



C O N N E C T I C U T R I V E R

S t o r m w a t e r C o m m i t t e e

MS4 Permit Year 7
Annual Report for Public Education and Outreach
MCM 1 and additional requirements in Appendixes F and H

July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025
September 18, 2025

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The Connecticut River Stormwater Committee annual report provides a summary of all the work undertaken during the July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024 reporting period. All of this work is directly applicable to all member communities' EPA annual reporting requirements.

Content has been formatted in a manner consistent with the format of the EPA annual report template for Year 6. Because the Connecticut River Stormwater Committee is a regional partnership program, these sections are written from a "regional" perspective rather than municipality-by-municipality. Additional details of community-specific efforts are reported in each municipality's annual report.

In communication with PVPC, who facilitates the coalition, EPA has endorsed and encouraged a regional Annual Reporting approach whereby Connecticut River Stormwater Committee member communities can satisfy the Public Education and Outreach reporting requirement (within MCM 1 and Appendixes F and H) by referencing the coalition's annual report with a url link in their own annual report.

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Introduction

1. Coalition Purpose and Membership

The Connecticut River Stormwater Committee is an intergovernmental compact of 20 municipalities, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission organized to work cooperatively in meeting US EPA Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit (“MS4 Permit”) requirements for stormwater education and outreach. Facilitated and staffed by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Committee also works together to meet other permit compliance activities where appropriate and needed. Work for the group is funded through annual dues paid by each member and through occasional grants. Member communities are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Connecticut River Stormwater Committee Member Communities

Member Community	Committee Representatives and Departments
Agawam	Tracy DeMaio and Mike Albro, Department of Public Works
Belchertown	Linda Leduc, Department of Public Works and Stephanie Sansoucy, Conservation Department
Chicopee	Quinn Lonczak, Department of Public Works
East Longmeadow	Bruce Fenney and Mark Berman, Department of Public Works
Easthampton	Dianne Rossini, Department of Public Works
Granby	Dave Derosiers, Highway Department
Hadley	Scott McCarthy, Department of Public Works, and Nick Cristofari, CEI,
Holyoke	Miira Gates, Department of Public Works
Longmeadow	Tim Keane, Department of Public Works
Ludlow	Jim Goodreau, Department of Public Works
Monson	Toni Uliana, Conservation Department
Northampton	Doug McDonald, Department of Public Works
Palmer	Richard Josephson, Department of Public Works
South Hadley	Melissa LaBonte, Department of Public Works
Southampton	Randall Kemp, Highway Department
Southwick	Randall Brown and Jon Goddard, Department of Public Works
Springfield	Vacant
West Springfield	Connor Knightly, Department of Public Works
Westfield	Joe Kietner, Casey Berube and Noel , Department of Public Works
Wilbraham	Tonya Basch and Dena Grochmal, Department of Public Works
University of Massachusetts - Amherst	Terri Wolejko, Environmental and Hazardous Materials Management Services Department, and Neils LaCour, Campus Planning Department

2. Water Quality Considerations in the Region

All Connecticut River Stormwater Committee communities are subject to additional MS4 permit requirements in Appendix F based on waters that are tributaries to the Long Island Sound, which has an approved TMDL for nitrogen.¹ Some member communities are also subject to additional MS4 permit requirements based on the following:

- Lakes and ponds with approved TMDLs for phosphorous (additional requirements within Appendix F of the MS4 permit)
- Waterbodies and their tributaries that are impaired for water quality due to phosphorous (additional requirements within Appendix H of the MS4 permit)
- Waterbodies and their tributaries that are impaired for water quality due to bacteria or pathogens (additional requirements within Appendix H of the MS4 permit)
- Waterbodies and their tributaries that are impaired for water quality due to solids (total suspended solids) (additional requirements within Appendix H of the MS4 permit)

It is important to note that the MS4 permit stipulates that certain additional requirements for public education and outreach messaging in the appendixes can be combined where appropriate. Specifically, Appendix H part I and II as well as Appendix F part A.III, A.IV, A.V, B.I, B.II and B.III.

¹ TMDL = identifies the Total Maximum Daily Load of nitrogen that can be discharged, in this case to Long Island Sound, without significantly impairing the health of the Sound.

Annual Report Part II: Self-Assessment

1. Education and Outreach on Bacteria/Pathogens

- ✓ Annual Message encouraging the proper management of pet waste, including noting any existing ordinances where appropriate
- ✓ Disseminated educational material to dog owners at time of issuance or renewal of dog license, or other appropriate time
- ✓ Provided information to owners of septic systems about proper maintenance.

See description of messaging in section 2 below.

2. Education and Outreach on Nitrogen and Phosphorous (combined)

- ✓ Distributed an annual message in the spring (April/May) that encourages the proper use and disposal of grass clippings and encourages the proper use of slow-release fertilizers
- ✓ Distributed an annual message in the summer (June/July) encouraging the proper management of pet waste, including noting any existing ordinances where appropriate.
- ✓ Distributed an annual message in the fall (August/September/October) encouraging the proper disposal of leaf litter

See description of messaging in section 3 below.

