TappsWise
A Social Marketing Approach to Help Prevent Harmful Algae Blooms

Puyallup Watershed Symposium
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Overview

Role of Health Department
Social Marketing
TappsWise
What is the Problem?

Worlwide, harmful algae blooms seem to be increasing.

Possible causes:
- Elevated nutrient levels, especially nitrogen and phosphorus.
- Rising temperatures.
- Changes in water chemistry such as pH, turbidity.

Why, as a Health Department, do we care?

Toxic algae blooms impact public health.

- Toxins can make people sick.
  - Children very vulnerable.
- Toxins can kill pets.
Traditional Role of Health Department

- Monitor lakes.
- Send samples to lab for toxin levels.
- Issue public health advisories.
  - Emails.
  - Info on TPCHD’s website.
  - Info on TPCHD’s social media sites.

Non-Traditional Role of Health Department: Preventing Toxic Algae Booms

- Algae need light, warm temperatures and nutrients to thrive.
- Lake residents influence how many nutrients enter the lake.
- How to change behavior? Education?
  - Studies have shown that education alone has little effect on behavior. Education campaigns don’t address barriers to behavior change.
Social Marketing

Social Marketing uses marketing techniques to create behavior change that benefits the targeted individuals and society.

- Choose Behavior (KISS Keep It Simple and Singular)
- Identify Barriers and Benefits
- Develop strategy by choosing tools

Lake Tapps

- 4.5 sq miles, 45 miles shoreline
- White River water gets diverted into it.
- Flow through lake decreased since ownership change.
  - No flushing out
  - what goes into the lake, stays in the lake
- Lake closure due to toxic algae in 2016.
Choose Behavior

Problem:
Residential nutrient pollution causes declining water quality in lakes.

Sources of nutrients:
- Fertilizers
- Septic Systems
- Soil erosion
- Pet waste

• Reduce fertilizer use (organic and/or slow release preferred).
• Maintain septic systems.
• Fix eroding driveways, yards and parking areas.
• Scoop pet waste.
• Keep or create natural shoreline vegetation.
Barriers

Fertilizer Use
• Knowledge
  → Natural yard care and lawn care workshops.

• Availability of “lake-friendly” yard care products.
  → List of slow-release fertilizers and where to get them.

• Cost of “lake-friendly” yard care products.
  → Discount program.

Barriers

Septic System Maintenance
• Knowledge
  → Septic care workshops.
  → Septic care reminders.

• Cost of septic inspection
  → Discount program.
Choose Tools

Voluntary Commitment

Prompts

• Septic care reminders
• Pet waste postcards
Choose Tools

Incentives
• Septic Incentive
• Fertilizer Discount Program

Choose Tools

Change of Social Norms
• Yard signs
TappsWise

So far:
• Great participation in natural yard care workshops.
• Less interest in septic workshops.
• Few properties certified. Biggest barrier is fertilizer use.

In future:
• Provide more support to residents to help switch to slow-release fertilizers.
• Promote program through direct mail and community events.

TappsWise

In future:
• Cascade Water Alliance has started regular water quality monitoring.
• TPCHD will continue TappsWise.
• TPCHD will continue to monitor for toxic algae.
• Survey to determine if behaviors have changed.
Questions?

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