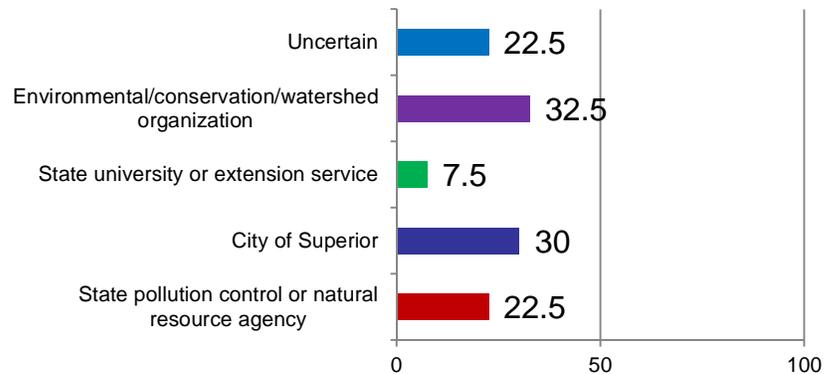
Which of the following areas produces the most stormwater run-off?



At what level is stormwater a contributor to the following problems?

Problem	Major	Moderate	Minor	None
Flooding	50.0	37.5	10.0	2.5
Weed and algae growth	20.0	57.5	20.0	2.5
Negative impact on fish habitat	22.5	62.5	15.0	0
Negative impacts on swimming and beaches	27.5	50.0	22.5	0
Sediment in local streams and rivers	30.0	55.0	15.0	0
Increased temperature in streams and rivers	5.0	52.5	35.0	7.5

Which of the following would you most likely turn to for information about stormwater pollution and pollution prevention practices?

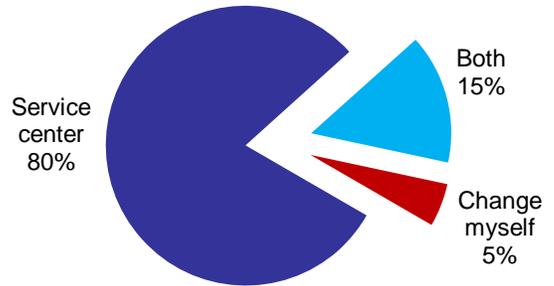


Group Stormwater Survey Results

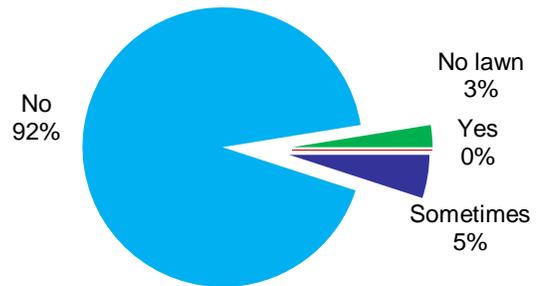
At what level do each of the following contribute to pollution?

Item	Major	Moderate	Minor	None
Grass clippings, sand and leaves	5.0	45.0	40.0	10.0
Street sand	22.5	45.0	25.0	7.5
Lawn chemicals	57.5	32.5	7.5	2.5
Pet waste	25.0	47.5	25.0	2.5
Road salt	57.5	27.5	15.0	0
Manure from farm animals	15.0	50.0	27.5	7.5
Improper disposal of household hazardous waste	52.5	30.0	17.5	0
Improper disposal of used motor oil and anti-freeze	55.0	30.0	15.0	0
Agricultural fertilizers and pesticides	55.0	30.0	15.0	0

Do you change your own oil or go to a service center?

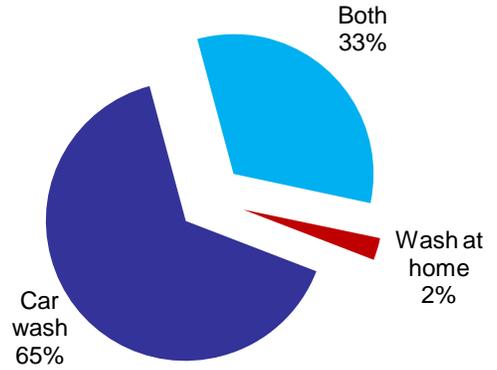


Do you sweep your grass clippings and other yard waste into the gutter or street?

