**GROSS Grant Information – July 7, 2015 – Initial Concept**

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**Project statement:**

Develop and implement a Strategic Public Education and Awareness Campaign focused on providing information on the water quality challenges facing the Spokane River and the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer and what citizens and businesses can do to make a difference.

**Goals:**

* To build public awareness of water quality concerns in the Spokane River and the Aquifer, focusing on the influence of stormwater on water quality.
* To provide the public with actions that they can take to keep pollutants out of stormwater runoff and facilities, improving the water quality in the river and maintaining the health of the Aquifer.
* To inform the public of what’s being done to improve the health of the Spokane River and protect the Aquifer, specifically addressing PCBs, nutrients like phosphorus, and heavy metals.

**Primary Target Audiences:**

* City of Spokane residents.
* All residents of Spokane County, including all those in incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County.
* Residents in other areas that border the Spokane River, including Lincoln and Stevens counties, Washington, and Kootenai County, Idaho.
* Greater Spokane Area businesses.
* Local media.

**Project description:**

This project is a high-level public education and awareness campaign designed to build understanding and spur action by the residents and businesses within the City and beyond to include the entire Spokane River watershed. The campaign’s focus will be to provide information on the water quality challenges facing the Spokane River and the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer and what we all can do to make a difference.

The campaign will stress the key role of stormwater in bringing pollutants to the river and how careful housekeeping measures by all can make a big difference. The pollutants of particular concern include PCBs, heavy metals and nutrients such as phosphorus.

The campaign will support the work already being done by the City and the members of the Spokane Regional Toxics Task Force. It will help meet a variety of requirements related to public outreach and education, and most importantly, it will spur action by the hundreds of thousands of citizens who live in and around the Spokane River.

The campaign will use a multi-media approach to reach people where they already get their information. Spokane’s broadcast and print media outlets have a large reach and can get the message out throughout our targeted region. And social media and other on-line resources will add to those mass marketing outlets.

The mass marketing/advertising campaign will be complemented by the creation of a “Virtual Stormwater Trail” that details recent stormwater projects in and around Spokane. This would be combined with physical signage at trail highlighted areas.

Additionally, the City and other regional entities will supplement these materials with more detailed messages and information as the campaign progresses to provide greater details for those seeking greater information. And the graphics and related elements will be shared with all regional entities to brand stormwater and river health projects and messages.

The campaign also will coordinate with Spokane County, if the County is successful in its efforts to obtain a grant for the development of K-12 curriculum materials to educate on water quality concerns in the Spokane River.

**Timeline/Schedule:**

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| **Date** | **Major Tasks** |
| November 2, 2015 | Finalize grant funding with Department of Ecology |
| November 2015 | Finalize RFP for marketing and advertising agencies to provide proposals for the public education and awareness campaign. |
| December 2015  | Seek proposals in response to the RFP. |
| January 2016 | Evaluate proposals, interview top proposers, select vendor, and finalize contract. |
| February 2016 | Review existing studies, surveys, and other materials and fill in with needed research to develop strategic direction. And develop a campaign implementation strategy and performance tracking measures. |
| March 2016 | Prepare campaign graphics and other deliverables, including radio, TV, social media, web, billboard, and print advertising, as needed according to the implementation strategy. |
| April-May 2017 | Develop Virtual Stormwater Trail, a web tool that highlights the work that’s been done to reduce stormwater flows and pollution going to the river. Include physical signage to be installed at stormwater locations highlighted in the virtual trail. |
| April 2016 – March 2017 | Run advertising. Install signage. Launch Virtual Stormwater Trail. |
| April 2016 – March 2017 | Supplement the advertising campaign with blog posts, news releases, social media posts, videos, and longer-form informational pieces to provide more information on what the City of Spokane and members of the Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force are doing to address stormwater runoff and other sources of pollutants—including PCBs, nutrients, and heavy metals—to the river. Encourage neighboring jurisdictions to do the same. |
| June 2016 | Develop a package of base materials to share with members of the Toxics Task Force and other regional jurisdictions that can be tailored to their specific needs. |
| Throughout with final report completed after the completion of the campaign | Track results of campaign and develop a final report on the campaign and its reach. |

**Measurable outcomes:**

Reach of advertising campaign, including audience numbers and demographics, numbers of impressions, and reach on social media and on-line components.

Measure of changed impressions and understanding. (Do we want to do another survey?)

**Background:**

**The Spokane River provides a statewide benefit and is a statewide priority.** The Spokane River flows through two states, several Washington counties, and the sovereign lands of the Spokane Tribe. It empties into the Columbia River. The Spokane River basin and the Columbia River basin represent two of the four priority water basins listed on the Department of Ecology’s web site.

Stormwater is a major contributor of pollution to the Spokane River. Stormwater carries pollutants, including PCBs, heavy metals, and nutrients such as phosphorus, to the river. The influence of stormwater also causes combined sewers within the City of Spokane to overflow, sending raw sewage to the river.

The City of Spokane, and neighboring jurisdictions in the region, is investing hundreds of millions of dollars of public money in projects to improve the water quality in the Spokane River and reduce the amount of stormwater pollution reaching the river. Knowledge of these efforts and why they are important is limited, as is the knowledge of the pollutants or sources of pollutants that are being addressed, according to a survey conducted by the Spokane River Forum in May and June 2015.

While respondents indicate that they are aware of pollution/water quality being concerned, only about 3 percent were able to cite stormwater, PCBs, metals, or phosphorus as a specific issue when unaided in their response. When aided in the response, respondents ranked stormwater—and essentially all other pollutants asked about as “somewhat” of a problem, indicating a knowledge gap. And, finally, some 78 percent of respondents either said that nothing was being done to clean up the river or that they were unaware of the efforts.

Nonetheless, some 75 percent of respondents reported visiting the river, with the average respondent reporting visiting the river more than 33 times in a typical year. That’s 16 percent higher than what citizens reported in a similar survey in 2009.

Citizens are interested in learning more. And four in five respondents (82 percent) reported that they were somewhat or very interested in learning more about the challenges facing the Spokane River.

And, they seem willing to take steps themselves to protect the river, with 89 percent saying that we owe it to future generations to protect the Spokane River and 79 percent saying the river is an important part of the regional economy. They agreed that individual households could make a difference and even generally supported banning products that are pollution sources for the river. They believe that delaying actions only will increase costs.

The City of Spokane and other jurisdictions and industry along the Spokane River have specific requirements to provide education on stormwater and its water quality impacts.

* Add information on the public outreach and education requirements of the MS4 permit.
* Add information on the public outreach and educational requirements of the Toxics Task Force.
* Add information on the pollutants of concern/ 303d lists for the Spokane River.
* Add information on the exchange between the river and the aquifer.