

***Nine Mine Run Rain Barrel
Initiative:
Phase 1 Survey Report***

Prepared for

Riversides Stewardship
Alliance

By



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M e t h o d o l o g y & L o g i s t i c s

Study Sample

- A total of 600 randomly selected residents of Allegheny County, 18 years of age and older were interviewed from the following Zip Code areas: 15221 / 15217 / 15218. The survey was commissioned by the Riversides Stewardship Alliance.

Survey Method

- The survey was conducted using computer-assisted techniques of telephone interviewing (CATI) and random number selection. A total of 20% of all interviews were monitored and the management of Oraclepoll Research supervised 100%.

Logistics

- The survey was conducted between the days of January 8^{13th} to January 30th 2004. Initial calls were made between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. Subsequent callbacks of no-answers and busy numbers were made on a (staggered) daily rotating basis up to 7 times (from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.) until contact was made. In addition, telephone interview appointments were attempted with those respondents unable to complete the survey at the time of contact. If no contact was made at a number after the seventh attempt, the number was discarded.

Confidence

- The margin of error for results from the entire 600-person survey is $\pm 4.0\%$, 19/20 times.

Executive Summary

Summary

- Water related issues, including the quality of water and the health of local waterways is the leading group of environmental issues of concern to residents. They also have concern with respect to the quality of their tap water. Water quality and drinking water are hot button issues that may be used in the campaign to increase buy-in.
- While there is moderate awareness as to what in fact a watershed is, only a low number of respondents are aware that they live in a watershed.
- Moreover, there is not a good understanding as to what the current health of the Nine Mile Run Watershed is, and a high number are also unaware if the environmental quality has improved over the past five years. Despite this, only a small number of residents are not currently concerned about the health of the Nine Mile Run Watershed.
- While 7 in 10 area residents feel that runoff from properties has a negative impact on local waterways, only half take ownership with the view that their property is a contributor. Rather runoff from roads and public properties and industrial pollution are seen as the main offenders. Clearly a greater link needs to be established.
- However, results are encouraging as baseline data suggests that 56% feel that they can take action to reduce runoff from their property and 58% agreed it would be their responsibility to help fix the problem of sewage in their neighbourhood causing backups.
- A strong majority of area residents (83%) support upgrading Allegheny County's sewer infrastructure and when presented with the scenario of higher sewer rates,

73% still support these upgrades, although no specific rate increase amount was mentioned to them. Once again, there is a need here to link lower cost solutions and the role of the individual in the process.

- 7% are aware of the Three Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Project and 18% have seen or heard information about the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association. Among those that have seen or heard something about the Association, 22% stated that its activities have had some (14%) or a great deal of impact (8%) on their actions to reduce wastewater.
- Currently, less than a quarter or 24% of residents hold the view that it is not important for area residents to use rain barrels, while on the other hand 35% feel it is important. The bulk of residents or 41% either have no opinion (10%) or have a neutral (31%) view on the subject. This neutral and undecided group needs to be targeted in a campaign to sway them to the “important” range, while it is unlikely that the core 24% opposed will be moved.
- Only 27% are opposed to using a free rain barrel compared to more than half or 52% would be likely (17%) or very likely (35%) to use one, while 21% are neutral (14%) or have no opinion (7%). Opposition concerns that range from having no space, what to do with the standing water, health concerns over stagnate water and installation issues need to be addressed.
- There is significant opposition to paying \$75 for a barrel (57%), while the number of likely users falls to 18% and 26% are either neutral (23%) or have no opinion (3%).
- Once again there is a core group of 28% opposed or not interested in receiving information about the Nine Mile Run Rain Barrel Initiative, while almost half or 48% of respondents are interested, with 23% of respondents holding a neutral view and 1% being unsure. When asked in an open-ended question their preferred method to receive information, flyers in the mail were the preferred method.

- Opposition to making a public commitment by placing a lawn sign stands at 52%, while support is at 31% and a high 17% did not know or were unsure.
- Half of residents would support door-to-door outreach, while 8% were unsure of their support or opposition and the remaining 42% of respondents were opposed. It should be noted that among the 42% of all residents opposed to outreach, 59% of them also stated that they prefer to be notified about the Nine Mile Run Rain Barrel Initiative by a flyer in the mail. 60% of homeowners who oppose door-to-door outreach also prefer to receive information in a flyer delivered in their mail.
- As a result, the campaign needs to find a way to market the door-to-door outreach to those opposed to it in a different manner. For example, the campaign must build upon hot button issues of importance to residents such as water quality, including tap water and the general health of the watershed to engage them. Furthermore sell the campaign as a personalized flyer information drop whereby staff will also educate residents or be able to answer any of their questions (if they so choose) with respect to the role of the individual in the process of reducing runoff into an aging sewer infrastructure.

Top of Mind Environmental Issue

Survey respondents were first asked what they considered to be the most important environmental issue facing Allegheny County. Respondents were allowed to provide verbatim responses in an open-ended format.

