

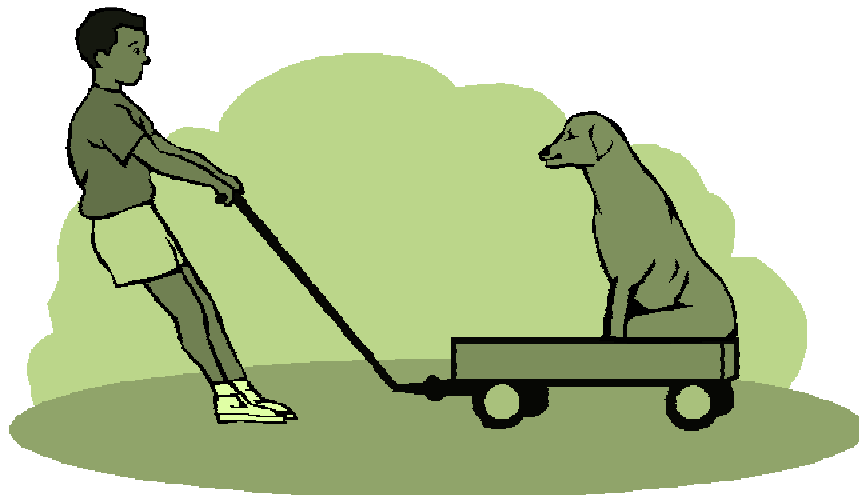
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# Hillsborough County Pet Waste Research

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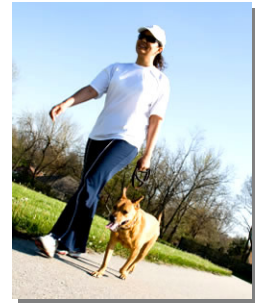
**GPI**  
Southeast, Inc.



# Hillsborough County Pet Waste Research

## Project Overview

Hillsborough County recognizes that pet waste is a potential source of bacteria that can result in contamination of waterways and the storm sewer system, as well as becoming a potential public health issue. With the development of Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) to address bacterial impairment of several water bodies, Public Works Specialized Services believes it is important to encourage pet owners to make behavior changes in the way they dispose of pet waste. To that end, Specialized Services initiated a social marketing study to promote pet waste scooping. This study characterized and segmented the target audience, identified barriers to the desired behavior, and recommended interventions to achieve behavior change. The use of social marketing allowed the project to produce information on pet owners to encourage behavior change in a manner that the education efforts and funding are spent in the most effective and efficient way to achieve real results.



In order to gain insight into the public's mindset regarding pet waste, the project utilized a form of research known as social marketing. Social marketing was "born" as a discipline in the 1970s, when Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman realized that the same marketing principles that were being used to sell products to consumers could be used to "sell" ideas, attitudes, and behaviors. Kotler and Andreasen define social marketing as "differing from other areas of marketing only with respect to the objectives of the marketer and his or her organization. Social marketing seeks to influence social behaviors not to benefit the marketer, but to benefit the target audience and the general society."<sup>1</sup>

Among the important concepts are:

- The ultimate objective of marketing is to influence action;
- Action is undertaken whenever target audiences believe that the benefits they receive will be greater than the costs they incur;
- Programs to influence action will be more effective if they are based on an understanding of the target audience's own perceptions of the proposed exchange;
- Target audiences are seldom uniform in their perceptions and/or likely responses to marketing efforts and so should be partitioned into segments;
- Recommended behaviors always have competition which must be understood and addressed;
- The audience's perspective is constantly changing and so program effects must be regularly monitored and management must be prepared to rapidly alter strategies and tactics.

For the pet waste study, two processes were used to receive input from the public: a web-based public opinion survey and targeted focus groups. In addition, a literature search was conducted to identify and review existing pet waste study and outreach efforts in other parts of Florida, the United States, and in some cases, internationally.

<sup>1</sup> What is Social Marketing by Nedra Kline Weinreich

| Tampa Bay Pet Waste Disposal Survey                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| 1. <div><div></div><div>100%</div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |
| Animal waste can be a major contributor to water pollution in urban and suburban areas. We are interested in what motivates people to pick up after their pets (in most cases - dogs) and what can be done to encourage pet owners to protect the environment. Answers to this survey will be helpful in encouraging pet owners to be responsible. |  |
| 1. What is your zip code?<br><input type="text"/>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |
| 2. What is your gender?<br><input type="radio"/> Male<br><input type="radio"/> Female                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
| 3. What is your age?<br><input type="radio"/> 20-29<br><input type="radio"/> 30-39<br><input type="radio"/> 40-49<br><input type="radio"/> 50-59<br><input type="radio"/> 60-69<br><input type="radio"/> 70-79<br><input type="radio"/> 80-above                                                                                                   |  |
| 4. What is your household income?<br><input type="radio"/> Below \$20,000<br><input type="radio"/> \$21,000 - \$40,000<br><input type="radio"/> \$60,000 - \$75,000<br><input type="radio"/> \$41,000 - \$59,000<br><input type="radio"/> \$76,000 - \$100,000<br><input type="radio"/> Above \$100,000                                            |  |

# Project Methodology

## Pet Waste Program Research

Pet waste has become a significant issue in many communities both in the U.S., as well as internationally. Education programs are popping up in many areas to encourage the public to pick up after their animals. GPI Southeast (GPI-SE) was asked to research the existence of such programs. By identifying these various programs, lessons can be learned in what techniques are being used and to review any existing research. In addition to several programs in Florida, other programs were identified across the United States.

The following article from USA Today in 2002 identified the issue of pet waste and pollution:

### Dog waste poses threat to water

By Traci Watson, USA TODAY

For as long as the dog has been man's best friend, dog waste has posed a menace to man's nose and foot. Now science has revealed a more unsavory truth: It's an environmental pollutant.

In the mid-1990s, scientists perfected methods for tracking the origin of nasty bacteria in streams and seawater. From Clearwater, Fla., to Arlington, Va., to Boise the trail has led straight to the hunched-up dog — and to owners who don't pick up after their pets.

At some beaches, dogs help raise bacteria levels so high that visitors must stay out of the water. Goaded by such studies, some cities have directed as much as \$10,000 in the last few years to encourage dog owners to clean up after their pets. A few municipalities have started issuing citations to those who ignore pet clean-up ordinances.

Many dog lovers are in denial about their pooches' leavings. But researchers have named the idea that areas used by dogs pump more bacteria into waterways — the "Fido hypothesis."

Dogs are only one of many fixtures of suburban America that add to water pollution. Lawn fertilizers, rinse water from driveways and motor oil commonly end up in streams and lakes.

But unlike those sources, dogs generate disease-causing bacteria that can make people sick. Studies done in the last few years put dogs third or fourth on the list of contributors to bacteria in contaminated waters. "Dogs are one of our usual suspects," says Valerie Harwood, a microbiologist at the University of South Florida. "At certain sites, we find their effect to be significant."

It doesn't take a Ph.D. to figure out that dog do is nasty. But it took science to determine how nasty it is.

