



**CLEAN LAND.
SAFE WATER.
HEALTHY LIVES.**

Regional Litter Prevention Campaign E-Blasts

These are sample letters to send out to your constituents in order to alert them about the issues surrounding litter and to inform them about the implementation of the campaign in your jurisdiction.

I. Why the Campaign:

Building Traction against Trash

Did you know that drinking those eight glasses of water a day might actually make you sick? If you live in the Potomac River area, that is.

Only a fraction of area thirst quenchers know that the source of their drinking water is so dirty it's become a health hazard and cost millions of dollars to clean it up each year. Those storm drains you see around town are not trash cans. That same litter that you throw down the drain goes right into your drinking water. The Potomac Watershed has been contaminated by unsanitary trash, contributing to this dirty water. In fact, the most recent regional Potomac River Watershed Cleanup removed *503,800 pounds of trash* (equivalent to around 125 police cruisers) from the water and shoreline. Numerous factors are to blame: lenient law enforcement, meager public education and bad habits.

Now for the good news: if more people knew that the storm drains lining their streets propel trash *directly* into our waterways, *without filtering the debris*, litter behaviors could be changed.

Start now and take control, take care of your trash. This regional litter prevention campaign is a multi-state, multi-jurisdictional campaign designed to make the Potomac Watershed trash free. To find out more information, please visit www.trashfreepotomac.org.

II. What is a Watershed:

The Potomac Watershed: A 383 Mile Lifeline

What do four states and the District of Columbia have in common?

The Potomac Watershed is comprised of rivers, creeks, streams and tributaries throughout the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. It connects communities across this

entire region, providing a whopping 80 percent of the region's drinking water; a place for fishing, boating and kayaking; and a home for wildlife.

Improperly disposed litter travels through the Watershed's far-reaching system of tributaries and is eventually dumped right into the Potomac River. Even seemingly insignificant pieces of litter such as gum wrappers and bottle caps can have a negative impact on the health of the region if disposed of incorrectly, because piece by piece, litter adds up and makes the places we go to every day unsafe and unhealthy. Take control. Take care of your trash for clean land, safe water and healthy lives. For more information on the Potomac Watershed, or how to support the litter prevention movement, please visit www.fergusonfoundation.org.

III. Research Connection:

What's Your Litter IQ?

True or false: Trash that finds its way into storm drains around the Potomac is filtered before it ends back in the river.

The answer is false, the water from storm drains is not filtered, allowing litter and debris to end up in our local waterways. If it seems unimaginable to you that litter can travel miles from land to sea, and into our local waterways, you are not alone, 77 percent of people surveyed throughout our region would have failed that test.

Here's another question: *Why do we litter?*

Though a survey conducted in 2008, it was revealed that the majority of respondents are bothered by the litter they see, but may still litter for various reasons. Many residents do not believe they will be penalized for littering, and others did not see their small acts of litter having an impact. There are direct and indirect consequences for littering, including a hefty fine, jail time and putting the health of you and your family at risk.

Take control. Take care of your trash for clean land, safe water and healthy lives. To find out more about litter laws and to how to help make the Potomac Watershed trash free, visit www.fergusonfoundation.org.

IV. Litter & Health

Piece by Piece Litter adds up and makes the places we go to unsafe and unhealthy.

A few numbers to consider:

- 503,800: the pounds of trash removed from our parks, shorelines, and sidewalks during the most recent Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, which is equivalent to the weight of around 125 police cruisers;
- 21,700: the number of plastic bags gathered at the same event;
- 14,900: cigarette butts found on the shoreline and floating in the water.

Now, think of the places you and your family go every day. Do you find trash there?

Litter is a considerable health concern. Litter attracts rats, vermin and mosquitos, which are carriers for disease. When litter gathers in community spaces, children are exposed to disease and toxins emitting from the debris as well as the creatures it attracts.

Improperly disposed trash contributes to filth, disease-causing bacteria and toxins harmful to you and those you love. Take control. Take Care of your Trash for clean land, safe water and healthy lives in the Potomac Watershed. Visit www.fergusonfoundation.org for more information.