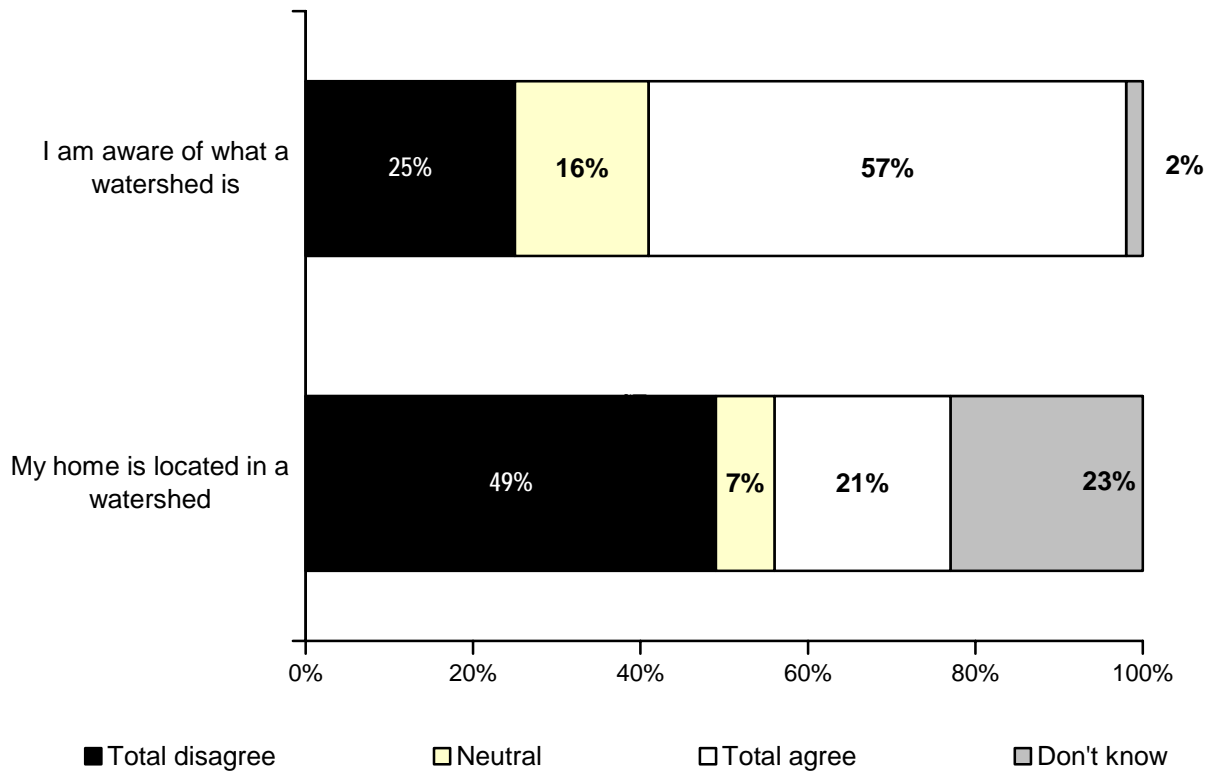
While air quality was the single most cited issue by 22% of residents, themes related to water, rivers and sewers were named by almost one-third of those interviewed. For example, 20% stated that water quality was the most pressing environmental issue, 7% rivers and waterways, 5% wastewater, runoff or sewers topics and 1% watersheds.

The protection of green spaces was named by 4% of respondents, as was pollution in general, while 3% stated that land development or land use issues were most important. A total 22% did not know or had no opinion.

A higher percentage of renters named air quality (38%) as their number one issue compared to homeowners (21%), while owners were more inclined to mention themes related to water, rivers and sewers (33%) than renters (15%).

Awareness of Watersheds

"I am now going to read a short list of statements that I would like you agree or disagree with using a scale from one strongly disagree to five is strongly agree."



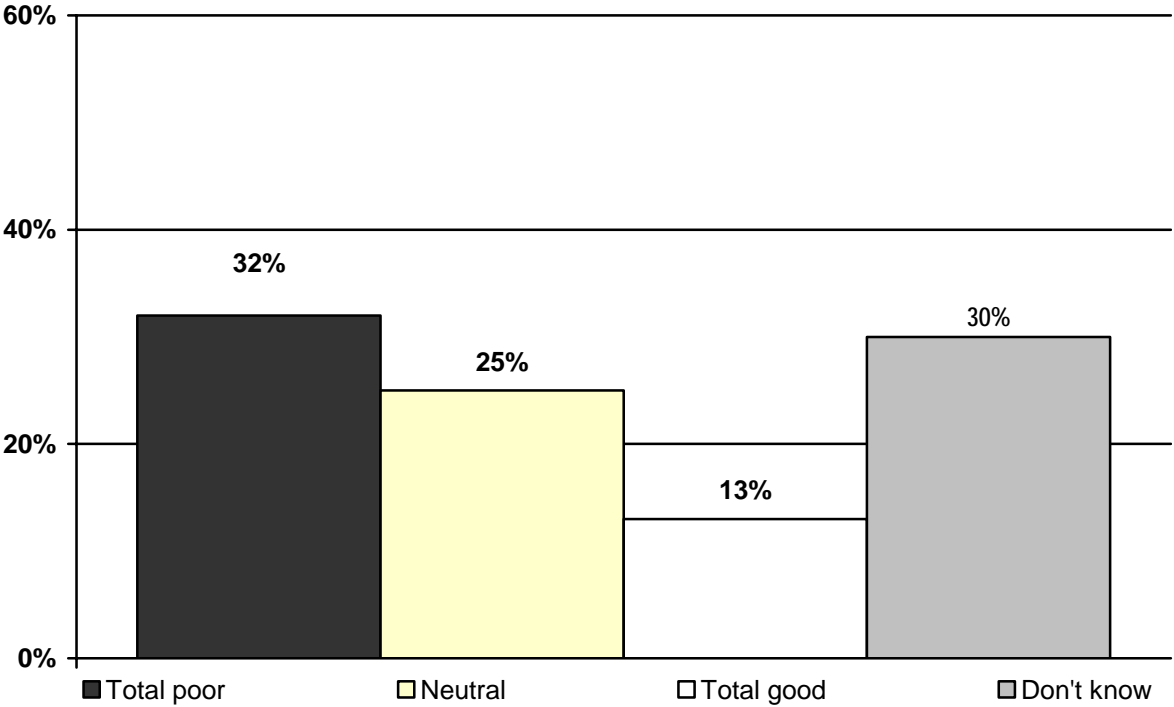
Almost six in ten respondents were aware of what a watershed is, with awareness being highest among males (66%), the highest income earners in the over \$125,000 cohort (77%) and those with graduate degrees (65%). More homeowners (58%) renters (48%) were also aware.