From mutt to blue-blooded champion, all dogs harbor so-called coliform bacteria, which live in the gut. The group includes E. coli, a bacterium that can cause disease, and fecal coliform bacteria, which spread through feces. Dogs also carry salmonella and giardia. Environmental officials use measurements of some of these bacteria as barometers of how much fecal matter has contaminated a body of water.

This wouldn't matter if pet dogs were as rare as pet chinchillas. But four in 10 U.S. households include at least one dog, according to the American Pet

### Cities want to pick up 'piles'

By Traci Watson, USA TODAY

Cities struggle with 'dog piles'  
Where they're cracking down:

- **San Diego.** The city spent roughly \$10,000 on extra trash cans, nagging signs and plastic "mutt mitts" at its Dog Beach, where the surf was closed to swimmers 125 times in 2000.

The measures led to "measurably fewer dog piles. That's the term we use," says Ted Medina, deputy director for coastal parks. He estimates the beach is 30%-40% cleaner than it was before the effort started late last year.

- **Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area near Atlanta.** Bacteria levels in the river exceed standards so often that a Web site tells would-be boaters and swimmers whether the river is safe on any given day. To help clean it up, park officials recently started giving tickets to visitors who have dogs but no doggie bags.

- **Boulder, Colo.** Here the problem wasn't dirty water but the nitrogen in dog droppings. Native grasses in the city's mountain parks are used to low-nitrogen conditions. But with dogs doing their business, weeds were muscling aside the grasses. The city did 10 months of education before starting to hand out \$100 fines last year. Boulder officials had to convince residents that dog waste "is not fertilizer," says Mike Patton, co-director of open space and mountain parks. "Some people really did believe it was."

Products Manufacturers Association. The association's statistics also show that Americans owned 54.6 million dogs in 1996 and 68 million dogs in 2000. Of that total, 45% were "large" dogs — 40 pounds or more.

Those numbers add up to a lot of kibble. That wouldn't matter if all dog owners also owned a pooper-scooper. But several studies have found that roughly 40% of Americans don't pick up their dogs' feces (women are more likely to do so than men).

### **New analysis provides answers**

The environmental impact of dog waste went unrecognized for decades. Then scientists developed lab techniques to determine the origin of fecal bacteria contaminating water. One method is a variant of DNA fingerprinting. Another method looks at the antibiotic resistance of microbes from different species.

Scientists caution that the methods are still new. They are able to distinguish between major and minor sources of pollution, but they can't say with precision whether dogs contribute 20% or 30% of the pollution in a stream. "There's inherently some error," says Don Stoeckel, a microbiologist for the Ohio district of the U.S. Geological Survey who's studying bacteria-tracking methods. "I think the best (they) can do is give you some evidence of the magnitude of each source."

Nonetheless, Stoeckel says, the analytical tools do provide useful information. Researchers have studied dozens of waterways. Wild birds and humans usually head the roster of who's fouling the water. But in some areas, dogs make significant deposits.

At Morro Bay, Calif., for example, dogs contribute roughly 10% of the *E. coli*, says Christopher Kitts, a microbiologist at California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo. "And that can be the difference between a beach closing and a beach not closing," he says.

Places where dogs dirty the water:

- **Stevenson Creek in Clearwater, Fla.** Residents were worried that a sewage treatment plant contaminated the creek. But when Harwood tested the water, she found that dogs, along with leaky septic tanks and wild animals, were to blame for high bacteria counts. Dog feces probably washed out of yards by the creek, Harwood says.
- **Four Mile Run in Arlington and Fairfax counties, Va.** Studies show that dogs add to the contamination in this suburban Washington, D.C. stream. Officials calculate that the 12,000 dogs living in Four Mile Run's watershed leave behind more than 5,000 pounds of "solid waste" every day.
- **Boise River in Boise.** The river suffers from high bacteria levels that make it unsuitable for swimming. Testing of streams and drainpipes flowing into the river showed that in urban areas, dogs were a leading culprit. In some spots, dogs and cats account for even more of the bacteria than human feces — from dysfunctional septic tanks and leaky sewage pipes — do.

### **Fines don't sway some**

Even where dogs aren't the prime offenders, they're one of the few polluters authorities have control over. At many California beaches, for example, seagulls and other birds are most responsible for high bacteria levels. But federal laws protect birds.

That leaves dogs. Officials know that they have a lot of educating to do before people realize their pooch can be a canine sewage pipe. Some people find it humiliating to carry a plastic bag.

A survey by the Center for Watershed Protection in 1999 found that of the 41% of respondents who rarely or never clean up after their dogs, 44% would refuse to do so in the face of fines and neighbors' complaints. Reasons included, "because it eventually goes away," "small dog, small waste," and "just because."

More cities may follow the lead of Laguna Beach, California, a wealthy beach enclave. The city provides pooper-scoopers at the local dog park. But many people "don't take care of their little friends," says Victor Hillstead, the city's parks and buildings manager.

So the city hired Entre-Manure, poop-scooping service based in nearby Dana Point whose motto is "#1 in the #2 Business." Since the city's contract started in January, the service has collected 187 pounds of dog waste from the city. "I'm real proud of that fact," says Craig Stern, founder and chief picker-upper. "That's pollution that'll never reach the ocean."

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## Literature Search

GPI-SE staff researched existing pet waste studies and programs. Pet waste has become a focus of many education programs throughout the U.S. and the world. After reviewing numerous programs and research, a collection of examples is included in this report. The search for programs focused on both Florida-based efforts as well as others. These ongoing programs offer an opportunity to see what others are doing and to gain additional insight into encouraging behavior changes.

## Web-based Public Opinion Survey

While the primary effort in receiving input from the public was the use of focus groups, GPI-SE staff decided to take advantage of current technology and develop a short, web-based survey. Utilizing the services of Survey Monkey™, a brief survey was created and posted on the Internet. Once the survey vehicle was posted, an effort was made to encourage people to participate. The survey was promoted through use of email lists, community and organization newsletters, and other outreach efforts.

The following is the web-based survey:

### Tampa Bay Pet Waste Disposal Survey

1.

|  |      |
|--|------|
|  | 100% |
|--|------|

Animal waste can be a major contributor to water pollution in urban and suburban areas. We are interested in what motivates people to pick up after their pets (in most cases - dogs) and what can be done to encourage pet owners to protect the environment. Answers to this survey will be helpful in encouraging pet owners to be responsible.