Annual Report Part IV: MCM 1 – Public Education and Outreach

The required general education messages to four audiences under the existing MS4 permit were completed with work in Year 6. As such, this section here describes additional work completed in Year 7, primarily under the continuing annual public education and outreach requirements under Appendixes H and F of the MS4 permit.

1. *Think Blue Connecticut River* Website

Message description and distribution method: The *Think Blue Connecticut River* website is at the core of all regional messaging about stormwater. The website at www.thinkblueconnecticutriver.org does the following:

- Covers major areas of messaging about reducing polluted stormwater flows, including lawn and yard care, pet waste management, car care, controlling soil erosion, soaking up the rain, and septic system care
- Addresses the key 4 audiences plus educators
- Serves as the “landing place” for information on nearly all social media messaging

In the past year, PVPC has developed a new logo for the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website as a way to draw greater interest from all audiences in the region. The logo features a river otter, inspired by drone video footage capture of otters in lower Abbey Brook in Chicopee. The river otter will help with future messaging in drawing more powerful connection between the need for clean stormwater to support the lives of these and other important creatures. The core message

being, how we manage our lawns, pet waste, septic systems, etc. has direct impact on the otter and other wildlife dependent on rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands. Selection of the otter is also based on its qualities as a charismatic megafauna with greater public appeal and thus potential for inducing a response to appeals for cleaning up stormwater. PVPC will be working with the Stormwater Committee in the coming year to consider ways to use the otter to best effect.



Targeted audiences: Residents, business/institutional/commercial, developers, and industrial, and municipalities throughout the region

Responsible Department/Parties: PVPC staff and Connecticut River Stormwater Committee members

Measurable goal(s): A total of 5,060 people visited the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website during Year 7 and spent an average of 12 seconds on viewing pages on stormwater best practices. Beyond the web analytics reported below on specific messages, there were the following views of the general audience pages on the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website:

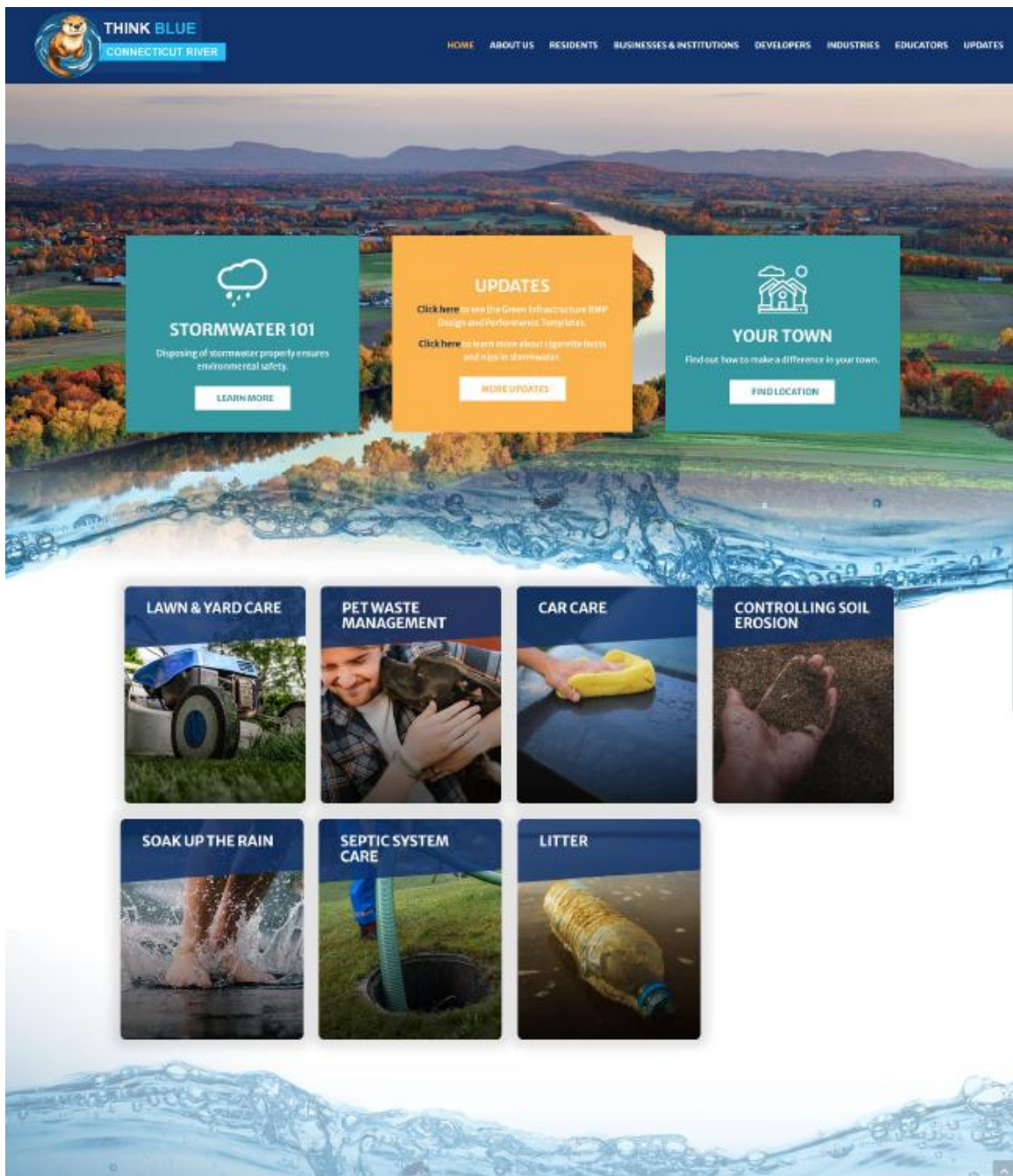
Residents views = 69; Businesses and Institutions views = 48; Developers views = 59; Industries views = 29; and Educators views = 39.

