

Minimum Control Measure #1:
Public Education & Outreach
REGIONAL STORMWATER EDUCATION PROGRAM
RETHINK RUNOFF

JANUARY–DECEMBER 2023
ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by:

Pluck

This project is supported by the twelve Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System permittees in Chittenden County implementing the regional Rethink Runoff campaign

INTRODUCTION

This 2023 calendar year report recaps the work done primarily related to Minimum Control Measure #1. As in prior years, this work was developed through coordination with CCRPC and its MS4 subcommittee of the Clean Water Advisory Committee.

HISTORY

Since 2003, Chittenden County's 12 MS4s have worked to pool resources to professionally engage the public in a one message, one outreach effort, first known as the Regional Stormwater Education Program. Through regular spring and summer advertisements to drive people to the program's first website, www.smartwaterways.org, this cooperative approach to fulfill its NPDES Permit Minimum Control Measure #1 (Public Education & Outreach) requirements built a regional awareness among the public of the need for individual action to assist in fighting stormwater problems. In the summer of 2016, the MS4s contracted with Tally Ho through its Lead Agency, the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission to rebrand the Smart Waterways campaign and coordinate it with the MS4's Minimum Control Measure #2 (public involvement and participation) regional effort, known as the Chittenden County Stream Team, which had begun in 2011. The goal was to create one cohesive organization and outreach effort to educate the public about stormwater and boost public participation implementing projects to combat the negative impacts of stormwater. In the spring of 2017, implementation of the MCM #1 aspects of this joint effort, Rethink Runoff, was publicly launched, which included a new website, www.rethinkrunoff.org and revised creative by Pluck (previously Tally Ho Design).

Pluck has been responsible for the management and creative development of Rethink Runoff since late 2017 while the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District has overseen and implemented MCM #2. This 2023 calendar year report recaps the work done primarily related to Minimum Control Measure #1.

2023 INITIATIVES

2023/2024 New Creative

As part of our 2022/2023 contract, Pluck began concepting for new creative, including a series of shorter animations.

We identified four topics, with an initial plan to create four :15 second animated spots. Since we focus more on digital distribution as opposed to broadcast (based on both cost and targeting ability), we conceptualized these as both landscape and portrait, enabling additional distribution via Facebook stories and Instagram stories, with the ability to move into TikTok or other avenues as desired.

Each spot has been planned and storyboarded around a single focus or piece of information with an additional call to action to the site.

Together with the 2024 Production budget, our preliminary schedule for 2024 is as follows:

January: Salt Use

February: Pet Waste:

March/April: Gardening/Rain Garden

April/May: Rain Barrel Installation

In addition, the art for each spot will serve as a both print and static digital ads.

Stream Monitoring Data

With the interruption of COVID-19 and turnover, stream monitoring data was no longer current on the site. In addition, the site maintained current stream monitoring data, but did not present a history of all stream monitoring.

In collaboration with The Stream Team, we completely reformatted the data for all streams monitored, both past and current. In addition to providing year-by-year data, we also revised how points of collection are presented on the site. Past locations were typically identified as upstream or downstream. As multiple collection points were introduced, we adopted the same naming conventions used in the data tracking.

Media Buy Breakdown

We eliminated all broadcast purchases, based on cost, allowing us a stronger effort to use targeted digital advertising.

Digital media buys include Google ads: Display, Search and YouTube as well as Facebook and VTDigger. We continued our radio spots on WVMT and VPR (underwriting). In addition, we tested a large Front Porch Forum campaign in fall.

Currently, our largest interaction rate from digital ads is from Facebook/Instagram, although this may change from year to year.

We also began examining other opportunities for advertising, including assessing the Lake Monsters baseball games as a potential outreach location and restarting print advertising in local community newspapers. Our plan is to review these options in Spring 2024 for potential changes in the near future.

Municipal Projects

Pluck is also looking at integrating a new section in the website that highlights municipal projects involving stormwater efforts. The goal here is to illustrate that local and state governments are addressing stormwater reduction as Rethink Runoff and The Stream Team focuses on residential efforts.

Social Media

Pluck continued on social media development and content creation. Our primary focus is Facebook, although we do cross-post occasionally, and our advertising efforts cross both channels.