1. What is your zip code?

2. What is your gender?

|        |
|--------|
| Male   |
| Female |

**3. What is your age?**

|          |
|----------|
| 20-29    |
| 30-39    |
| 40-49    |
| 50-59    |
| 60-69    |
| 70 -79   |
| 80-above |

**4. What is your household income?**

|                      |
|----------------------|
| Below \$20,000       |
| \$21,000 - \$40,000  |
| \$60,000 - \$75,000  |
| \$41,000 - \$59,000  |
| \$76,000 - \$100,000 |
| Above \$100,000      |

**5. Do you walk your pet(s)?**

|     |
|-----|
| Yes |
| No  |

**6. Which best represents you?**

|                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I always pick up my pet's waste and dispose of it in the toilet/trash |
| The waste helps fertilize the grass                                   |
| I pick up my pet's waste and dispose of it down the storm drain       |
| I am sure someone else will be cleaning the area                      |
| The pet waste will just wash away                                     |

**7. If you pick up after your pet, why?**

|                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| It looks bad                         |
| Bad odor                             |
| Bacteria                             |
| I do not want to step in it          |
| concern about polluting water bodies |

**8. What is the most difficult part of picking up after your pet?**

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**9. When you pick up after your pet(s), where do you dispose of the waste?**

|                        |
|------------------------|
| Garbage/Public Trash   |
| Toilet                 |
| Compost pile           |
| Other (please specify) |
|                        |

**10. How do you feel about neighbor pets using your yard or public area to deposit waste?**

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**11. What would best motivate people to properly pick up and dispose of pet waste?**

|                                           |
|-------------------------------------------|
| Education                                 |
| Concern for the environment               |
| Clean neighborhood                        |
| Health                                    |
| Fines                                     |
| Availability of waste disposal facilities |
| Peer pressure                             |
| Other (please specify)                    |
|                                           |



## 12. How do you receive information about water quality, local news, information, etc?

|                        |
|------------------------|
| Television             |
| Radio                  |
| Newspaper              |
| Internet               |
| Billboard              |
| Friend/Family/Coworker |
| Don't know             |
| Other (please specify) |
| <input type="text"/>   |

Part of the survey included demographic questions to document who was responding. This data will help later in determining targeted audiences for any education campaign. As with most Internet-based surveys, this was an informal, non-scientific collection of opinions. Thus, a certain group may have influenced the results. However, due to the nature of the topic and the survey content, an organized effort to sway the survey one way or another was unlikely. With these types of responses, trends are sought. The survey provides a reference for responses received through the focus group process.

### Focus Group Sessions



GPI-SE staff developed a plan to utilize focus groups to receive detailed, personal input from the public. A series of focus group sessions were scheduled in three geographical sections of Hillsborough County. These regional areas included Carrollwood, New Tampa, and Brandon. These regions represented areas where a large number of dogs were licensed by the County. The areas were also cross-referenced with designated TMDL-impaired water bodies.

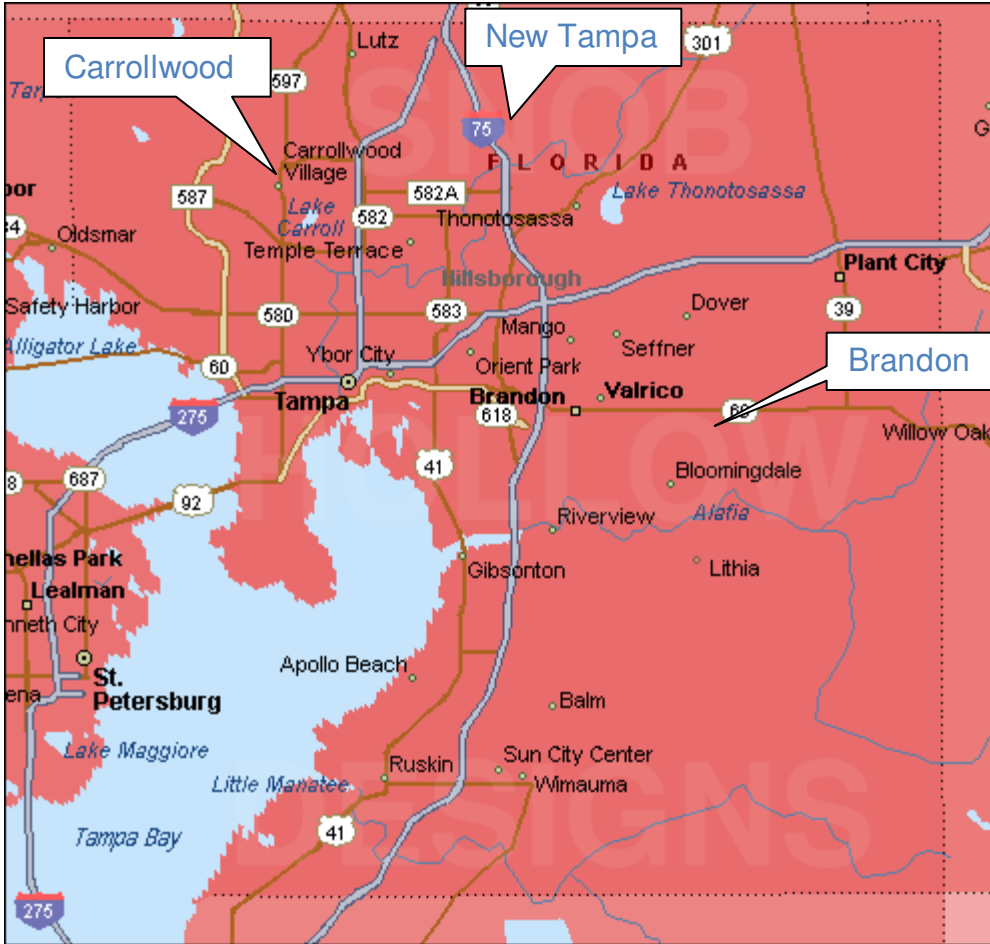
Once the regions were designated, other demographic information was considered in the selection of focus group participants. Attempts were made to include consideration for income, age, education, and so forth. In addition, several other attempts were made to hear from residents.

Focus group participants were asked specific questions and encouraged to offer their comments, suggestions, issues, and other information. The session presentation was informal to encourage a free flow of information and to make participants comfortable. The number of participants in each focus group varied.





## Hillsborough County Focus Group Locations



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# THE PET WASTE STUDY REPORT RESULTS

## Literature Research

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GPI-SE staff began the pet waste research with an extensive literature search for other programs and public opinion input. It was obvious that many communities are concerned about the impact of pet waste on the environment. Numerous education programs exist, featuring similar components including collateral materials, waste bag distribution, signage, and other outreach efforts.

Included in this report are some samples of the existing programs reviewed both in Florida and other locations.

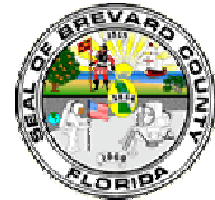


## Pet Waste Programs

### **Florida**

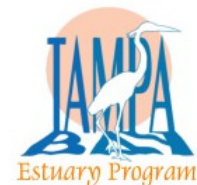
#### Brevard County

- Posted pet waste awareness survey on County website
- Developed a pet waste and water quality public education brochure
- County pet waste web site:  
[http://www.brevstorm.org/pp\\_petcare.cfm](http://www.brevstorm.org/pp_petcare.cfm)
- Enacted an ordinance, Brevard County Ordinance 14-59: "no animal shall be permitted to defecate or urinate on public property. It shall be the responsibility of the owner or person in control of the animal to dispose of or remove excretions caused by the animal"
- Fine structure for not abiding this ordinance is (1<sup>st</sup>) offense \$40.00, (2<sup>nd</sup>) offense \$115.00 (3<sup>rd</sup>) offense \$215.00, (4<sup>th</sup>) offense \$415.00
- Provisions of this ordinance are enforced by the County's Animal Services Director/Officers
- Posted on County pet waste site is H2O4U public service announcement on pet waste developed by UCF Stormwater Management Academy, DEP, and EPA..et al.