Message dates: July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025

Message completed for: Appendix F requirements ☒ Appendix H requirements ☒

Was message different than what proposed in your NOI/SWMP? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, describe why the change was made: As indicated in previous annual reports, the website was not mentioned in the NOI and SWMP, but it has been central to all messaging in the region, providing additional information and resources on key topics.



Above is an image of the updated home page for the Think Blue Connecticut River website.

2. Messages related to bacteria and pathogens

Proper management of pet waste

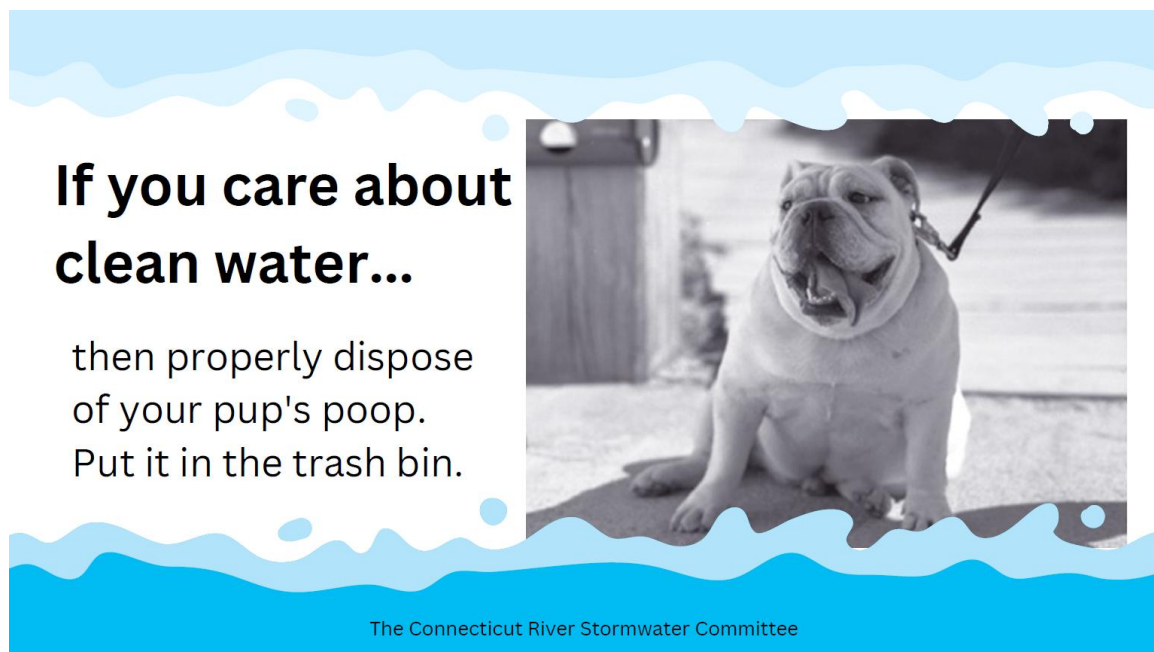
Message description and distribution method: Pet waste messaging in Year 7 occurred at time of licensing and during the summer months and was based on the message: “Think picking up Spike’s poop is gross? Try swimming in it.” In part, the aim of messaging has been to drive people to the pet waste pick up pledge on the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website.

At time of licensing

Messaging included a slide for use by local cable access television stations in English and Spanish, and an e-mail message to municipal clerks/dog officers providing materials for use in the licensing process.

The cable access message was simplified based on feedback from cable tv stations on a Year 5 fall leaf litter messages. This message in Year 7 on pet waste also focused specifically on communicating that pet waste *should be put in a trash bin*. Public works officials on the Connecticut River Stormwater Committee had stressed the importance of this point because they are frequently finding bagged pet waste in catch basins.

Materials provided to municipal clerks and licensing officers was based on a survey done in Year 3 about what might be the most effective methods for messaging through their licensing process.



Si te importa el agua limpia...

desecha correctamente
la caca de tu perrito.
Ponla en la basura.



The Connecticut River Stormwater Committee
(El Comité de Aguas Pluviales del Río Connecticut)

The above message in English and Spanish was provided to 18 local cable access television stations in the region.



**THINK PICKING UP
SPIKE'S POOP
IS GROSS?**

TRY SWIMMING IN IT.