However, only 21% of those interviewed agreed with the statement that their home is located in a watershed, while almost half disagreed and a high 23% did not know. A lower number of renters (15%) compared to owners (22%) agreed with the statement.

The Condition of NMR Watershed

Respondents were first read a short preamble and were then asked to rate the condition of the Nine Mile Run Watershed, followed by their concern over its state.

A watershed is the land area, where rain or snow accumulates and then drains into a specific body of water, such as the 3 rivers. Using a scale from one very poor to five is very good, how would you rate the environmental condition (your local) Nine Mile Run Watershed?

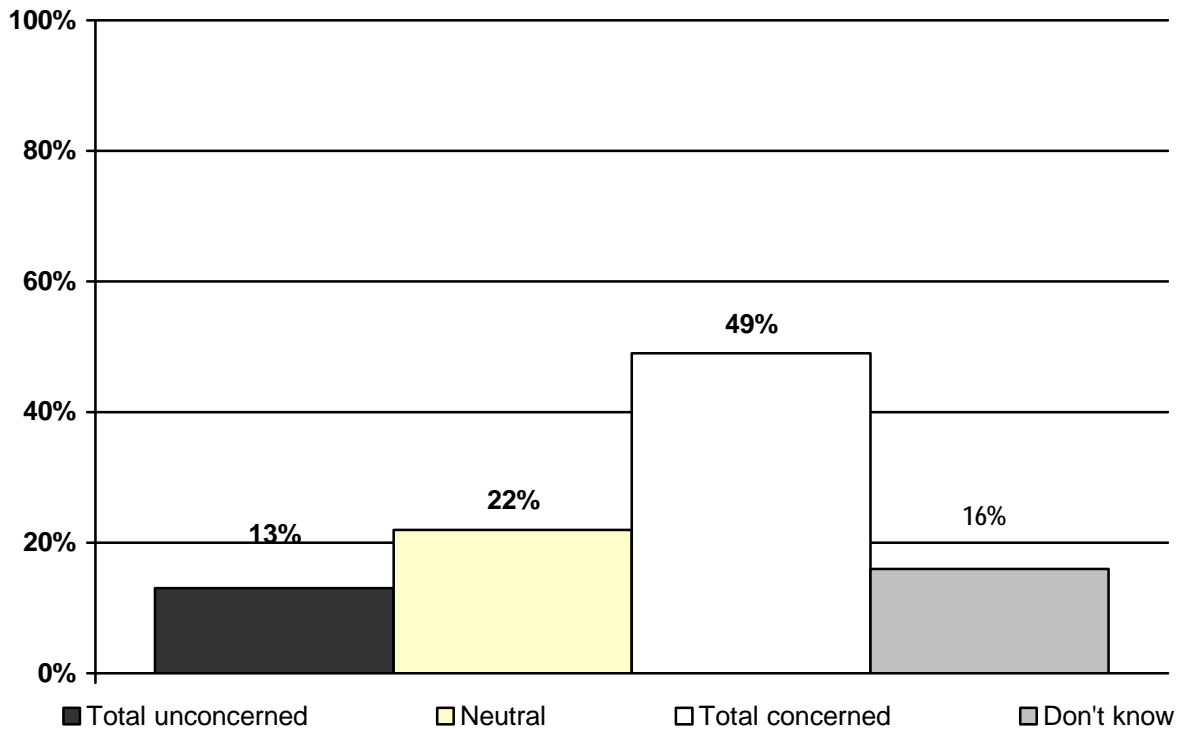


Only 13% of residents surveyed rated the condition of the Nine Mile Run Watershed as being good or very good, while almost one-third feel that it is in a poor or very poor condition. One third of homeowners provided a poor or very poor rating of the Watershed compared to slightly more than one-quarter (26%) of renters.

A high percentage of residents are unaware of the condition of the Watershed, also evidenced by the fact that 38% did not know if its condition has improved, decreased or remained the same over the past five years. The rest of area residents are split as to whether it has improved (26%) or remained the same (28%), while a low 9% hold the opinion that its condition has worsened.

Almost half of renters (49%) were unaware of the condition of the Watershed compared to a lesser 36% of homeowners, while more owners (28%) than renters (12%) felt that the condition has improved.

Are you concerned about the health of the Nine Mile Run Watershed? Please use a scale from one not at all concerned to five very concerned.