#### TBEP: Pooches for the Planet

- Pet owner survey
- The "Pooches for the Planet" was an eight month neighborhood-oriented pilot project to increase awareness about the connection between dog waste and water quality in the Tampa Bay Rivercrest Greenway Park area
- "Pooches" Kits were available for neighborhood groups that want to conduct their own pet waste education program. The group can obtain these kits to distribute in their own parks.



The Kits include:

1. Portable information station (tent canopy, small table, sandwich board sign)
2. The group can distribute “giveaways” such as “Bags on Board” pet waste dispensers that clip to the dog leashes
3. Informational brochures and refrigerator magnets.

For more information contact Nanette Holland at [Nanette@tbep.org](mailto:Nanette@tbep.org) or go to <http://www.tbep.org/scoopthepoopkits.html>

#### Alachua County - NPDES Stormwater Cleanup-Pet Waste Public Education Campaign

- Request was made to the County Board of County Commissioners meeting on Feb 10, 2009 to fund an NPDES Stormwater Cleanup-Pet Waste Educational Campaign
- The proposed program includes educating the public through various mediums (i.e. commercials, posters, veterinarian offices. They have developed a tagline “Scoop it, Bag it, Trash it!” and will target pet owners in Alachua County and City of Gainesville. To overcome barriers, the County plans on providing portable bag dispensers at public events, and pre and post surveys will be conducted to assist in determining if people remember the message and if behavior change is sustained.



#### City of Orlando - The Stop the Poo-llution Campaign

- Is a shared effort between Keep Orlando Beautiful and the City of Orlando's Stormwater Utility Section with the goal to educate the public on pet waste issued and also to help preserve surface water quality.
- The Stormwater Utility Section attends pet events, neighborhood meetings, and other events when requested.
- The campaign has developed a flyer which they encourage people to distribute and it can be found at: [http://www.cityoforlando.net/public\\_works/kob/PDF's/Flyer.%20StopPoolution.pdf](http://www.cityoforlando.net/public_works/kob/PDF's/Flyer.%20StopPoolution.pdf). For more information, call City of Orlando Stormwater Utility (407) 246-2125 ext.17 or visit [www.cityoforlando.net](http://www.cityoforlando.net)



#### Southwest Florida Water Management District

- Reducing Pet Waste paper submitted by McKenzie-Mohr & Associates (2009)
- The report outlined existing pet waste programs, a pet waste reduction pilot, and a pilot evaluation
- The programs mentioned were “Pooches for the Planet,” TBEP, Snohomish County’s “101 Reasons to Pick Up Pet Waste” awareness campaign, and the city of Melbourne, Australia’s Pet Waste Management Program.
- McKenzie-Mohr & Associates have developed a Pet Waste Reduction pilot that includes an (1) awareness campaign (2) pet waste control ordinances (3) specially designed dog parks.
- McKenzie-Mohr & Associates plan on evaluating the Pet Waste Reduction pilot by selecting three neighborhoods and each area will be randomly assigned into one of three pilot conditions (1) door-to-door visit by pet owners who are serving as block leaders, (2) conversations that occur by pet owners that are serving as block leaders; while they are out walking their dogs; and (3) the control group: where no information is provided or contact made with households.



To read more, visit:

[http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/files/social\\_research\\_docs/Pet\\_Waste\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/files/social_research_docs/Pet_Waste_Final_Report.pdf)

- SWFWMD Topline Report: White Paper Survey: Fertilizer, Pet Waste, and Pesticides
- Fifty percent of respondents in the Central region didn't walk dogs in public areas, 25 percent did
- To read more of the McKenzie-Mohr & Associates' report, visit the following website:  
[http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/site.php/com/social\\_research](http://www.swfwmd.state.fl.us/site.php/com/social_research)

## Other States

### New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services - Pet Waste Outreach Campaign

- To encourage community involvement, the N.H. Dept of Environmental Services has compiled a *How to Conduct a Pet Waste Outreach Campaign Manual* found at:  
<http://des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/pip/publications/wd/documents/wd-06-35.pdf>. The manual provides a step by step guide to designing and implementing a well researched sound pet waste outreach campaign. The manual is organized in three separate sections they are the following: (1) Planning/Assessment Toolkit, (2) Media Toolkit and (3) Activities Toolkit. Also, the manual gives an example of a successful case study in Dover, NH.
- For any questions please contact Cathy Coletti at (603) 599-0024 or email [Catherine.coletti@des.nh.gov](mailto:Catherine.coletti@des.nh.gov)



### Cobb County, GA Pick It-Up Program

- The Cobb County Watershed Stewardship Program (WSP) has partnered with Cobb County Parks, Recreational and Cultural Affairs to install the "Pick It Up" pet waste disposal stations along trails and in local parks.
- The "Pick It Up" program promotes improving aesthetics and public health by reducing the exposure to fecal material. The pet waste stations are strategically installed along parks and public trails. Each station includes a bag dispenser, receptacles, and educational signage. Not only are the signs educating pet owners to be responsible by picking up waste, but also teaches them about water quality. Community members can download a brochure and two posters at the following:  
<http://watershed.cobbcountyga.gov/files/petWaste.htm>



### North Carolina Pet Waste Radio Campaign and Education Outreach, NCDENR Office of Environmental Education

- Funding from an EPA Section 319 Grant allowed the NCDENR to expand on a previous pet waste education program where the Department created postcards informing people of water quality impacts of not picking up after their dog. The grant expanded the project by disseminating the message through a statewide radio campaign and also, through pet waste signs at environmental education centers, nature centers, and parks where people bring their dogs.
- To read the entire study visit the following website:  
<http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/nps/documents/319GrantFinalReportPetWastePickupEducation.pdf>



### Washington Puget Sound Action Team - Public Involvement and Education (PIE): Scoopy Doo!

#### A Pet Waste Education Campaign, Thurston County, WA

- The primary goal is to increase public knowledge of the impact of pet waste on bacterial pollution in Puget Sound and to encourage responsible disposal practices among pet owners. The overall approach was the following: (1) Design and conduct presentation for Henderson Inlet Community Shellfish Farm (HICSF) and neighborhood association meetings located within Henderson Inlet watershed; (2) distribute brochures using “Scoopy Doo”, the campaign mascot at community events; (3) gather signatures from citizens pledging their commitment to protect the health of Puget Sound through responsible pet waste disposal, and (4) advertise the campaign message on busses serving routes within the Henderson Inlet Shellfish Protection District.
- To read more about the progress of the campaign and download background info, pet waste facts, disposal methods, and a brochure go to:  
<http://www.pacshell.org/projects/petwaste.htm>



