

Ohio District Teaches Residents Stormwater Management and Responsible Lawn Care Practices

As we enter spring, lawn care is back at the top of the list of seasonal priorities. Through the program “[Get Grassy! Clean Water by the Yard](#),” the Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in Columbus, Ohio, developed an opportunity to connect with the average landowner and offer them practical opportunities to have a positive impact on water quality in their community.

The primary goal of “Get Grassy!” is to educate residents on good stormwater practices, which include proper disposal of yard waste, mowing high, watering at the right time, keeping product off of hard surfaces and applying it correctly, and keeping rainwater on property to prevent polluted runoff.

In 2015, “Get Grassy!” brought together a combined partnership from public agencies, professional organizations, non-profit groups and lawn care companies. Further assistance was also provided by two communications and advertising companies. Franklin SWCD, in cooperation with the City of Columbus, launched the program in 2016.

When reaching out to their community, **SWCD director Jennifer Fish** strives to “meet people where they are.” This applies to both their physical location and their knowledge base. Program accessibility is important, so a specific [website](#) was created for the program, making proper lawn care resources available for download, printing



Administrative Specialist Erika Rowland holding a rain gauge and “Get Grassy!” hot cards.

and distribution. The district staff also searched for various in-person events and locations to engage with residents, such as setting up displays at nurseries, community and sporting events; holding workshops; and hosting field days.

The program materials were designed to be eye-catching with simple messages using audience-appropriate, easily understood language to avoid technical jargon. Further publicity for the program and its messaging was generated through various newsletter articles, press releases and paid advertisements.

As with any program, it’s important to measure success to determine impact and ensure resources are being invested wisely.



Earth Day event with intern Kalab Ryan

The Franklin SWCD chose to measure their program success through paper or [online pledges](#), “[hot card](#)” literature (pictured at right) that is distributed by partnering lawn care companies and partner surveys.

Residents who take the pledge receive an opportunity to enroll in a monthly gift card drawing and receive seasonally-appropriate lawn care tips, a rain gauge to ensure proper watering, and magnets that serve as reminders.

From the pledge forms, the Franklin SWCD has measured the response rate from around the county and recorded the respondents’ choice of committed behaviors on how they’ll work to keep rain on their property; keep their lawn healthy; and keep pollution out of streams and watersheds.

The “Get Grassy!” program has become a well-established program for the Franklin SWCD, and it complements the district’s other programs that engage landowners and businesses and address water quality. As they move forward with the program, the



district is evaluating ways to improve the program and design additional materials to build on its success.

If you’re looking to expand your public outreach in your community or would like to discuss how the Franklin SWCD launched their “Get Grassy! Clean Water by the Yard” program, visit the [district website](#) or contact [district manager Jennifer Fish](#).