Despite the lack of awareness over the environmental condition of the Nine Mile Run Watershed, almost half of respondents or 49% are concerned about its health. Once again, homeowners expressed a higher level of concern (50%) than those renting (38%).

While 57% of all area residents are concerned about the quality of their tap water, almost seven in ten renters (69%) expressed concern in this area in relation to a lower 55% of homeowners.

Furthermore, only 36% of citizens would feel comfortable using their area rivers for recreational purposes like boating and swimming.

R u n o f f

Respondents were read the following statements and were asked to agree or disagree with them.

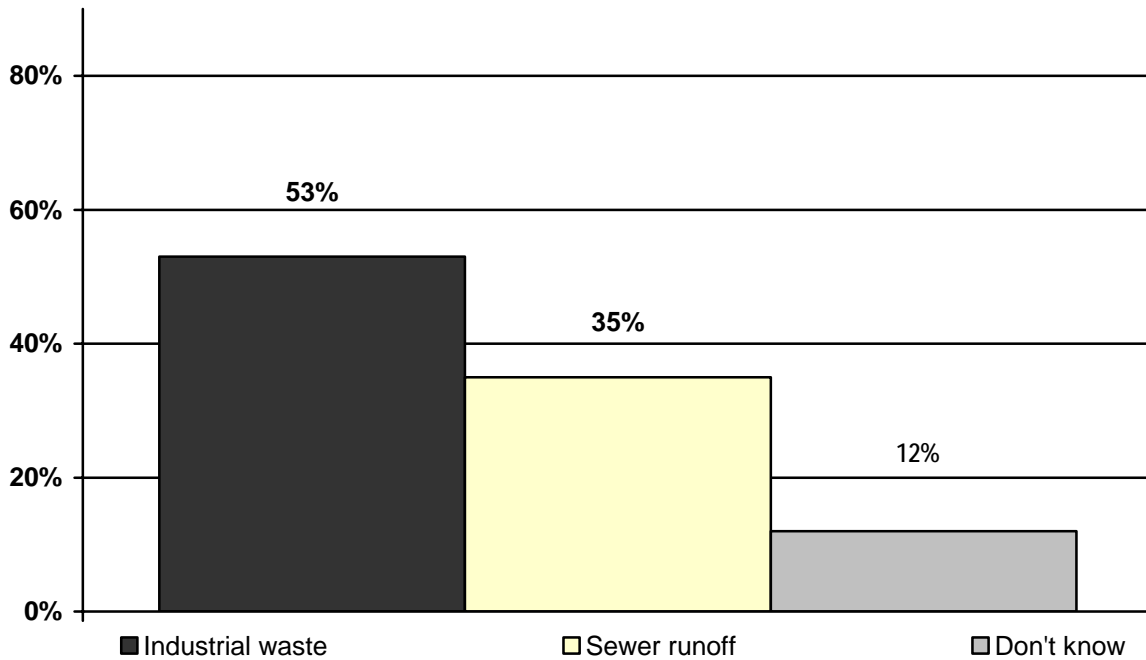
<i>"I am now going to read a short list of statements that I would like you to agree or disagree with using a scale from one strongly disagree to five strongly agree."</i>	Total Disagree	Total Agree
Runoff from properties and roads to storm sewers has a negative effect on the environmental condition of local rivers	12%	68%
Rain and melting snow from my home contributes to sewage overflowing into rivers, creeks and streams in Allegheny County	27%	49%
As a homeowner I can improve the health of our rivers, creeks and streams by taking actions to reduce waste water runoff from my home	23%	56%

Almost seven in ten respondents agreed that the runoff from properties and roads have a negative effect on the environmental condition of local rivers, however, less than half agreed with the statement that runoff from their property contributes to sewage overflowing into waterways.

Despite the split on whether their home contributes to overflows, baseline data indicates that a higher 56% of residents agreed with the "take ownership" question agreeing that they can take action to reduce runoff.

There was stronger buy-in from homeowners in all three areas, while renters were least likely to agree that rain and melting snow from their home contributes to sewage overflows (38%) and that they can take action to reduce waste water runoff from their home (44%).

“Which of the following do you feel contributes more to pollution of Allegheny County waterways, industrial waste or storm sewers runoff?”



A majority of the public does not see sewer runoff as being the main contributor to the pollution of area waterways. 53% still see industrial waste, as being the main offender and 12% did not know, while slightly more than a third stated sewer runoff.

Sewers & the Watershed

Respondents were read the following preamble and were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements.

“As I mentioned, a watershed is the land area, where rain or snow accumulates and then drains into a specific body of water, such as the 3 rivers.