### California Erase the Waste Campaign - California Stormwater Toolbox

- The California Water Boards offer a free multilingual California Storm Water Toolbox with a comprehensive set of educational and outreach tools working to reduce harmful stormwater pollution (pet waste) included. The toolkit is available in English, Spanish, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese and includes the following pet waste educational items: posters, tip cards, print advertisements, neighborhood action kits, and radio advertisements. Learn more visit the following website:  
[http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/outreach/erase\\_waste/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/outreach/erase_waste/)



### Examples of Surveys

In addition to pet waste education programs, the literature review also revealed some public opinion survey. Here are some samples:

### North Carolina Stormwater, Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviors A 2005 Survey of North Carolina Residents - NC DENR

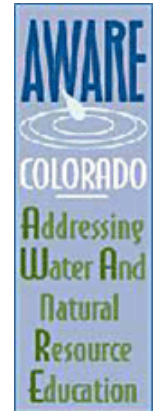
- A 31-item survey was created in partnership with East Carolina University Center for Survey Research designed to measure awareness, perceptions and behaviors related to water quality and polluted stormwater runoff in NC. Questions regarding pet waste, lawn care, vehicle care etc were asked.
- Over 11,000 phone calls were placed to capture 1,000 completed surveys.
- Respondents who claim they walk their pets were asked how often they picked up their pet's waste.
- Urban and suburban dwellers reported more pet walking than those found in the rural areas.
- The respondents who rarely or never picked up pet waste were 47% of urban pet walkers, 49% of suburban pet walkers, and 59% of rural pet walkers
- The respondents who reported always or often picked up pet waste were 35% of urban dwellers, 34% of suburban dwellers, and 27% of rural pet walkers.
- Also, the survey captured gender as well: they found that women are more likely to report they always or often pick up pet waste: 35% to 28%.





## Survey of Colorado Residents Awareness and Understanding of Household Generated Polluted Runoff - League of Women Voters of Colorado Education Fund

- A telephone survey was designed to judge current awareness and understanding of household polluted runoff. Three sources were identified as having the most significance in urban and suburban areas of Colorado: pet waste, lawn and garden chemicals, and automobile maintenance products. Also, questions concerning incentives and barriers to changing polluting behaviors were included in the survey.
- January 1998 volunteers administered the survey to 618 residents throughout the state.
- Fewer than one-half of respondents knew that stormwater runs into local rivers, lakes and streams without being treated by conventional treatment methods
- Many respondents knew that home lawn and garden fertilizers and pesticides have a negative effect on water quality, 1/5<sup>th</sup> of them did not associate pet waste with water contamination.
- Behavior-changing motivational factors receiving the highest response rate included a concern for human health, drinking water protection, and the quality of the environment for future generations.
- Two barriers to changing behavior are a lack of information and inconvenience.



## Chesapeake Bay Residents Survey – Home and Garden Information Center (HGIC, 1996)

### *Maryland*

- Sixty-two percent always cleaned up after the dog, 23% sometimes, and 15% never
- The disposal methods: 66% trash can, 12% toilet, and 22% other
- Also, from this survey dog owners were asked their rationale for picking up and not picking up. They are the following:
  - Reasons for picking up: it's the law, environmental reasons, hygiene/health reasons, neighborhood courtesy, it should be done, and keeping the yard clean.
  - Reasons for not picking up: because it eventually goes away, just because, too much work, on edge of my property, it's in my yard, it's in the woods, not prepared, no reason, small dog/small waste, use as fertilizer, sanitary reasons, and own other kind of pet.



### *Washington, D.C.*

- Pet ownership is about 58%
- Fifty-one percent of dog owners do not walk them
- Sixty-nine percent claimed they cleaned up after their dogs
- Thirty-one percent do not pick up
- The disposal methods were: 54% trash, 20% toilet and 4% compost pile
- Four percent train pet to poop in their own yard
- Eighty-five percent agreed that pet wastes contribute to water quality problems

### *Chesapeake Bay*

- Pet ownership is about 41%
- Forty-four percent of dog owners do not walk dogs
- Fifty-nine percent of dog walkers who clean up most/all of the time
- Forty-one percent of dog walkers who rarely cleanup
- Of those respondents who never/rarely clean-up, 44% wouldn't cleanup even with a fine, complaints or improved sanitary collection or disposal methods
- Sixty-three percent agreed that pet wastes contribute to water quality problems

### SURVEY

Some 104 operators of off-leash dog parks were asked 4 questions concerning dog waste collection. 46 operators provided responses. In responding to questions 1-3 some operators gave responses which, although helpful, did not directly answer the question and therefore were not included in the survey results, i.e. "I have no idea how many visit on a daily basis, but I can tell you that we've sold over 4,500 permits in the past six months."

1. How many dogs visit your park per day?  
27 operators responded  
Low: 12  
High: 300 (2 responses)  
Mean: 90  
Median: 50
2. What percentage of those dogs defecates in the park?  
31 operators responded  
Low: 20  
High: 100 (10 responses)  
Mean: 81  
Median: 90
3. What percentage of owners cleaned-up after their dog?  
36 operators responded  
Low: 25  
High: 98 (12 responses from 90% to 98%)  
Mean: 79  
Median: 85
4. What are the main reasons dog waste is left on the ground?  
46 operators responded  

|                                  |    |      |
|----------------------------------|----|------|
| Did not see                      | 31 | 40%  |
| Irresponsibility                 | 30 | 38%  |
| Conditions: dog waste or weather | 14 | 18%  |
| Other                            | 3  | 4%   |
| Totals                           | 78 | 100% |

Note: Some operators offered more than one reason.

#### *Responses to the last question - other:*

- "The dogs get too far from their owners and by the time the dogs go they can't find it."  
"The owners simply don't notice it was their dog that made the waste."
- "I personally think that one reason that people don't pick up is because they don't want to. The other is that many of our areas that are off-leash are trails and natural areas. I think that people think it is okay not to pick up if their dog goes one foot or two off the trail."
- "It could be that the owner was not aware of their dog doing its business. Or there may have been too many dogs in the park to see whose dog did what."
- "I believe the number 1 reason it is left behind is because people are lazy and/or offended by picking up dog waste. There are times when they also have trouble finding it, but mainly I think they just don't want to do it."
- "Laziness and assuming someone else will do it."