We also began posting in additional weather-based posts and other secondary information that may indirectly relate to stormwater including new stories or other pertinent information, such as beach closures during the summer.

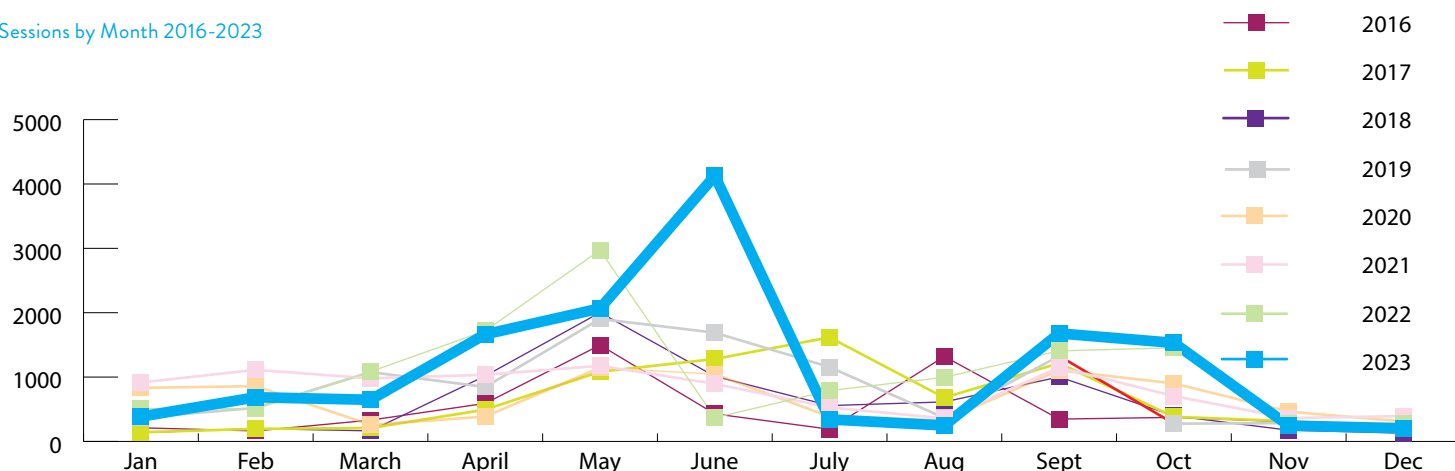
Print Collateral

Pluck also created a new print materials for The Stream Team for stream monitoring activities.

WEBSITE METRICS FOR 2016–2022

Overall website sessions continued to climb, surpassing our pre-COVID metrics. From 2021 to 2022, we had a 17% increase in sessions and a 11% increase in users. Most notably, we had a 100% increase in page views.

Sessions by Month 2016-2023



Year to Year Metrics

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
SESSIONS	13,196	12,365	10,557	8,908	10,111
USERS	11,121	10,537	9,436	7,861	8,531
PAGEVIEWS	19,690*	16,634	16,001	13,112	15,769

In 2023, Google introduced G4 Analytics, a new system of reporting that includes new measurements. Engaged sessions, one of these new measurements, indicates a session in which someone has visited the site for over 10 seconds and/or engaged in what Google refers to as an Event, which includes everything from measurable events to page clicks. We will continue to measure both Sessions and Engaged Sessions for the time being.

Total Sessions/Visits (1/1–12/31)

TIME PERIOD	TOTAL
2023	13,916
2022	12,365
2021	10,557
2020	8,908
2019	10,111
2018	7,832
2017	7,407
2016	6,004
2015	4,659

Website Event Tracking

CALL-TO-ACTION	2023	2022	2021	2020
MAILCHIMP FORM	41	66	48	61
RAIN GARDEN PDF	32	68	56	N/A
RAIN BARREL PDF	19	75	17	8
SOIL TEST CTA	0	5	18	5
SCIENCE EXPERIMENT PDF	20	26	15	N/A

Sessions vs. Engaged Sessions by Month

MONTH	SESSIONS	ENGAGED SESSIONS
JAN	386	
FEB	686	
MARCH	647	
APRIL	1,664	544
MAY	2,067	660
JUNE	4,217	1,035
JULY	342	206
AUG	248	132
SEP	1,678	429
OCT	1,531	289
NOV	246	125
DEC	204	95

* Our pageviews for 2023 were 34,872. Further analysis shows a spike in pageviews on four separate days, visits from foreign countries. With that in mind, we scaled down our page views by only including the expected visits on those days and not the actual amount.