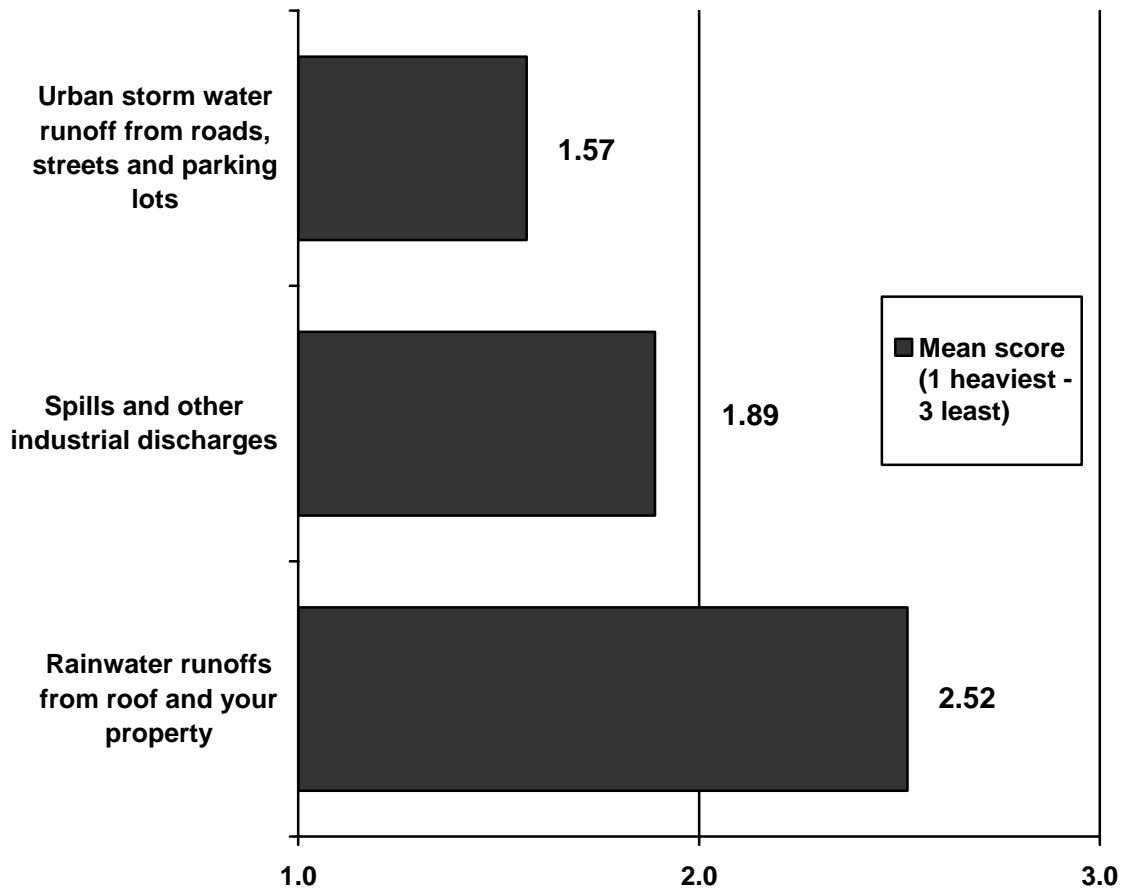
In Allegheny County, the sewer system was designed to carry wastewater from homes to treatment facilities, but in rainy weather the heavy volume of wastewater and storm water getting into the sewer system leads to raw sewage overflows, which in turn overflows into the three rivers. These overflows contribute to the pollution of watersheds and ultimately drinking water.”

<i>“I am now going to read a short list of statements that I would like you to agree or disagree with using a scale from one strongly disagree to five is strongly agree.”</i>	Total Disagree	Total Agree
I support upgrading the sewer infrastructure of Allegheny County to handle waste and storm water runoff	5%	83%
I would support upgrading the sewer infrastructure of Allegheny County to separate waste and storm water runoff even if it means higher sewer rates	12%	73%
If I became aware that sewage from my neighborhood was discharging into rivers and streams or causing sewage backups in my area, it would be my responsibility as a resident to help pay to fix this problem	21%	58%

A strong majority of area residents (83%) support upgrading Allegheny County’s sewer infrastructure. Even when presented with higher sewer rates, 73% still support these upgrades.

Numbers however drop to 58% when respondents were presented with the scenario of them taking responsibility to deal with the issue, but this baseline figure is encouraging.

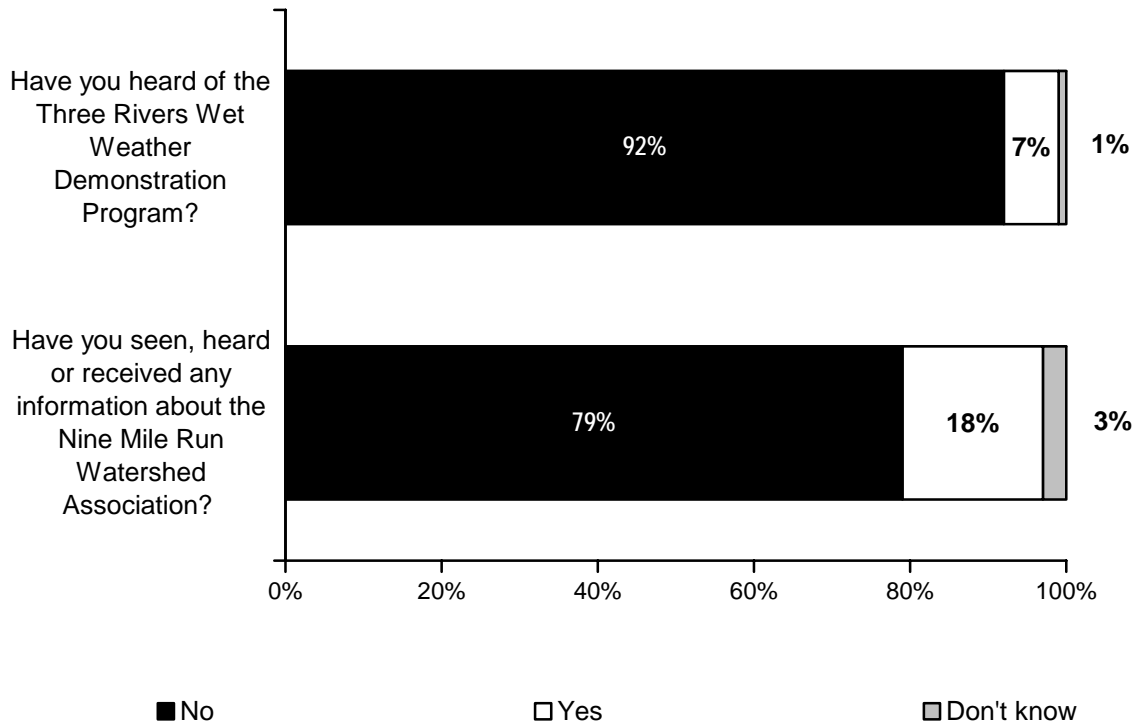
“Which of the following do you feel most contributes to storm water pollution in the Nine Mile Run Watershed? Please rank each in order from 1 being the heaviest contributor to 3 being the least. “