- "My opinion is laziness and not realizing when you multiply that times hundreds of dogs..."
- "In my opinion people don't pick up after their dogs because they are too lazy, they think it's gross, they are uneducated about the health hazards of pet waste in our environment, or they forgot to bring materials."
- "They don't want to. They don't care to, too runny."
- "About four years ago we tried to come up with a figure of how much dog waste we dispose of each year. We guesstimated (very conservatively) that figure to be 50 tons per year."
- "It is quite a problem and threatens the viability of dog parks in the city."
- "I have no idea why folks don't pick up after them."
- "If you have an answer, I'd like you to share it with us. We haven't been that successful in improving collection of dog waste."
- "Clearly, in addition to being wonderful areas for our dogs to socialize and exercise, off-leash dog parks are prime toilet areas. Dogs are territorial. Once dog waste has been allowed to hit the ground, whether it is picked up or not, it leaves an odor which encourages other dogs to defecate and defend the territory. This can lead to anti-social and aggressive behavior. Bacteria are almost always left behind. Quite often parasites are left behind. If diarrhea is involved, most likely at least some of the mess is left behind."
- "Dog waste is raw sewage. We scour the floor when a dog has an accident in the home. Yet, we anesthetize ourselves to the health, environmental and social issues associated with dog waste out-of-doors."
- "Off-leash dog parks represent areas with the highest compliance for dog waste collection. Most people appreciate the parks and understand they are a privilege and not a right. Yet, even in these parks, there are compliance issues with dog waste collection."
- As stated by one municipal official above, "if you have an answer, I'd like you to share it with us. We haven't been that successful in improving collection of dog waste."

## **The Focus Group Sessions**

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Three targeted and one general focus group sessions were conducted in Hillsborough County over the two month period of February-March 2009. The three targeted focus groups were conducted in different geographical regions of the County: Brandon, Carrollwood, and New Tampa. A fourth session was conducted at the Lakes, Ponds, and Stream Night event at the Tampa Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI).

The purpose of the focus groups was to receive input from the public on a variety of issues regarding pet waste, including:

- Perception of pet waste problem
- Dog walking habits
- Barriers to preventing pet waste pollution
- Possible incentives to encourage the public to pick up after their pets
- How best to reach the public



## Carrollwood Focus Group

February 25, 2009

### Focus Group Summary

#### *Thoughts*

1. One person in each family appears to be the primary dog walker
2. Dog walking is a social event for most

#### *Issues in order of importance*

1. Aesthetics
2. Pollution
3. Odor
4. Stepping in waste
5. Health
6. Nuisance
7. Having to pick up after others

#### *Suggestions*

1. Education on proper disposal
2. Provide convenient disposal facilities
3. Provide biodegradable bags
4. Provide signage
5. Enforcement

#### *Disposal methods used*

1. Trash
2. Toilet
3. Composting

#### *Barriers*

1. Lack of effort
2. Not knowing what to do
3. Not having supplies
4. The "Ick" factor
5. Not wanting to carry waste
6. Not knowing where to dispose

#### *Encouragements*

1. Education
2. More disposal facilities
3. Find a profit motive for collection of waste
4. Better distribution of bags
5. Peer pressure
6. Increase license fees to generate education funding
7. Start a pet waste hotline for information

### Focus Group Session Notes

Hillsborough County Pet Waste Study  
Carrollwood Focus Group Session  
Jimmie B. Keel Regional Library  
February 25, 2009  
6:30 p.m.



Moderator - John Walkinshaw

Mr. Walkinshaw provided a brief overview of the pet waste problem and rules for the focus group session.

### Dog Walking Habits

It appears that one family member is the primary dog walker. Some multiple dog owners may have different habits for different dogs. One dog owner walks two of their dogs while letting their three other dogs roam in their back yard. Most enjoyed walking their dogs. Several considered walking their dogs an opportunity for exercise.

Several of the focus group members consider dog walking a social event. They get to know their neighbors and even know the names of other dogs. One participant uses the dog walking to check out the neighborhood for problems. Dog walkers provide a sense of community.

Other focus group members let their dogs run loose in their yards which are fenced in. They sometimes pick up after their animals in their yards.

### Pet Waste Issues

All of the participants have problems with their neighbors not picking up after their dogs. It is a constant problem. One focus group member mentioned a neighbor with three dogs, who utilizes other neighbor lawns even when the dogs are leashed. Others reported neighbors who were rude and ignorant of the rules.

All of the focus group members were aware that pet waste can be a problem. Some have read articles about the issue. Among the responses regarding the pet waste issue, participants mentioned:

- Aesthetics  
Group members felt that dog waste was an eyesore to the community. It looked bad and added to litter and other dumping problems
- Pollution  
Pet waste enters the water bodies and pollutes. This reduces water quality in our lakes, ponds, and other water bodies near and far from our neighborhoods. There is a significant cost to reduce water pollution once it begins. Reducing pet waste can prevent pollution before it becomes a problem.
- Odor  
In some common areas of their communities, large deposits of dog waste presented an odor issue. The smell of the waste was extremely strong in some places.
- Navigation – do not want to step in  
Pet waste can become a problem when walking around the neighborhood. It was felt that people needed to watch where they walked in order not to step in waste.
- Health  
There was a concern over excessive pet waste presenting a health problem. The waste can draw insects and contains bacteria. Children in the neighborhood can be exposed to health issues when playing. Children use some of the same common areas where there is a large collection of pet waste.
- Nuisance  
Pet waste continues to be a problem and the communities have to spend time responding to complaints and enforcing deed restrictions
- Having to pick up after others  
The more civic-minded residents in communities must spend time picking up pet waste to keep their neighborhoods clean. This can cause resentment against those not picking up after their animals.

### Pet Waste Disposal Suggestions

Focus group participants were asked what they thought could help in encouraging people to pick up after their animals. The number one suggestion was increased education. All of the participants felt that education must play the key role in getting people to take action. Respondents said that the more people understood the problem, the more they were likely to change their habits. While rules and enforcement were discussed, it was generally accepted that enforcement was difficult due to limited availability of law enforcement and actually witnessing the infractions.

- Provide education on the problem with pet waste, why it is important to pick up after animals, and how to properly dispose of the pet waste.
- Provide disposal facilities such as garbage cans, plastic bags, and dog parks.
- Encourage the use of biodegradable bags
- Post signs reminding people to pickup after their dogs
- Provide free disposal bags
- Enforce deed restrictions and ordinances

Several of the disposal methods were discussed including putting in trash, flushing in the toilet, and composting. Focus group members found issues with each of the alternatives.

- Trash

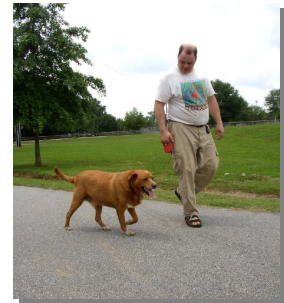
Most of the participants utilized their trash can or a public trash can for disposal of pet waste. However, the members had concerns over the use of trash cans. They included adding waste to landfills, plastic bags that may last forever, and even polluting groundwater.

- Toilet

Participants felt that on first look at toilet disposal, it was a good way of getting rid of the waste. However, some brought up that flushing waste uses additional water. Also, there was an issue over getting the waste out of the plastic bag and then disposing of the bag.

- Composting

Composting pet waste can work and there are kits available to the public for the process. However, unlike other composting, pet waste composting requires significant heat and it can be very messy. It also requires time and dedication.



Focus group participants discussed the barriers to people in picking up after their pets. The barriers included:

- Lack of effort

Participants discussed the motivation factor. Picking up pet waste is not a pleasurable experience. The act requires some physical effort. If no immediate disposal facility is available, it means carrying the waste home.