**THINK AGAIN.
THINK BLUE.**

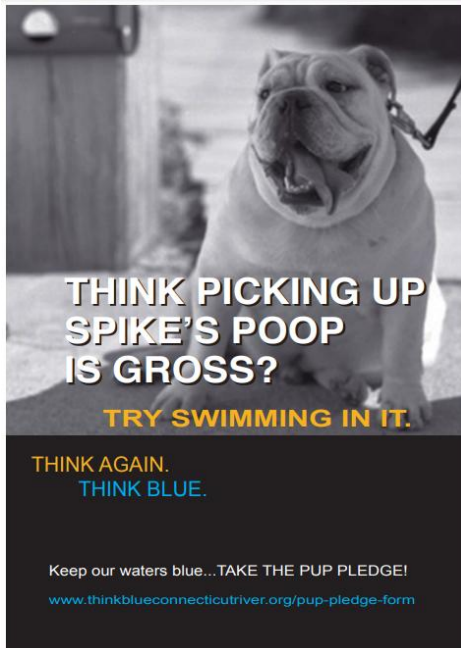
Did you know that there are about 47,000 dogs in the Pioneer Valley, and that together, they produce about 17.5 tons of animal waste a day?

Dog waste does not act as an effective fertilizer. Stormwater runoff can wash dog waste into ponds, lakes, streams and drinking water supplies, causing outbreaks of *E. coli* and other bacteria harmful to both people and wildlife. It can contaminate parks, athletic fields and places where children play.

We all need to pick up and properly dispose of our pet's waste in the trash can. Join all the dog owners in your neighborhood who are showing they care and take the PUP (Pick up Poop) Pledge at:

www.thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/pup-pledge-form/

PVPC provided the above electronic message to be placed on municipal dog licensing web pages in member communities.



JOIN PIONEER VALLEY DOG OWNERS BY TAKING THE PUP (PICK UP POOP) PLEDGE!

Here in the Valley, we have about 47,000 dogs that together produce more than 17.5 tons of waste per day. Dog poop left on the ground — or thrown down a storm drain— washes with the next rainfall straight to our rivers and lakes. The cumulative impacts of improper waste disposal make our local waters unsafe. Show that you care and take the PUP Pledge to help keep our waters BLUE.

TAKE THE PUP (Pick Up Poop) PLEDGE!



Follow the web link, or scan the QR code to access the pledge.

www.thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/pup-pledge-form

SCAN ME

Messaging was slightly modified as shown above to also serve members communities as a postcard for distribution with dog licenses.

Summer

Paid placement social media messages on Facebook and Instagram at the start of the summer swimming season targeted people in Connecticut Stormwater Committee zip codes who had identifiers that match “pets at home” and “dog walking.”



Above is the paid social media message that ran on Facebook and Instagram. The pledge button links to the pledge form on the Think Blue Connecticut River website.

As this message in Year 7 on pet waste also focused specifically on communicating that pet waste *should be put in a trash bin*. We also sent the following email and sign to local BOH, parks departments & Conservation Commission to post in the Town's parks and open space areas and included information on installing signage, kiosks and pet waste stations.

Good morning,

Dog waste in your parks or conservation property got you down? The Connecticut River Stormwater Committee has some great resources for your use.

Your municipality is a member of this group, a regional coalition that works together to meet EPA and MassDEP requirements to message for water quality improvements. Your member representative is cc'd on this message so that you might collaborate and stay in touch about use of these pet waste pick up reminder materials.

Please see attached for your use:

- a design template for a humorous 12x18" sign
- quotes for sign production and sign hardware within the region
- an example kiosk used recently by City of Holyoke (if you are interested in setting up a pet waste station)

Most people just need a reminder that leaving their dog's waste in the park or on a conservation property is not acceptable. With some prompting and a dose of humor that reminds them that there is no poop fairy, people ought to be more conscientious about proper disposal of dog waste. Not only will this help you in better care for your property, but it will also prevent the harmful bacteria in pet waste from flowing with rainfall to local rivers and streams.

there is no
POOP FAIRY!



per local ordinance

SCOOP YOUR POOP

Grab it - Bag it - Toss it
(in the trash)

Keep our local waters clean
ThinkBlueConnecticutRiver.org

Measurable goal(s):

During time of licensing

The cable access message in English and Spanish went to 18 local stations.

Summer

Messaging reached 892 people in Stormwater Committee communities with 273 individuals clicking on the “Pledge” button to go to the Pick Up Poop pledge on the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website.

Analytics for the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website, indicate that there were another 109 people went to the pet waste landing page on the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website.

The email and sign went to 20 local Boards of Health, 20 parks and/or recreation departments & 20 Conservation Commissions in the region.

Message dates:

The social media message ran on Facebook and Instagram for eight days from June 24 to July 1, 2025.

Message completed for: Appendix F requirements ✓ Appendix H requirements ✓

Was message different than what proposed in your NOI/SWMP? Yes ✓ No

The NOI/SWMP indicated pet waste messaging only in summer months as PVPC understood that messaging under the Appendixes could be combined. EPA has indicated that additional messaging to dog owners “at time of licensing” is required. Messaging at time of licensing was added, starting in Year 2, along with additional messaging on pet waste during “stay at home” orders with the pandemic (given the increased visibility of associated problems).