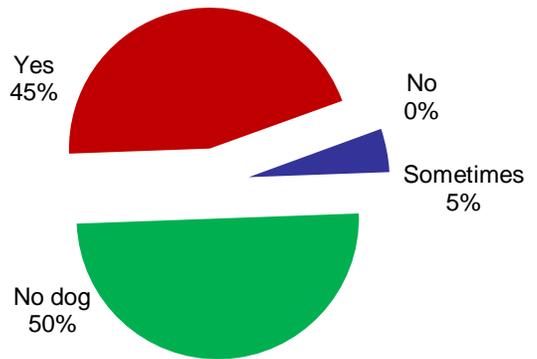


Group Stormwater Survey Results

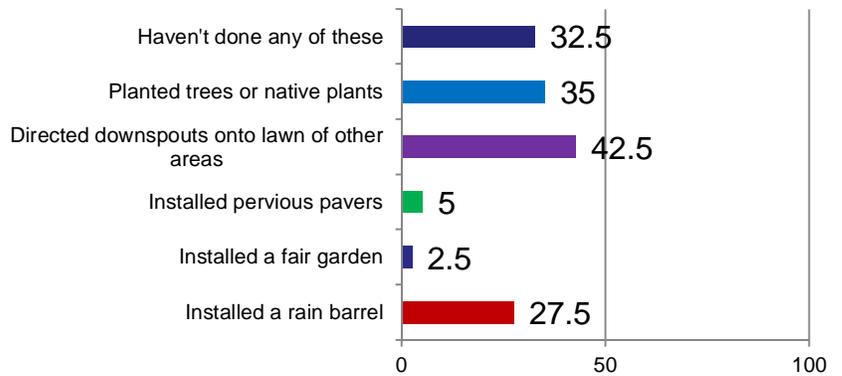
Do you usually wash your car at home or take it to a car wash?



Do you usually pick up after your dog?



Which of the following have you done in the last five years to reduce water run-off from your property?



Group Stormwater Survey Results

Please select the response that best indicates your current practice regarding your lawn care.

Current Practice	Do This Now	Willing to Do This	Not Willing to Do This	NA
Conduct soil test to determine fertilizer application rates	0	32.5	17.5	50
Apply chemical fertilizers and weed killed yearly	25.0	10.0	30.0	35.0
Sweep dry fertilizers and chemicals off your pavement	22.5	17.5	20.0	40.0
Stop using chemical fertilizers and weed killers completely	35.0	25.0	17.5	22.5
Clear grass clippings off sidewalk/driveway after mowing	50.0	20.0	12.5	17.5
Stop using salt to melt ice	22.5	37.5	25.0	15.0
Compost leaves and grass clippings in my yard	40.0	27.5	17.5	15.0
Compost leaves and grass clippings at community program	7.5	50.0	12.5	30.0

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Individual actions of average citizens have a significant impact on water quality	55.0	42.5	2.5	0
It is the job of the city to keep stormwater off my property	10.0	65.0	20.0	5.0
In the Spring, the best way to get rid of road salt is to sweep it into the street for the street sweeper	5.0	32.5	40.0	22.5
It's okay to dump waste oil into a storm drain	0	0	15.0	85.0
It's okay to dump waste oil into a gutter or ditch	0	0	15.0	85.0
Stormwater isn't really a problem in this region and we have many high quality streams and lakes to prove that point	2.5	15.0	47.5	35.0
Stormwater run-off is only a problem in urban areas	5.0	5.0	55.0	35.0
People living in suburban areas or in the country don't have to worry about stormwater pollution	2.5	5.0	55.0	37.5
I would like to do more to prevent pollution but I'm not sure what I should be doing	32.5	57.5	10.0	0
It's important that my neighbors think I have a nice lawn or garden	7.5	40.0	37.5	15.0

Group Stormwater Survey Results

Please select the following information sources where you have seen, heard or read about stormwater.

Information Source	Response
Public service announcement or ad on television	47.4
Public service announcement or ad on radio	23.7
Newspaper article or ad	57.9
Television news or weathercast	57.9
Internet site	23.7
Materials distributed through schools	7.9
A flyer in a utility bill	71.1
A sign or billboard	10.5
A magazine article	21.1
Direct mail for my residence	23.7
Facebook or social network site	5.3
Regional festival or expo	15.8
Workshop or seminar	15.8

We'd like to know what steps some of you have taken to prevent stormwater pollution. Who can give us an example of some behavior that might have changed, some action you've taken to prevent the pollution from occurring?