Runoff from roads, streets and parking lots was seen as being the heaviest contributor to storm water pollution, followed by spills and industrial discharges. Rainwater runoff from roof and property was viewed as being least contributing.

Baseline Awareness

The following two questions established baseline awareness of both the Program and the Association.



While there is 7% baseline awareness of the Three Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Project, two and an half times more people or 18% have seen or heard information about the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association.

What they have seen or heard varies; most seem to have received this information in a flyer, pamphlet or read about it in the newspaper.

Among those that have seen or heard something about the Association, 22% stated that its activities have had some (14%) or a great deal of impact (8%) on their actions to reduce wastewater. A total of 55% claimed it has had no impact (19%) or no impact at all (36%), while 2% did not know and 20% had a neutral opinion on the topic.

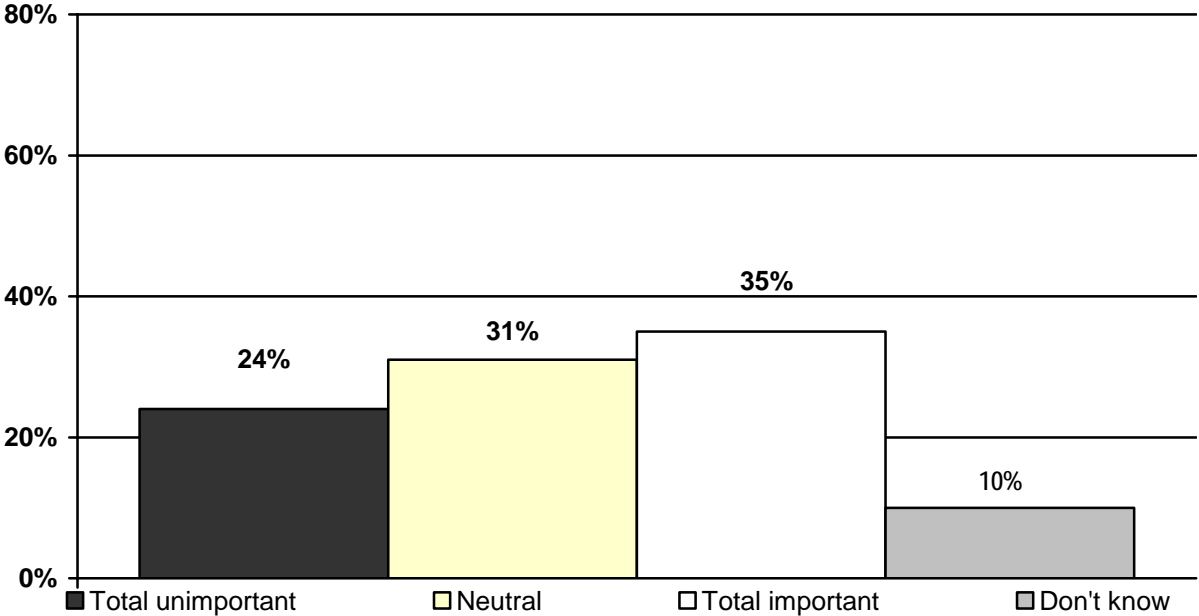
Rain Barrels

The following preamble was read, after which respondents were asked a series of questions on rain barrels.

In order to comply with US Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act, ALCOSAN communities in the region are now required to upgrade their aging sewer infrastructure. In addition, to the needed and costly infrastructure upgrades there are other options to ease the burden on the areas storm sewers.

The Three Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Program, which builds partnerships with communities and businesses to protect and restore local watersheds, is currently promoting the benefits of reducing contaminated runoff into storm sewers by offering rain barrels to homeowners through the Nine Mile Run Rain Barrel Initiative.