Overall Media Spend

YEAR	SPEND
2023	\$16,682*
2022	\$22,174
2021	\$26,870
2020	\$25,918
2019	\$27,135

* In 2023, we softened our media buy, knowing new creative would be coming in 2024 and that 2024 is an election year, which could increase the digital advertising bids/costs overall.

Google Advertising Metric

CAMPAIGN	IMPRESSIONS	INTERACTIONS*	INTERACTION RATE	COST
DISPLAY	3,266,336	4,352	0.14%	\$5,930.01
VIDEO	268,785	209,988	80.05%*	\$3,089.99
SEARCH	15,786	1,050	6.65%	\$1,244.65
FACEBOOK/INSTA	300,041	2,816	1%	\$2,328.75
FPP	~110,000	33	<.1%	\$1,430

* Interaction rates for video ads are full video views and click, not just clicks.

Impressions are the number of times the ads are served to web users. For Display and Search, Interactions are the number of times a web user clicks on the ad.

Video ads are considered pre-roll or mid-roll, meaning they are shown either directly before or in the middle of a video the web user is watching. These ads are typically skipable after the first five seconds. Interactions include web users who click on the ads or watch the entire ad.

Facebook Advertising

Impressions are the number of ads served to Facebook users. Clicks are the number of people who click on an ads. Reach is the number of individual Facebook users that see the ad.

Our increased focus on social media also provides us with age-and gender-related information about users who like our Facebook page (Likes) and individuals who follow our Instagram page (Followers).

In this case, reach refers to the overall unique users in each platform that have seen our posts, either through other users liking and sharing our content, users using the Explore features, or users who see promoted posts.

Facebook Likes Demographics

	2023	2022	2021
REACH	39,620	33,412	60,666
NEW LIKES	25	33	32

Instagram Follower Demographics

	2023	2022	2021
REACH	21,812	17,495	19,384
FOLLOWERS	523	440	349

* We intentionally lightened our spend in 2022/20223 in anticipation of new creative in Winter/Spring 2024.