If yes, describe why the change was made: To provide additional messaging.

Proper septic system care

Message description and distribution method: Recognizing that Boards of Health are the primary point of contact on septic systems for residents, the Stormwater Committee worked this year toward better understanding and enabling them in this role. A survey went out to all Boards of Health, asking several questions, including

- Whether they are in possession of a list of septic system owners in Town from Board of Assessors.
- Whether issuing a direct mail letter to septic system owners makes sense
- When approving septic plans, does the BOH make a practice of providing three-page EPA flyer on septic system care?
- If yes, can BOH track this?
- If no, willing to begin this practice?

Based on the survey responses, Boards of Health received several messaging items for their use shown below.



BE SEPTIC SAVVY

HELP KEEP OUR WATERWAYS CLEAN

Proactive septic maintenance can save you money and help protect the health of your family, community, and environment. Make sure to evaluate your tank every 1-3 years and pump when solids reach 1/3 of tank volume. For more tips, visit: <https://thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/septic-system-care/>

Website / social media element were provided for Board of Health use.

Do Your Part, Be SepticSmart: The Do's and Don'ts of Your Septic System

Learn these simple steps to protect your home, health, environment and property value:

Protect It and Inspect It:
Do:

- Have your system inspected (in general) every three years by a licensed contractor and have the tank pumped, when necessary, generally every three to five years.

Think at the Sink:
Don't:

- Pour cooking grease or oil down the sink or toilet.
- Rinse coffee grounds into the sink.
- Pour household chemicals down the sink or flush them.

Do:

- Eliminate or limit the use of a garbage disposal.
- Properly dispose of coffee grounds & food.
- Put grease in a container to harden before discarding in the trash.

Don't Overload the Commode:
Don't:

- Flush non-degradable products or chemicals, such as feminine hygiene products, condoms, dental floss, diapers, cigarette butts, cat litter, paper towels, pharmaceuticals.

Do:

- Dispose of these items in the trash can!

Shield Your Field:
Don't:

- Park or drive on your drainfield. The weight can damage the drain lines.
- Plant trees or shrubs too close to your drainfield; roots can grow into your system and clog it.

Do:

- Consult a septic service professional to advise you of the proper distance for planting trees and shrubs, depending on your septic tank location.

Don't Strain Your Drain:
Don't:

- Concentrate your water use by using your dishwasher, shower, washing machine, and toilet at the same time. All that extra water can really strain your septic system.

Do:

- Stagger the use of water-generating appliances. This can be helpful especially if your system has not been pumped in a long time.
- Become more **water efficient** by fixing plumbing leaks and consider installing bathroom and kitchen faucet aerators and water-efficient products.

For more SepticSmart tips, visit: www.epa.gov/septicmart

832-813-002 • September 2013

Ponga de su parte: conozca SepticSmart: Lo que sí puede hacer y lo que no puede hacer para su sistema séptico

Siga estos pasos sencillos para proteger su casa, su salud, el medio ambiente y el valor de su propiedad.

Protéjalo e inspecciónelo:
Si:

- Contrate a un contratista licenciado para que inspeccione el sistema séptico en su totalidad cada tres años y bombee el tanque (si es necesario) generalmente cada 3-5 años.

Piense en el fregadero:
No:

- Eche grasa para cocinar por el fregadero o el inodoro.
- Eche restos de café por el fregadero.
- Eche productos químicos de uso casero por el fregadero o el inodoro.

Si:

- Elimine o limite el uso del triturador de desperdicios.
- Desheche correctamente los restos de café y de comida.
- Antes de tirar la grasa en la basura, píngala a que se solidifique en un recipiente.

No sobrecargue el inodoro:
No:

- Eche en el inodoro productos no degradables, como productos de higiene femenina preservativos, hilo dental, pañales, colillas de cigarrillos, arena sanitaria para gatos, toallas de papel, medicamentos.

Si:

- Desheche estos artículos en la basura!

Proteja el área:
No:

- Se estacione ni conduzca por el área de drenaje. El peso puede dañar la tubería.
- Siempre arbustos ni árboles demasiado cerca del área de drenaje: las raíces pueden crecer sobre el sistema y obstruirlo.

Si:

- Consulte con un profesional de servicios sépticos para que le diga cuál es la distancia correcta para plantar arbustos y árboles, dependiendo de la ubicación del tanque séptico.

No ponga a prueba su drenaje:
No:

- Concentre el uso de agua usando el lavaplatos, la ducha, la lavadora y el inodoro al mismo tiempo. Toda esa agua extra puede sobrecargar el sistema séptico.

Si:

- Use los aparatos que usan agua a distintos horas. Esto puede ser muy útil si el sistema no se ha bombeado por mucho tiempo.
- Use el agua con más eficiencia: repare cualquier fuga y considere instalar aireadores para grifos en el baño y la cocina y productos eficaces para el consumo del agua.

Para obtener una lista completa de recomendaciones SepticSmart, visite www.epa.gov/septicmart

832-813-002 • Agosto 2013

EPA flyers were provided for Board of Health use.

