AN EXAMINATION OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF WATER QUALITY IN DENVER, CO

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Confluence Park

The Confluence of Cherry Creek and the South Platte River, Denver, CO
Project Scope

Determine how to more effectively communicate the risks of recreating in the City’s streams

- Phase 1 - Survey of Confluence Park users
  - Identify topics of interest
  - Identify preferred modes of communication
- Phase 2 – Develop Social Marketing Efforts
Survey Design

- Topics Covered
  - Perception of water quality
  - Perception of pollutant sources
  - Appropriate City responses
  - How and what to communicate

- Incentives
Results – Perceptions & Priorities

- **Perceptions**
  - Quality of water is better than reality
  - Largest sources of pollution
    - Litter
    - Animal waste
    - Discharges from storm sewers

- **Priorities**
  - Activities the City should perform
    - Trash removal
2011 Sampling Results

Mean Confluence E. coli Levels, 2011

- **E. coli**
- **Temperature**

**CO Swim Beach Standard** — 235 CFU / 100 mL

Recreation Season:
- Boating
- Wading

Instream Temperature in °C

Geometric Mean E. coli in CFU / 100 mL

January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December
Results – Perceptions & Priorities

- **Perceptions**
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- **Priorities**
  - Activities the City should Perform
    - Trash removal
Results - Communication

- Desired information
  - Safety
  - Efforts and progress to improve water quality
  - Volunteer opportunities
- Method of Communication
  - Facebook
  - Signs at the waterfront
Examples of Existing Signs

ADVISORY
Bacteria in water have been found at levels which may make you sick
Hidden hazards may exist
Water may have chills
Currents may be swift
Swimming is not recommended
ENTER WATER AT YOUR OWN RISK

ALERTA
Ha probado bacterias en el agua que puede ser perjudicial
Peligros ocultos pueden existir
El agua puede ser fría
Los corrientes pueden ser muy fuertes
El nadar no se recomienda
FI ENTRAR AL AGUA SRA AL SU PROPIO RIESGO

For more information on water quality:
Para más información sobre la calidad de el agua:
Call 311 or see: http://www.denverwater.org/311_places
Take Home Messages

- Current communication efforts are ineffective
  - Need to enhance existing education campaigns
    - Address incorrect perceptions about water quality
    - Focus on changing behaviors that result in identified problems (trash, pet waste)
  - Promote the activities that we already do
- Create & promote more volunteer opportunities
What’s Next

- **Trash**
  - Working with a broad coalition of stakeholders to develop social marketing campaigns geared towards addressing trash in Denver’s surface waters

- **Discharge from City Storm Sewers**
  - E. coli TMDL implemented into MS4
    - Includes specific BMPs to address quality of water discharging from City’s MS4

- **Pet Waste**
  - Developing Social Marketing campaign to encourage people to pick up after their pets
Questions?

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