In earlier discussions, not a single participant had mentioned rain barrels or rain gardens as a program or project undertaken by the city to combat the effects of stormwater or water pollution. Yet when asked what particular steps they might have taken, several participants mentioned the use of barrels, construction of gardens and the addition of rain gutters. A few admitted being more likely to pick up pet waste and some had begun composting their grass clippings and some yard waste. Others had cut back on or stopped their use of salt during winter. While some indicated they had limited their use of lawn chemicals, at least one participant suggested he was able to use weed killer and chemicals safely and in a manner that was not harmful to the environment. Several homeowners indicated they were also mowing their lawns less frequently and had added bushes and shrubs to their property.

Did you take these steps knowing that they would help improve water quality, or was there some other reason?

"I don't think I consciously thought about it, I just did it," said one participant, a comment that seemed to be shared by others in each of the groups. In one case, a participant had taken steps to eliminate basement flooding. In another, rain barrels were added to provide a clean water source for flowers and gardens. In one of the panels, the participants agreed that culture has changed. "We don't do what we used to do. We're conscious of what's wrong. We don't need stronger laws."

Those of you who haven't taken any steps, can you tell us why you haven't?

"I don't make pollution. I'm not concerned about pollution," stated one of the panelists. While not all members of that group agreed, others said they very seldom think about whether their actions are causing increased pollution problems. In a few cases, those participants who were renters admitted they haven't personally taken any steps to improve conditions because those tasks were left to their landlord.

We'd like you to think for a moment about some of the things people do around their house or property that might contribute to pollution, and whether you think there should be some enforcement steps taken to prevent them or stop them from continuing this behavior.

This particular topic generated the most discussion during the focus group sessions. In each case, there was an immediate indication that there should be stronger enforcement, but there was also widespread belief expressed that while a good idea, increased enforcement might not be possible. Some objected to increased government involvement. Some comments included: "People might respond, but more laws are not the answer." "We need to make it easier to do the right thing and people will respond." "We have enough regulations. We can't force more expenses on people." "We can't burden people with more costs. They can't afford them now." "This can't cost the homeowner so much. Maybe they should reduce our taxes if we do something that stops pollution." "In lieu of increased regulations and enforcement, some of the panelists suggested the community would benefit if there was a strong education program and awareness campaign. "We're busy in our own lives. I can see that we don't know so many things. We need to build community awareness, maybe through family-friendly programs," offered one panelist, a view shared by many others. There was a

suggestion that an early education program be implemented in the city's schools. Access to materials that could assist in pollution prevention was raised in two groups, with a suggestion that the items such as rain barrels be available at a cost homeowners could afford. Others suggested collection areas for waste be provided at little or no cost.. There seemed to be modest support for programs that would assist lower income residents. Some members of the panels questioned whether the installation of rain gutters would stop pollution, and at least one participant questioned what the net effect would be of cutting back on the use of lawn chemicals, wondering what the effect would be after two to three years. In an attempt to avoid increased regulation and enforcement citywide, one panelist suggested the city concern itself with troubled or problem areas.

Public Awareness

All participants were provided with a 1-page survey to complete. Results are included below, and indicate the number of participants responding to the individual topic. A copy of the survey instrument is included in the report appendix. Participants were asked to indicate whether they were aware or unaware of the listed activity, whether they had participated in the activity, project or program (including reading where appropriate), and whether they had a generally positive or negative opinion about the listed item.

Activity	Aware	Unaware	Active	Positive	Negative
Rain Barrel	22	14	8	30	0
Compost Bin	21	16	4	26	2
Faxon Creek Restoration	2	32	2	9	0
Riparian Landowner Workshop/Survey	1	36	1	7	1
Composting Workshops	5	33	2	17	2
Newspaper . Related Ads	16	22	6	22	0
Outdoor Classroom	8	31	0	17	1
Storm Drain Stenciling	13	27	3	15	1
Stormwater Newsletter	21	16	9	23	0
Bill Stuffers	23	15	6	23	0
Attend Local Events	17	19	6	22	1

As participants were completing the awareness survey, they were presented with several newsletters and brochures distributed by Environmental Services.

One of the items we asked you about on the survey was the Stormwater Update newsletter. How many of you have seen this before? How many of you generally take the time to read the newsletters or any of the bill stuffers or materials that are distributed with your stormwater bill?

Just under half of all participants indicated they had seen or read the stormwater newsletters; some doubted the newsletters had ever been delivered to their residence. % of have to actually want to read it in the first place, +is how one participant described his lack of interest in the newsletter.