DRAFT – Letter for local boards of health to send to residents with septic systems

Print on muni/organizational letterhead

June __, 2025

Hello,

your muni name is subject to more stringent federal and state stormwater permit requirements. Along with 23 other communities here in the Pioneer Valley, we must find ways to reduce contaminated flows to local rivers, streams, and lakes.

Our records indicate that your household relies on a septic system for disposal of sanitary sewage. Your septic system is designed to treat wastewater from your home before it filters into the soil and replenishes the groundwater that feeds local lakes, rivers, and, in many cases, drinking water supply wells.

Pumping your septic tank is critical to ensuring that it properly treats waste. Accumulated solids at the bottom of your tank can prevent the system from doing its job. If your septic system is not in good working order, it can also flood and cause sewage backup into your yard or home. While you can imagine how harmful raw sewage could be to your property, you may not be thinking about the harm a faulty septic system can cause to drinking water and local waterways. MassDEP recommends the following strategies for ensuring a healthy septic system:

- Inspect your system at least once every 3 years. A reputable, permitted septage hauler can advise you on the frequency of pumping needed for your particular household. For homes with garbage disposals, pumping once a year is recommended.
- Limit the use of your kitchen sink garbage disposal and flush only human waste down your toilets. This will keep your system working optimally and reduce the overall frequency of maintenance.
- Properly dispose of hazardous or toxic substances, such as medicines, household chemicals, solvents, etc. These substances are not treated by your septic system and contaminate groundwater.
- Avoid driving over, parking on, or doing construction over your system and tank as this can impact proper function of your system.
- Conserve water to reduce the amount of liquid your system must process and thereby extend its lifespan.

You can find more information on maintaining septic systems at the state website at: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/caring-for-your-septic-system>. The Connecticut River Stormwater Committee, of which your muni name is a member also has some helpful information at: <https://thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/septic-system-care/>

As a resident of your muni name, your commitment to proper maintenance and upkeep of your septic system helps us achieve and maintain water quality standards.

Thank you,

Letter above was provided for Board of Health use.

Targeted audience: Residents

Responsible department/parties: PVPC staff and Connecticut River Stormwater Committee members

Measurable goal(s): The survey and follow-up content went to 20 Boards of Health in the region.

Additionally, analytics for the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website, indicate that there were another 17 people went to the Septic System landing page on the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website.

Message dates: Spring 2025.

Message completed for: Appendix F requirements Appendix H requirements ✓

Was message different than what proposed in your NOI/SWMP? Yes ✓ No

If yes, describe why the change was made: As reported previously, the NOI/SWMP indicated septic system messaging would be done in Year 3 only as MS4 permit language in Appendix H was not entirely clear on the timing of this message. EPA has since indicated that septic system messaging must occur each year. The Connecticut River Stormwater Committee adjusted accordingly, starting in Year 2.

3. Messages related to phosphorus and nitrogen

Disposal of grass clippings and proper use of slow-release fertilizers

Residential audience

For the Stormwater Committee, PVPC worked with UMass Cooperative Extension to improve outreach content for Think Blue and UMass web pages to simplify the process of soil testing, interpreting results, and then acting on those results. For its part, PVPC revised elements on the Think Blue website related to lawn care including:

- Soil test information, noting that 95% of soil tests showing that already way overblown on nutrients – clear pattern
- References to good field guide resource(s)

Once these updates were made, PVPC worked with the Stormwater Committee social media consultant on social media campaign with a slightly revised lead message: “Know what your lawn needs.”

Targeted audience: Residential and business/institutions/commercial facilities owners

Responsible department/parties: PVPC staff and Connecticut River Stormwater Committee members

Measurable goal(s): Analytics for the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website page on lawn care, indicate that there were a total of 1917 views on the website landing page with 4 downloads.

Message dates: May 7th to 14th

Message completed for: Appendix F requirements ✓ Appendix H Requirements ✓

Was message different than what proposed in your NOI/SWMP? Yes No ✓

If yes, describe why the change was made: N/A



Above is the post that ran on social media and had 2,237 clicks to Learn More, which directly links people to content on the Connecticut River Think Blue website specific to lawn care.

Business and commercial audience

For the business audience, PVPC had planned to do an op-ed piece in the Business West magazine featuring a local business following best practices, but we were unable to locate a company willing to work with us on a letter to the editor. We made significant outreach efforts with repeated emails and calls to follow up with over ten local businesses but were never returned and we were unsuccessful.

Proper management of pet waste

Summer messaging was combined with annual messaging requirements for bacteria and pathogens. See description in section 2 above.

Proper disposal of leaf litter

Residential audience

For Year 7, PVPC worked with the *Be a Leaf Hero* social media posts developed by the Cape Cod Commission, already customized by PVPC for the Connecticut River Stormwater Committee. Messaging to the residential audience included the following:

- Slides displayed by local cable access television stations
- A flyer for posting on member webpages

Both messaging elements included a “call to action,” providing a link to a series of tips and more in-depth content on the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website. The flyer included a link to locations for proper disposal of leaves and yard waste in each community. See website page at: <https://thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/be-a-leaf-hero/>. The content seeks to promote better practices with leaf litter and build understanding about potential contamination of stormwater with leaf litter.

