



CLEAN LAND.  
SAFE WATER.  
HEALTHY LIVES.

## Key Messages & Talking Points

*Below are key messages and talking points to use when talking about the Trash Initiative and the Regional Litter Prevention Campaign. These are useful for prepping for media interviews, talks, meeting, etc.*

### **Message I: *Who is the Alice Ferguson Foundation?***

- The Alice Ferguson Foundation (AFF) is a leading environmental non-profit organization chartered in the state of Maryland. Its mission is to provide experiences that encourage connections between people, the natural environment, farming and the cultural heritage of the Potomac River Watershed, which lead to personal environmental responsibility.
- In 2005, the Alice Ferguson Foundation (AFF) created the Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative (Trash Initiative), to address the growing trash problem in our region. The Trash Initiative aims to:
  - Encourage collaboration among regional leadership ;
  - Explore alternative, innovative, cost-effective solutions with long term impact; and
  - Increase public awareness.
- To accomplish its goals, the Trash Initiative has developed a framework that incorporates Public Education, Regulation, Policy, Enforcement, and Market-Based Approaches.
- There are three primary engagement programs under the Trash Initiative, which bring together elected officials, partner organizations, and concerned citizens. These programs include:
  - **Potomac Watershed Trash Treaty:** signed by regional legislators committing them to supporting and implementing strategies aimed at reducing trash and increasing recycling; increasing education and awareness of the trash issue throughout the Potomac Watershed; and reconvening annually to discuss and evaluate measures and actions addressing trash reduction. Currently, 161 elected officials have signed the trash treaty.

- **Trash Summit:** The Annual Potomac Watershed Trash Summit brings together Congressional, state and local elected officials, concerned citizens, and environmental champions to facilitate dialog surrounding solutions and action steps to reduce litter in the region.
- **Potomac River Watershed Cleanup – A Community Catalyst for Progress:** Thousands of volunteers aggregate in sites across the region each year in April to remove hundreds of tons of trash from sites along the watershed.
- **“Trash Free by 2013”:** For the Alice Ferguson Foundation “Trash Free” means that the institutions, infrastructure, and policies are in place that will lead to a lasting reduction of litter in the Potomac Watershed. In 2005, the Trash Initiative chose 2013 as the deadline because it marks the 25<sup>th</sup> year that AFF has been conducting the Annual Cleanup, which is an opportunity to celebrate past successes while looking toward the future. The Trash Initiative efforts will not end after 2013, throughout the year, the Trash Initiative will evaluate the program’s successes as well as the areas that need improvement in order to meet the goal of a lasting reduction of litter in the Potomac Watershed.

*(For more information on the programs the comprise the Trash Initiative, please see the attached fact sheet or visit [www.fergusonfoundation.org](http://www.fergusonfoundation.org))*

## **Message II: *What is the Regional Litter Prevention Campaign and why do we need it?***

**To combat the severe problem with trash in the Potomac Watershed, The Alice Ferguson Foundation and local jurisdictions seek to raise public awareness and bring a stop to litter so that we may have clean land, safe water and healthy lives.**

- The Potomac Watershed makes up 80% of area resident’s drinking water. Each day, the river and its tributaries supply about 500 million gallons of fresh drinking water.
- A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place – in this case, the Potomac River. The water that drains into the river is called tributaries (or streams, creeks, and smaller rivers that flow into a larger body of water).
- The majority of trash originates as improperly or intentionally disposed along roadsides and in public and private open spaces. There are legal consequences to discarding trash improperly. Litter laws carry high penalties, ranging from \$75 to as much as \$40,000 in counties around the Potomac Watershed. In addition, litter and dumping infractions across the metro area as well as in Pennsylvania and West Virginia can result in jail time of up to a year.
- As part of AFF’s commitment through the Trash Initiative is to create a Trash Free Potomac, a region-wide public education campaign has been launched.

- This Litter Prevention Campaign is designed to: raise public awareness and understanding of the existing trash issues; lead citizens to change their behavior, and; ultimately to reduce the amount of litter reaching our waterways via storm drains, illegal dumping and wind-blown litter.

### **Message III: *Research surrounding the campaign***

- AFF commissioned unique market research in 2008 to understand littering behavior and attitudes across the watershed. In 2010, further research was conducted in order to further understand *why* people litter in an effort to, ultimately, change their behaviors. This research included:
  - Engaging stakeholders through one-on-one telephone interviews;
  - Developing concept statements and creative images tested through focus groups in Montgomery County, Fairfax County, Washington County and the District of Columbia;
  - Psychologist interviews with selected respondents to explore barriers and motives.

### **Message IV: *Making the connection to clean land, safe water, and healthy lives.***

**Piece by Piece, Litter adds up making the places we go to everyday unsafe and unhealthy. Taking personal responsibility for our trash enables us to enjoy clean land, safe water, and lead healthy lives.**

#### **Your Litter hits Close to Home: Litter & Health**

- Health and safety are the most important aspects of family life; by taking care of trash you are protecting them today and for the future.
- Trash and litter attracts rats, mosquitos, and other nuisance animals that carry disease.
- Trash is mobile and universal. That plastic water bottle dumped along the banks of the West Virginia might travel all the way to Anacostia, touching other families and individuals on its way.
- Water running into the storm drains in the area does not go to a waste water treatment plant; what flows down the drain flows right back into your drinking water.
- Road debris and hazardous waste pose a very real threat to the health and well being of families who live around the Potomac Watershed by increasing breeding grounds for disease carrying insects and rodents.

#### **Your Litter hits Close to home: Litter and You**

- Litter negatively impacts community aesthetics. The trash surrounding your home reduces its value and damages area business, recreation and tourism.

- Trash can become a significant financial burden to families and individuals; a street with improperly discarded trash will reduce the value on homes, making it difficult to sell, result in an increase in rent, or contribute to higher taxes in order to manage the storm drains and address the damage caused.
- When you improperly dispose trash, it ends up in places other than where you throw it; possibly even in your own backyard.

**Message V: *How can I get involved?***

- Take Control. Take care of your Trash.
- Volunteer at litter cleanups.
- Always carry a trash bag in your vehicle.
- Pick up after you dog and put pet waste in trash receptacles.
- Call 311 to report illegal dumping or other improperly disposed trash.
- Ask about community cleanups including trash traps.
- Securely attach the lid to your curbside garbage can.
- Remember that cigarette butts are litter; be sure that they are disposed of properly.