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What is the Watershed Report?

Background *Learn more at www.cedarriver.org*

The Watershed Report is a sophisticated new partnership between Friends of the Cedar River Watershed, local governments, school districts, business associations, youth media producers, media broadcasters and non-profit organizations. The Watershed Report integrates FCRW's fourteen-year history of successful project management while significantly amplifying our organization's reach through TV, the internet, the classroom and student-led presentations to local decision-making bodies. The pilot for the 2009 Watershed Report received a private screening before 150 community leaders at the flagship REI store on June 29, 2010. On August 17, members of our student team traveled to Ecotrust headquarters in Portland, Oregon, to receive an award for watershed films sponsored by the Whole Watershed Restoration Initiative.

Purpose

The purpose of the Watershed Report is to **inspire the next generation of watershed stewards through education, restoration and public communications**. The Watershed Report contributes to a generational shift in stewardship behavior by establishing a new mental framework for living sustainably within our "watershed address."

Driving improvements in stewardship behavior within the Cedar River / Lake Washington Watershed is critical because it is the most densely populated watershed in the region. The Watershed Report is fully aligned with the Puget Sound Partnership Action Agenda, the King County Department of Natural Resources annual performance measures and other local water quality and land use policies. Replication of the Watershed Report to other Puget Sound watershed communities will be supported through regular trainings, consultation and coaching.

The Product

Under the direction of Peter Donaldson, student leaders in grades 9-12 collaborate with professionals to produce a series of short video reports that **track sustainability trends** across multiple sectors within the geographic template of the Cedar River / Lake Washington Watershed. These sectors include school districts, city government, business development and habitat restoration efforts.

Leadership youth are recruited from all **13 school districts** in the watershed. The current team includes 22 students from 9 high schools representing 5 of the 13 school districts plus the private school network within the watershed boundaries. For the 2009 pilot, our reporting team included representation from the following school districts: Tahoma, Mercer Island, Bellevue, Seattle and Kent plus the Overlake School. For our 2010 report we plan to add student reps from five more school districts: Renton, Issaquah, Lake Washington, Northshore and Shoreline, plus several more private high schools in the watershed. By 2011, we plan to add Edmonds, Mukilteo and Everett.

The process of **recruiting high school leaders** is combined with outreach messaging and direct engagement opportunities. Twenty or more **sustainability seminars** are delivered each year reaching over 1,000 students. Up to ten **demonstration rain gardens** are installed on school campuses each year, along with field lab learning experiences focused on stormwater runoff.

From these experiences, highly motivated, self-directed students apply to join the Watershed Report Leadership Team. Selected leaders receive 6 full days of training each summer at “**Watershed College**” and additional coaching throughout the year on stewardship project management, policy analysis, public speaking, filmmaking and social media marketing.

The Strategy

Accurate, data-driven messages are culled from the annual reports of city governments, school districts and agencies, supplemented with targeted surveys and interviews with key personnel.

Updated annually, the Watershed Report is broken into short segments suitable for school seminars, public meetings, TV and the web.

Well informed youth are the only narrators. There are no expert interviews or adult speakers. The style is charming, fast paced and informative. Students work with professionals to research the data, analyze trends and narrate the message.

Only positive trends and leading edge efforts are featured, generating a gentle competition among peers in local government, schools and businesses. We believe people are drawn to the story of what works.

The three new state standards for environmental and sustainability education serve as the pedagogical backbone for our strategy. The Watershed Report becomes the basis for integrating systems thinking and project-based learning in school curricula. The standards are as follows:

1. Understands the relationship between ecological, social and economic systems.
2. Understands the relationship between the natural and built environments.
3. Understands the role of civic responsibility in sustainability.

Who is the Audience?

Student leaders deliver in-person updates to key groups within their community:

- Classrooms in grades 5-12
- Faculty meetings in middle school and high school
- School district administrative teams and School Board
- City staff and City Council
- Chambers of Commerce
- Rotary Clubs and other civic organizations

Annual presentations are made to key conservation groups:

- King County Council and DNRP managers and staff
- King Conservation District
- Seattle Public Utilities, managers and staff
- WRIA 8 Salmon Recovery Council
- Cedar River Council
- Eco-Net

Other audiences include:

- Science and sustainability conference keynotes and workshops
- Local access TV plus posting on partner websites
- Professional development for educators through a partnership with Antioch University
- Other Puget Sound watershed communities interested in replication