Given the election season this fall, however, there was no related social media messaging. In past election seasons, there has been heightened security around social media and the work to get through barriers to post has been extremely time consuming. With the U.S. presidential election this fall, it is anticipated that these issues will only be compounded.



Above is the slide provided to cable access television stations in the region.

CLEAN WATER
BEGINS WITH YOU



KEEP FALLEN LEAVES OUT OF STREETS

Leaves raked or blown into streets will leach nutrients into stormwater runoff and contribute to pollution in our local waterways. Leaf litter can also plug storm drains and increase flooding issues.

Better options:

- Mulch leaves in place with your lawnmower to put valuable nutrients back into the soil
- Gather leaves and other "yard waste" into a compost pile and let overwinter and decompose for use as fertilizer next growing season
- Dispose of your leaves locally. Find out where at :

<https://thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Muni-disposal-resources-Leaves-updated-10-16-22.pdf>



BE A LEAF HERO

For more tips and information visit:

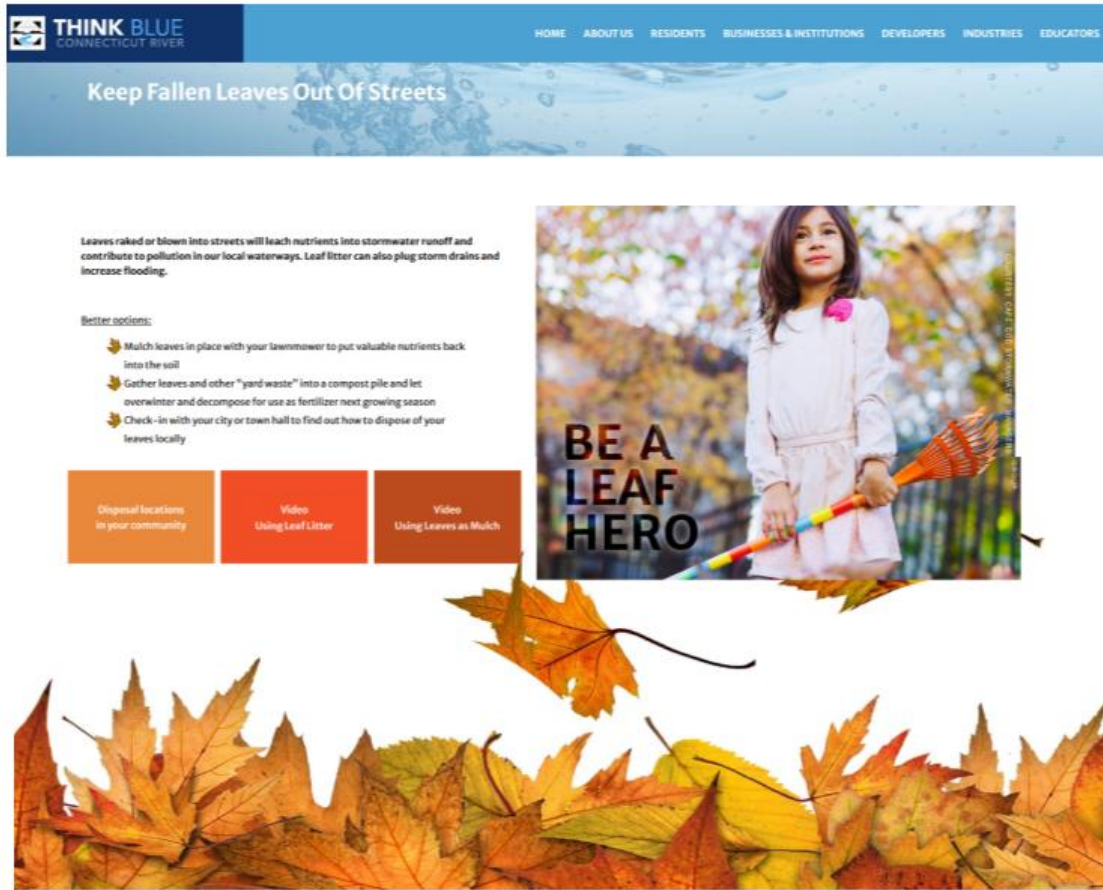
www.thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/be-a-leaf-hero

ADAPTED COURTESY CAPE COD STORMWATER MANAGERS GROUP

What is Stormwater Pollution?

It's the toxic mix of bacteria, chemicals, metals, nutrients and other contaminants that washes over pavement and other impervious surfaces and flows down storm drains to our waterways.

This flyer, which includes a link to a list of locations for proper disposal of leaves, was provided for members to post on municipal websites.



Above is the Think Blue Connecticut River website landing page on leaf litter, where social media clicks take the audience to additional information, including a list of disposal locations in Stormwater Committee communities and two instructional videos.

Targeted audience: Residents

Responsible department/parties: PVPC staff and Connecticut River Stormwater Committee members

Measurable goal(s): The cable access message went to 18 local stations. Analytics for the *Think Blue Connecticut River* website page on leaf litter, indicate that there were a total of 1416 views on the website landing page with 3 downloads.