- Not knowing what to do

Many people are not sure of what the process is for disposing of the pet waste once it is picked up. Others have not been convinced that not picking up is a problem.

- Not having necessary supplies

To pick up pet waste, certain supplies are needed. Number one on the list is a plastic bag. This requires the person to remember to bring the bag. And most people use plastic grocery bags. Other people use “pooper scoopers” to pick up the waste. Biodegradable bags in a convenient dispenser are gaining popularity.

- The “lck” factor

As stated before, picking up pet waste is not a pleasurable experience. The act of picking up the waste can be challenging. It is not a pleasant substance and the odor can be strong. There is an urgent sense to get rid of the waste as soon as possible. For

those who use a toilet to dispose of the waste, the process of emptying the bag and the left over residue can be a problem.

- Not wanting to carrying the waste back home

Once people pick up the waste, it means the waste must be carried some place for disposal. Carrying around pet waste can put people off to the process.

- Not knowing where to dispose of the waste

The participants also were somewhat uneasy in how to “properly” dispose of the pet waste. Does attempting one environmental effort cause problems for other environmental efforts such as using up landfills, not recycling plastic bags, and using more water.

The group also discussed what would help people pick up after their pets.

- Education

Education! Education! Education! Education appeared to be the most common theme among the participants. It was felt that more people needed information on pet waste and its impact to water quality. Suggested educational components included brochures, speaking engagements, displays, and signage.

- Waste disposal facilities

Participants felt there was an increased need for disposal facilities. This meant more trash bins, availability of biodegradable bags, and other places to dispose of the pet waste. They would also like to know that once the waste is collected, there is a process to dispose of the waste in an environmentally sound manner.

- Finding a profit motive for proper disposal

Two of the participants brought the concept of finding a profitable motive for pet waste. They suggested some commercial uses such as fertilizers. They feel more research needs to be done in this area. No real specific examples were presented.

- Distribution of biodegradable bags

Again, the participants were concerned about the use of grocery bags. While the grocery bags are meant to be recycled, they can have a very long life in landfills. Biodegradable bags break down faster. But there is also concern about the waste itself. Some asked if the remains could make it into the groundwater system.

- Peer pressure

Next to education, this proved to be the other method recommended by this group. They feel if more of their neighbors made it known that not picking up pet waste is not acceptable behavior, then more people would make the effort. The group feels that people do react to how their neighbors look upon them and this would encourage more people to pick up after their pets. Picking up pet waste needs to project as a social norm.

- Increase dog license fees to provide disposal facilities

While this is not necessarily an encouragement, the topic of fee increases was brought up by several members of the group. They feel adding \$2 or so to animal license fees could be used to make available additional resources for pet waste collection and education programs.

- Pet Waste Hotline

Provide a hotline phone number for the public to call and report people not picking up after their pets. Those offenders identified could be sent an informational piece in the mail explaining why pet waste should be picked up and the problems caused when it gets into the water bodies. The materials could also include a doggy bag dispenser.

The group also discussed some other issues with water pollution. The group mentioned concern over several pollution sources such as fertilizers, pesticides, and cigarette butts.

## Carrollwood Focus Group Session Evaluation

This focus group felt that community aesthetics was the most important consideration related to pet waste. They felt that those that do not pick up after their pets were disgracing the neighborhood. The emphasis for helping with the pet waste problem was education. They felt people needed to understand the connection with pet waste and environmental pollution. They also thought people needed more information on how to pick up after their pets and how to dispose of the waste.

### **Brandon Focus Group Session**

February 27, 2009

#### Focus Group Summary

##### *Thoughts*

1. This group was more informed on environmental issues
2. Dog walking is a social event for most
3. Disturbed by people not picking up after their animals
4. Problem with neighbors not controlling their dogs

##### *Issues in order of importance*

1. Pollution
2. Having to pick up after others
3. Odor
4. Health
5. Aesthetics

##### *Suggestions*

1. More education
2. Better disposal facilities
3. Enforcement
4. Provide signage
5. More bags

##### *Barriers*

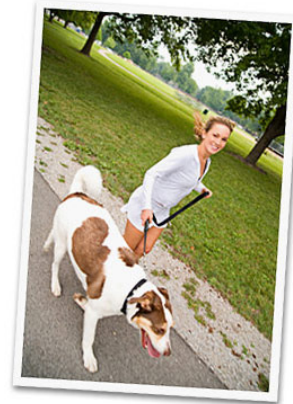
1. Lack of motivation
2. Lack of supplies
3. Lack of disposal facilities
4. The "lck" factor
5. Picking up is a chore
6. Not knowing impact
7. Don't care

##### *Encouragements*

1. Education
2. Peer pressure
3. Enforcement
4. More disposal options
5. More bags

#### Focus Group Notes

Hillsborough County Pet Waste Study  
Brandon Focus Group Session  
Brandon Regional Library





February 27, 2009  
6:30 p.m.

Moderator - John Walkinshaw

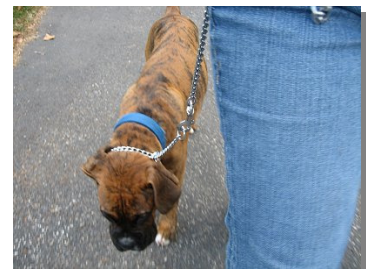
Mr. Walkinshaw provided a brief overview of the pet waste problem and rules for the focus group session.

Dog Walking Habits

In this group, the participants appeared to be aware of the impacts of pet waste on the environment. They understood the problems with water pollution. They pick up after their pets. However, one participant runs a company that picks up dog waste in their customer's yards. She said that her customers don't have a clue on what a negative impact pet waste has on the environment. Reasons why people are not picking up their pet waste: lazy, not knowing the harmful impact, and "just don't care".

They consider dog walking a social event. It is a time to visit with neighbors and friends. Some dogs are allowed to roam in their backyards.

It is apparent that they see others who do not pick up after their pets and are disturbed by this inaction. While most feel the behavior is just being lazy, the times are also used as an excuse. People are leading a very busy lifestyle and just don't have the time, convenience of having somebody else do it for them, and many people are disgusted and can't physically pick up the waste without having an adverse reaction.



The participants have problems with their neighbors not picking up after their dogs. It is an ongoing problem that has caused friction between residents. While unattended dogs did not appear to be a problem, some people let their dogs run free and use other people's lawns.

Pet Waste Issues

This group is informed about pet waste and has read articles and brochures on the topic. Topics mentioned:

- Pollution
- Having to pick up after others
- Odor
- Health
- Aesthetics

Pet Waste Disposal Suggestions

- More education
- Provide more and conveniently located disposal facilities
- Enforce deed restrictions and ordinances
- Post signs and warnings
- Provide free disposal bags
- Provide biodegradable bags

There was a discussion of disposal locations in the house. The trash and the toilet were both mentioned. The trash can was used most often. Some flushed the waste down the toilet. There was concern over what happened to the waste once it went to the landfill. Added water use was also a concern.