What topics or information would you like to see written about or discussed in the materials that are sent to residents of Superior?

Despite the general lack of awareness and interest expressed earlier, the participants were quick to offer many suggestions on topics they would like included in future newsletter issues. Many of these suggestions centered on %ow to+topics or ways in which residents could improve conditions on their property and neighborhoods. There were also several suggestions that it would be helpful if additional background information was included explaining some of the history behind decision-making and how the programs being implemented because of the decisions affect homeowners economically. Many of the participants said it would be helpful if information were presented in a frequently asked questions and answers format. Some panelists said it would be helpful if the city would provide a list of contacts for agencies or companies that could assist with homeowners wanting to improve conditions or undertake projects that would be of benefit to the community.

There are many ways to receive information. How do you generally prefer to receive information about things the city is doing that impacts you?

There was no shortage of suggestions on how best to present information to the public. Few of the suggestions included the use of traditional media, especially in light of the limited publication dates for the Superior Telegram. While some prefer traditional bill stuffers, many of the participants said they would like to see the newsletters available for pick up at area groceries, community centers, coffee shops or other businesses that would be willing to distribute the free copies. While some suggested the newsletters be included in shopping bags or pizza delivery packaging, this was not widely accepted by all participants. One panelist even suggested it would be beneficial if shopping bags were printed with helpful tips. Direct mail was discounted because of additional costs that would have to be incurred. Many of the participants indicated a stronger internet presence would be helpful, provided the information was presented in a user-friendly fashion. There was considerable enthusiasm for an opt-in online program where residents could choose specific newsletters or publications they would like to receive in electronic format. There was also interest in a continual series of community or neighborhood meetings that would be centered on such topics as landscaping and other ways in which residents could assist in stormwater and pollution prevention. %awareness will highlight our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, +said one panelist, adding, %As we look at some our strengths and how some of our weaknesses might become some our strengths, we see our dollars being used wisely, it there are opportunities we can leverage to make something better, a lot of it is just awareness.+

Rain Garden Specific

Let’s turn our attention specifically to rain gardens. We have distributed some information about rain gardens for you to review. How many of you currently have a rain garden? For those of you who do, why did you build one or have one built for you?

Only one of the focus group participants had an active rain garden; only five of the participants expressed knowledge or awareness of them. During the session with the participant who had the rain garden, there was a fairly active discussion of its benefits, although there were many unanswered questions.

The city is considering a pilot program that would offer technical assistance and possibly money for homeowners to install a rain garden on their property. We’d like to know how many of you believe this is a good project for the city to undertake, and why? If you oppose such a program, we’d like to know your reasons.

Very few participants voiced any objections to the concept of a pilot program, with most favoring the city’s leadership. Those who did object expressed concern about the funding source and the potential use of tax dollars. Taxes should not increase, so cost is an important consideration. One participant questioned whether the rain gardens would become a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Yet another wondered whether the small size of some residential lots within the city would prevent the construction of a rain garden.

If the typical rain garden costs \$500 to construct, how much of that amount do you believe the city should pay for citizens to participate in the rain garden project?

No one participant offered any suggestion on how much of the allocation should be borne by the city for the rain garden construction. As with the previous question, participants were concerned about the use of tax money. Where do you stop the subsidies? If, as one panelist suggested, residents were concerned about what’s in it for me, then it would fall to the city leaders to educate the residents about the construction of rain gardens as a catalyst to improve stormwater run-off. Some participants appeared open to building a rain garden if there was the potential their taxes would be reduced commensurate with the benefit they would provide because residents would then be contributing to a solution for an existing problem.

How likely is it you would visit a rain garden that has been completed and consider building one yourself?

Almost all participants indicated they would likely take advantage of a tour if it was properly advertised and promoted.

Generally speaking, how effective do you believe rain gardens are in preventing pollution and protecting overall water quality?

About half of the participants believed the gardens were effective. Most indicated their lack of awareness could be overcome with an increased educational campaign and favored the use of city funds to coordinate the effort.

Citizen Opinions Regarding Water Quality, Pollution Prevention & Stormwater

City of Superior Focus Group Research

Prepared for:

City of Superior, Wisconsin
Environmental Services Division
Department of Public Works

Prepared by:

Duke Skorich
Patty McNulty
Zenith Research Group, Inc.
3736 East Third Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55804
218.728.6525