



# Pet Waste Behavior Change Plan



## **Background**

The Centralia Stream Team was created in 2009 and has been the main source of education and outreach. The Centralia Stream Team is made up of volunteers that meet monthly to plan and discuss future volunteer opportunities to help improve our creeks and rivers within the city. Pet waste management and disposal was a major part of the Stream Teams projects and goals to inform the public. Pet waste baggie holders have been used as part of the education and outreach, and continues to be used. The Stream Team and the City of Centralia are planning on taking a more active role in pet waste.

Dog Feces in the water supply can contribute nutrients that lead to overgrowth of harmful algae and weeds, killing fish and other wildlife. Fecal coliform bacteria and E. coli are known pollutants of the Chehalis River and its tributary from past water sampling tests. These tributaries including, China Creek and the Skookumchuck River have parks and walking trails alongside that many people use to walk their pets. Walking along the Chehalis River, China Creek, and the Skookumchuck River makes it is easy to see that not all dog owners are picking up their animals' waste.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this plan is to outline social marketing strategies to encourage higher rates of dog owners picking up and properly disposing of pet waste and to define the process by which these efforts will be evaluated.

## **Selected Behavior**

The selected behavior is for dog owners using public trails to pick up pet waste in a bag and dispose of it in a trash receptacle. This plan contains strategies to address pet waste along trails, many of which are near water bodies.

## **Target Audience**

This campaign will target the residents of Centralia that walk in Borst Park and the Waste Water Discovery Trail. Signage will also be available in Spanish.

## **Research**

We began making a survey (Facebook, website) that will focus on people who live within the city limits of Centralia. This survey will give us data on:

1. If residences are aware of stormwater contaminates in dog poop?
2. If dog owner's pick-up their dogs poop?
3. If dog owners bring their own dog poop bags?
4. If trail heads/parks have enough bag stations and are stocked?

## **Public Trails/Parks**

Efforts will be focused on high priority trails/parks - those near or draining via the MS4 to water bodies with known bacteria and E. coli issues.

On existing pet waste bag dispensers within the parks and trails will be new signage that informs about our pet waste behavior study. These signs will include information on how dog poop can contaminate

our local stormwater and how it flows to rivers and streams. The signs will also include a QR code or a link to take a quick survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the behavioral change strategy. Also, we will be counting how many dog poop bags are used and stocked during the summer months (June, July, August, September).

Purposed trails with body of water:

- Waste Water Discovery Trail – Chehalis River

Purposed parks with body of water:

- Borst Park – Skookumchuck River/ Chehalis River

### **Evaluation**

The City of Centralia will be using two ways to determine the effectiveness of this behavior change study. We will be using the survey to determine the overall knowledge of the impact that pet waste has on local bodies of water and counting the number of bags used in the parks and trails.

Poop Counts - Centralia will count poop bags along each purposed trail and park on three occasions in April, May and June to get a baseline of pet waste left along the trail. The signage will be installed and outreach will be conducted in July and August. Poop bag counts will be conducted again in August, September and October to see changes. Evaluation on trails where the campaign is expanded will follow a similar procedure and timeline in 2022.