Message dates: October 11 to 29, 2024

Message completed for: Appendix F requirements Appendix H requirements ✓

Was message different than what proposed in your NOI/SWMP? Yes ✓ No

If yes, describe why the change was made: N/A

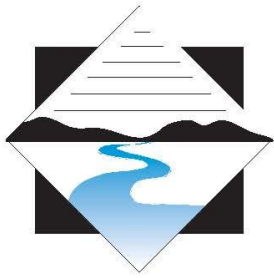
Business and commercial audience

For the business and commercial audience in Year 7, PVPC issued a letter to reach 147 landscaping and lawn care companies in the region with best practices messaging on disposal of leaf litter and leaf. We also included a survey asking questions related to managing and disposing of leaves from lawns and yards. Signed by the Committee Chair and Co-chair, the letter promoted several key best practices:

- Keep leaves off of driveways and roadways where they can easily wash into storm drains and contribute to higher nutrient flows during the fall season.
- Use a mulching mower. By mulching the leaves into turf areas, you avoid having to rake/blow and bag and you offer a way to manage autumn leaves while providing clients with free fertilizer. Mulched leaves recycle nutrients and reduce the overall need for applied fertilizer, which can help to reduce nutrient loading for local rivers, streams, and lakes.
- Alternatively, if your client has an existing compost pile, you can recommend that they consider allowing you to add leaves to the pile. Leaves provide a critically important element (carbon) to the composting process, making for a more soil enriching product to be used in the next growing season. Be sure compost piles are located away from streams, lakes, or storm drains as these decomposing materials and nutrients could easily reach these water resources.

A survey went out to all 147 landscaping companies in the region asking several questions, including

- Do you ever use a mulching mower to manage leaves on your client's lawns and yards?
- If you have never used a mulching mower, is there anything that would be helpful in enabling you to mulch leaves into the lawn (e.g. help with purchasing equipment, informative brochure for use with your client on the benefits of mulching leaves)?
- Do you ever add leaves to your client's composting pile?
- Do you ever take leaves to a nearby farm or other facility that composts leaves
- Do you ever dispose of leaves in another location?
- If yes, please indicate what other location you use to dispose of leaves at:
- Would you like more information on possible locations where land care professionals can dispose of leaves?
- If yes, please provide your company name and best contact for additional information:
- If you did not answer "yes" in Question 7 and would like to be entered into raffle, please provide your name and contact information here:



CONNECTICUT RIVER

Stormwater Committee

October 22, 2024

Town of Agawam
Town of Belchertown
City of Chicopee
Town of East Longmeadow
City of Easthampton
Town of Granby
Town of Hadley
City of Holyoke
Town of Longmeadow
Town of Ludlow
City of Northampton
Town of Palmer
Town of South Hadley
Town of Southampton
Town of Southwick
City of Springfield
Town of West Springfield
City of Westfield
Town of Wilbraham
University of Massachusetts
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Hello Professional Landscaper:

As you may know, many communities here in the Pioneer Valley are subject to more stringent federal stormwater requirements. This permit requires communities to reduce contaminated storm flows to local rivers, streams, and lakes. Under the Clean Water Act, we have made important strides toward fishable and swimmable waters, but we still have some distance to go.

Why should you care as a professional landscaper?

Many lawn care practices contribute directly to storm flows that are especially high in nutrients. The improper use and disposal of fertilizers, leaves, and grass clippings add nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorous into storm flows, which then directly enter our local rivers & stream. As a lawn care professional, you can do your part to help by learning more about best lawn care practices. These are changes to common practice and will involve the cooperation of your client as well. To that end, our group has posted information for property owners on better management practices. See: www.thinkblueconnecticutriver.org/be-a-leaf-hero/

For your work this fall, you might start by considering the following:

- **Keep leaves off of driveways** and roadways where they can easily wash into storm drains and contribute to higher nutrient flows during the fall season.
- **Use a mulching mower.** By mulching the leaves into the lawn, you avoid having to rake/blow and bag and you offer a way to manage autumn leaves while providing your client with free fertilizer. Mulched leaves put nutrients back into the ground and reduce the overall need for more soluble fertilizer products, which present greater problems for our local waterways.
- Alternatively, if your client has an existing **compost** pile, you can recommend they consider allowing you to add leaves to the pile. Leaves provide a critically important element (carbon) to the composting process, making for a more soil enriching product to be used in the next growing season. *Be sure compost piles are located away from streams, lakes, or storm drains as these decomposing materials and nutrients could easily leach to these water resources.*

Thank you for considering these better lawn care practices for leaf litter!!!

In an effort to better serve you we are conducting a brief survey to determine how local landscapers dispose of leaf litter. Surveys will be open until November 30, 2024, and anyone who participates in the survey will be entered into a raffle for a \$100 Lowes or Home Depot Gift Card! Please use the QR code or the following link for the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/fall2024leaf>

Patty Gambarini, from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, would be happy to hear from you about any thoughts on improving leaf litter practice in the region. Please contact her at: pgambarini@pvpc.org

Sincerely,

Joseph Kietner, Committee Chairman
Stormwater Coordinator, City of Westfield

Randal Brown, Committee Vice Chair
Public Works Director, Town of Southwick



Above is the letter sent to 147 landscaping companies in the region.