STREAM TEAM DATA



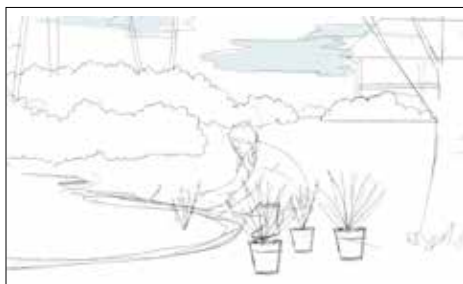
2024 CREATIVE CONCEPTING



Salt Use Creative



Mobile Framing



Gardening Tips/Rain Garden



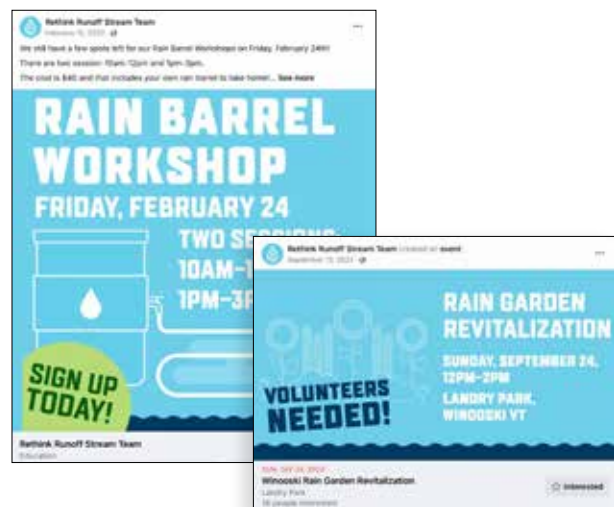
Pet Waste



Rain Barrel

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

STREAM TEAM EVENTS



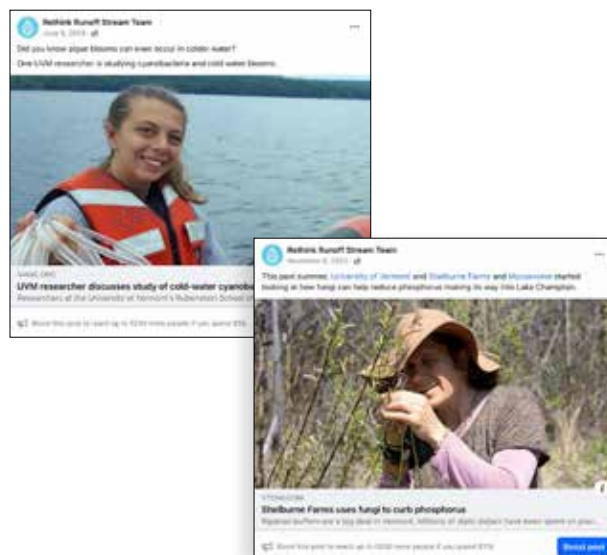
GENERAL INFO



DIRECT CALL-TO-ACTION



NEWS STORIES



WEATHER



STREAM MONITORING
COLLATERAL



THE STREAM TEAM

**VOLUNTEER FOR
STREAM MONITORING!**

The Rethink Runoff Stream Team is an important way for volunteers involved in community science. The 2023 Stream Team will be out this spring and summer collecting samples again, as part of the LaRosa Program Partnership Quality Monitoring Initiative.

WHY DO WE MONITOR?

Consistent data related to water quality allow stormwater managers to better assess condition of our waters and develop solutions that have a lasting positive effect.

Volunteers are typically used to collect data at a variety of locations along a stream or watershed. On occasion, volunteers may collect visual data detailing the condition of a stream.

Data collected in this way may include presence of riparian buffers, streambank erosion, and presence of litter or trash. These data will be sent to a lab and analyzed for chemical and total phosphorus.

Learn more about Stream Monitoring
<https://forms.gle/4ex5eqKQ7>



RETHINK RUNOFF

STREAM SAMPLING INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAM

If you have any questions, concerns, or are unable to sample on your sampling day, contact Adelaide Dumm, RRST program at adelaide@winooskinrco.org or rethinkrunoff@gmail.com.

As much advance notice as possible is appreciated so that arrangements can be made for someone else to sample if you are unable to.



Sampling days are Monday mornings on the following dates:
May 1st, May 15th, May 29th, June 12th, June 26th, July 10th, July 24th, & August 7th. Samples must be collected in the morning (no need to keep on ice this year) and delivered to the Winooski NRCD at 94 Harvest Lane in Williston by 5pm on Monday.

OUR ADDRESS
Winooski NRCD
94 Harvest Lane, Suite 203
Williston, VT 05495
(802) 288-8555 ext. 104

WHAT TO BRING:

☐ Sample bottles ☐ Directions to your site ☐ This instruction sheet ☐ Data sheet and Pencil, unless you are using the App to collect data

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:

- Carry a cell phone while sampling. Sample with a partner if possible, and always let someone else know where you are, when you intend to return, and what to do if you do not return on time.
- Never cross a landowner's property without permission.
- Never wade in swift or high water. Do not wade if depth is greater than knee-deep.
- Do not collect samples if the stream is at flood stage.
- If possible, have a first aid kit on hand.
- Be aware of the nearest hospital and how to get there from the sampling area.
- Listen to weather reports. Never monitor if severe weather is predicted or if a storm occurs.
- Do not walk on unstable stream banks. Disturbing these banks may accelerate erosion and lead to a collapse.
- Be aware of animals and plants: watch for dogs, farm animals, wildlife, and insects such as ticks, mosquitoes, and hornets. Watch for poison ivy, poison hemlock, and other skin irritating vegetation.
- Though uncommon, samplers have found needles at a few sites in the past. If you discover a needle at your site, do not pick it up. You can call the Howard Center Safe Recovery Program 802-488-6067 to connect with someone who can remove the hazard (they are open M-F 9-5). If you notice needles at your site please also notify the Stream Team Coordinator.
- Follow the most recent state guidelines around Covid-19 safety.

[Learn more at RETHINKRUNOFF.ORG](#)