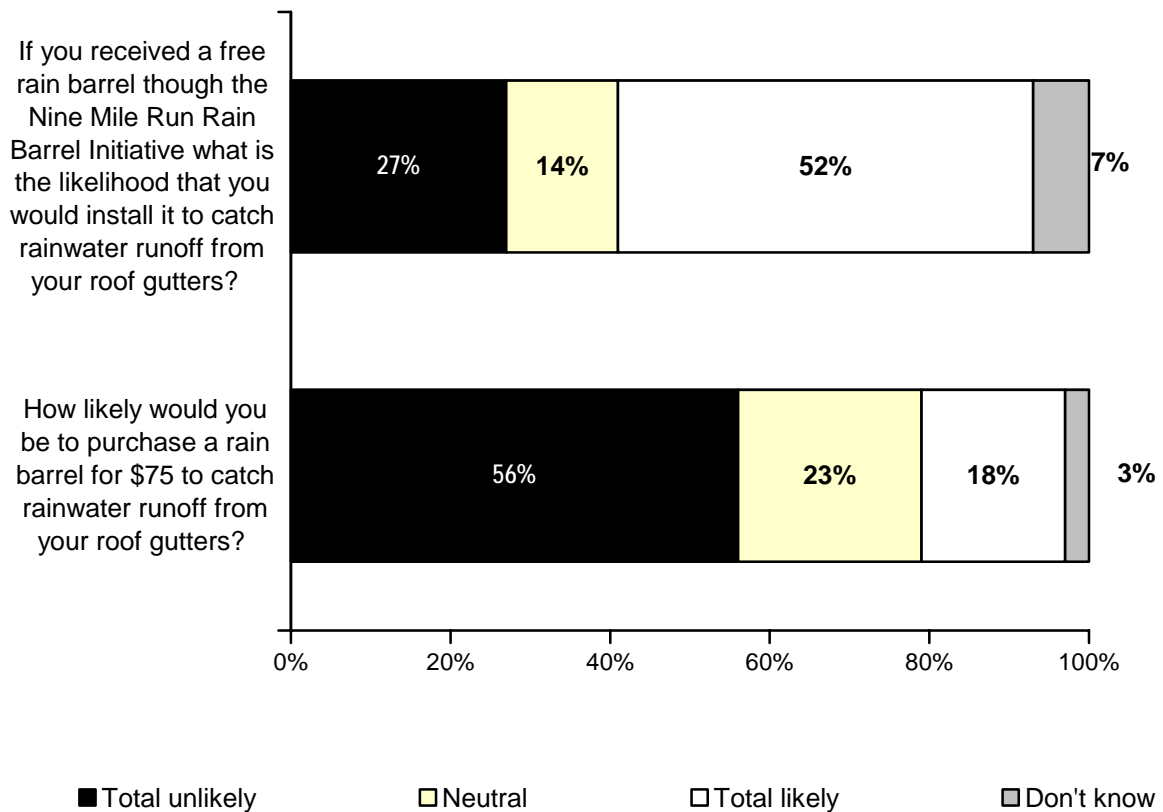
How important do you feel it is for area residents to use rain barrels to reduce rainwater runoff from their roof gutters runoff into storm sewers? Please use a scale from one not at all important to five very important.



Currently, less than a quarter of residents hold the view that it is either not important (13%) or not at all important (11%) for area residents to use rain barrels, while on the other hand 35% feel it is important (15%) or very important (20%). The remaining 41% of respondents either have no opinion (10%) or have a neutral (31%) view on the subject,

representing the group that needs to be moved. 18-34 year olds (43%) and \$125,000 and higher income earners (43%) were most inclined to be neutral on this issue.

All respondents were then first asked if they would use a free rain barrel. Those respondents that were likely (likely or very likely) and neither likely nor unlikely (neutral) on the issue were then asked if they would purchase a rain barrel in the event they did not receive a free one.



Opposition to using a free rain barrel stands at 27%, compared to more than half or 52% would be likely (17%) or very likely (35%) to use one, while 21% are neutral (14%) or have no opinion (7%). 69% of renters are opposed to receiving a free rain barrel compared to only 22% of homeowners.

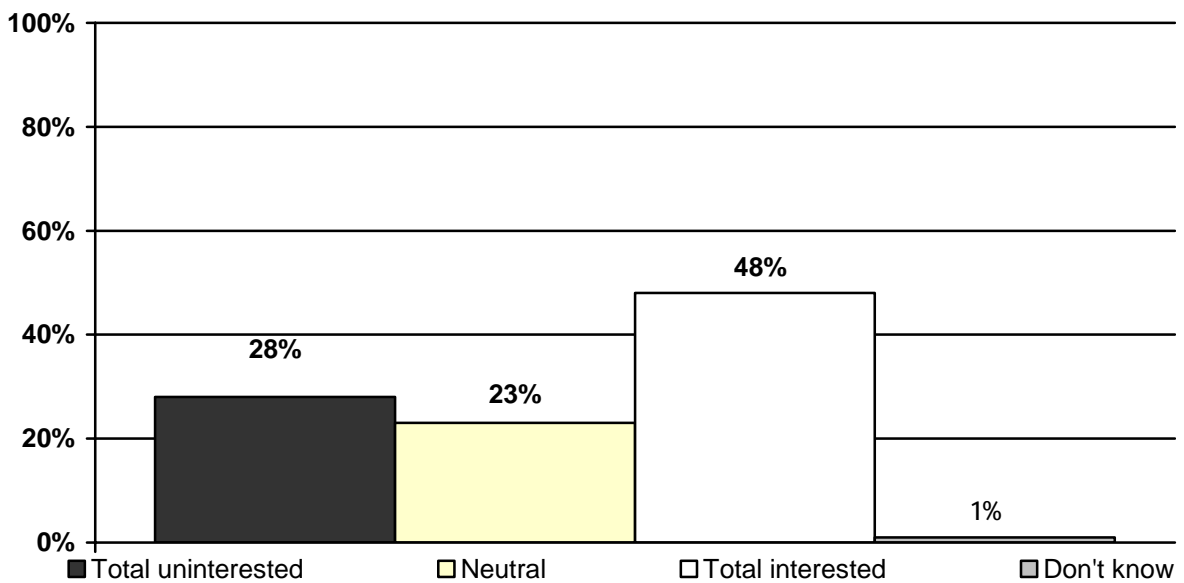
Those homeowners not likely to consider using a rain barrel require more information in order to address their concerns, that range from the belief that they do not have the space to install one, would not know what to do with the standing water, health concerns and the perceptions that they would be difficult to install or they would not know how to install them with their gutter configuration. Renters most often cited the fact that they do not own the property as their main barrier.

When asked if they would purchase a rain barrel for \$75, opposition increases to 57%, while the number of likely users falls to 18% and 26% are neutral (23%) or have no opinion (3%).

Information

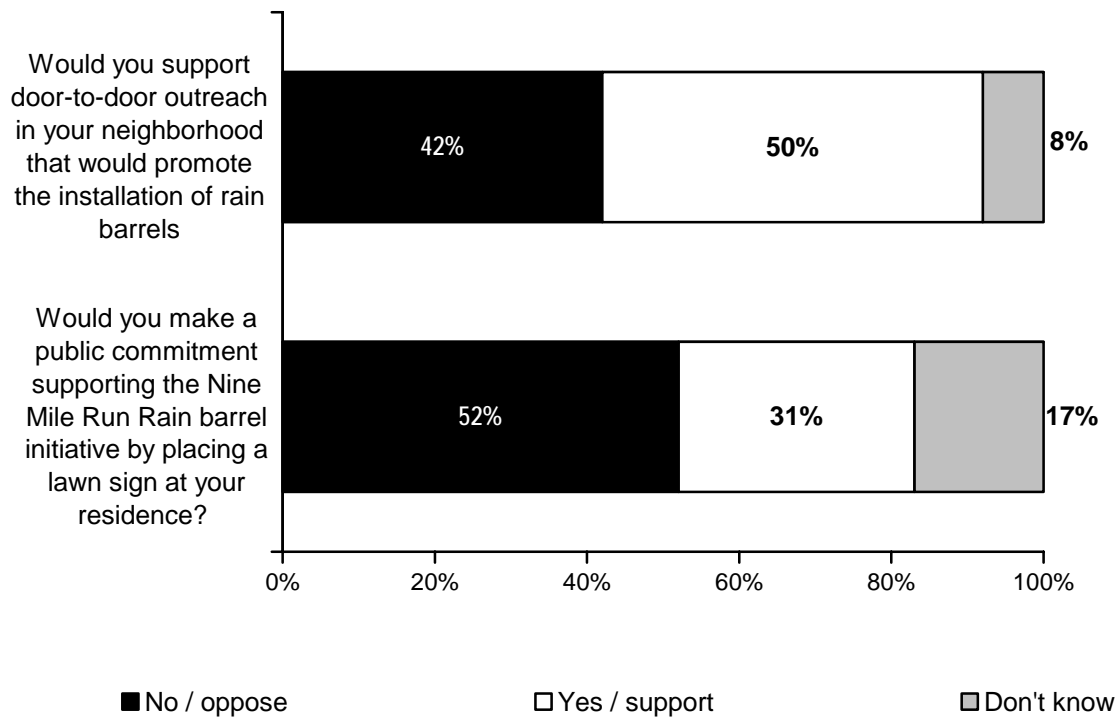
Respondents were asked a series of question on their interest in receiving information, including preferred methods of dissemination.

“How interested would you be in learning more about the Nine Mile Run Rain Barrel Initiative? Please respond using the scale from one is not at all interested to five very interested.”



Core opposition or disinterest in receiving information remains at a consistent 28%, almost half or 48% of respondents are interested (23%) or very interested (25%), while the 23% of respondents hold a neutral view and only 1% don't know. More than half of homeowners (51%) and one-quarter of renters (25%) were interested in learning more about the initiative.

Those neutral or interested were then asked what would be their preferred method to receive this information of which a majority or 54% stated flyers in the mail. The next most preferred method was a on an Internet website (13%), followed by e-mail (9%), newspaper advertisements (9%) and television ads (8%). Only 2% named door-to-door outreach as a top of mind response.



Half of residents support door-to-door outreach with an additional 8% being unsure. Support for door-to-door outreach decreases with age as 69% of 18 – 34 years support it, compared to 50% of 35 – 54 year olds and 38% of respondents aged 55 and older. Moreover, respondents in area 3 (Zip 15218) most supported outreach (58%), compared to 51% in Area 2 (Zip 15217) and 45% in Area 1 (Zip 15221). A higher number of owners (51%) in relation to renters (41%) support door-to-door outreach.

Opposition to making a public commitment by placing a lawn sign remains consistent at 52%, while support falls and a higher 17% did not know. Not surprisingly, only 5% of renters support such a commitment, while 34% of homeowners would support having a lawn sign.

It should be noted that among homeowners who oppose door-to-door outreach, 60% of them had stated they would like to receive more information about the Nine Mile Rain Barrel Initiative through flyers delivered in their mail.