#### Barriers to picking up after pets:

- Lack of motivation  
Participants felt that many people lacked motivation. Some of this was related to not knowing the problem with pet waste.
- Lack of proper supplies and tools  
Bags and “pooper scoopers” were mentioned as necessary for pet waste retrieval.
- Lack of convenient disposal facilities
- Lack of knowledge
- The “Ick” factor
- Picking up pet waste is not fun. Odor, consistency, and general concept do not encourage handling.
- Other factors: lazy, not knowing the harmful impact, and “just don’t care”.

The discussion turned to what would encourage people to pick up after their pets. Suggestions included:

- Education  
People need to be educated about the problem and provided information on what they can do. Provide speakers, materials, and include schools in the education process.
- Peer pressure  
Make neighbors feel uncomfortable about their bad behavior. Provide encouragement to those who do pick up after their pets.
- Enforcement  
Enforce existing homeowner association rules and ordinances. Make those breaking the rules an example.
- More disposal options  
There is a need for more research to determine additional disposal methods and to provide more environmentally-friendly alternatives to processing pet waste after disposal.
- Distribution of biodegradable bags  
The County should provide free biodegradable bags to the public so grocery bags do not need to be used.

#### Brandon Focus Group Session Evaluation

This group appeared to be more environmentally aware than the Carrollwood group. The primary issue they saw was impacts on the environment. There was also concern over what neighbors do with their pets. Education was the primary suggestion to increase knowledge and encouragement of doing the right thing regarding picking up after their pets.

#### New Tampa Focus Group Session

##### Focus Group Summary

March 5, 2009

##### *Thoughts*

1. Too much use of common areas
2. Dog walking is a social event for most
3. Need more disposal facilities
4. Concern about dog walkers from other neighborhoods

##### *Issues in order of importance*

1. Pollution
2. Localized concentration of pet waste in certain areas
3. Aesthetics

4. Having to pick up after others
5. Odor
6. Health

#### *Suggestions*

1. More education
2. Signage
3. More disposal facilities
4. Enforcement
5. More bags
6. Parental supervision on children walking dogs

#### *Barriers*

1. No pride in community
2. Don't care
3. Lack of motivation
4. Lazy
5. The "Ick" factor
6. Not wanting to handle waste
7. Lack of supplies
8. Lack of disposal facilities
9. Lack of knowledge

#### *Encouragements*

1. Need a lot of education
2. Peer pressure
3. Highlight people doing the right thing
4. Enforcement
5. More disposal facilities
6. Bags



#### Focus Group Notes

Hillsborough County Pet Waste Study  
New Tampa Focus Group Session  
Pebble Creek Community Center  
March 5, 2009  
6:30 p.m.

#### Moderator - John Walkinshaw

Mr. Walkinshaw provided a brief overview of the pet waste problem and rules for the focus group session.

#### Dog Walking Habits

The primary issue with this group was the use of common areas for dog walking. The homeowners association has been aware of the problem for a long time. Those attending the session represented both dog and non-dog owners.

The dog owners pick up after their pets. Dog walking is considered a social event by some. It is a time to visit with neighbors and friends. The dog walkers would like to see the installation of some trash cans in their neighborhood for pet waste.

In this community, people were also concerned with a number of people coming from a nearby condominium area to walk their dogs in the neighborhood. Utility right-of-ways were identified as places where a large amount of dog waste was deposited.

There are problems with neighbors not picking up after their dogs. The problem continues despite efforts by the homeowners association to take action.

### Pet Waste Issues

This group was aware about pet waste and its impact on water quality. Topics mentioned:

- Pollution  
This area has experienced water quality problems in water bodies. Participants could see the interaction of pet waste with the storm sewers. There was concern over increasing water pollution.
- Concentrations of dog waste in localized areas  
There was a focus on the use of common areas and utility easements for dog walking. These areas have suffered from a large amount of dog waste being deposited. These areas are very close to storm sewers and there is little chance for proper filtration before entering neighboring water bodies.
- Aesthetics  
Some of the participants feel that pet waste adds to the aesthetic degradation of the community. They also feel it could impact property values and the prestige of the neighborhood.
- Having to pick up after others  
This was a touchy subject as several participants felt some neighbors just do not care about the way the community looks. One participant stated that “they have no respect for their neighbors.” Others said they have picked up after their neighbors on occasion to keep the area clean.
- Odor  
Participants were concerned about the large deposits of pet waste in common areas. They complained that the odor drifted onto neighbor properties. Again, they felt it was blight in the community.
- Health  
There was concern for children in the community who play in some of the common areas and their exposure to the pet waste. Participants felt it was more of a problem than just “steeping in the waste.”

### Pet Waste Disposal Suggestions

- Education programs
- Signs and warnings
- Provide disposal facilities
- Enforce deed restrictions
- Biodegradable bags
- Parents should supervise children walking dogs

Barriers to picking up after pets:

- No pride in home or community  
People do not care.
- Lack of motivation  
Lazy, unconcerned
- The “Ick” factor  
Handling pet waste is a problem for some.
- Lack of proper supplies and tools  
Bags and “pooper scoopers” were mentioned as necessary for pet waste retrieval.
- Lack of convenient disposal facilities  
Need trash cans and bag dispensers.
- Lack of knowledge  
Some people do not know it’s a problem.

The discussion turned to what would encourage people to pick up after their pets. Suggestions included:

- Education and more education is needed
  - People need to know this is a problem. They need to know what to do.
- Peer pressure
  - Embarrass those for their bad behavior.
- Highlight those who are doing the right thing.
- Enforcement
  - Enforce existing homeowner association rules.
- Provide additional disposal options.
- Distribute bags

Disposal methods discussed:

More disposal facilities are needed to make it convenient for people to quickly dispose of pet waste. Participants suggested that the homeowners association and the County should provide pet waste bins in the common areas. A representative from the homeowners association expressed some reservations about the placement of waste bins in the common areas. They included:

- Cost of equipment
- Cost of collecting the waste
- Vandalism

### New Tampa Focus Group Session Evaluation

This group was more interested in the impact of pet waste on the community. Aesthetics, especially the look of common areas, was emphasized. Concerns were specifically expressed over utility easements. They were also concerned over seeing people from another neighborhood using their common areas to walk their dogs. There was also a discussion of the pros and cons of placing receptacles to dispose of pet waste. The issues included cost of receptacles, vandalism, how would the receptacles be maintained, and where would the waste go from there. The group wanted to focus on education and providing information to residents on how to properly dispose of the waste and why it is important.

### MOSI Special Event Focus Group Session

April 3, 2009

This special session was conducted as a workshop at the Hillsborough County Adopt-A-Pond Lakes, Ponds, and Streams Night event at the Tampa Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI). A group of event attendees were recruited for a workshop where the focus group questions were presented. This group was a more random selection of people who were attending the special event, thus the participants were less targeted. This group had more non-dog owners than the other focus group sessions, and people represented more regions of the County.



### Focus Group Summary

#### *Thoughts*

1. Most participants were aware of environmental impacts
2. Dog walking is a social event for most
3. Problem with high concentration of waste in common areas

4. Disposal of collected waste in storm sewers

#### *Issues in order of importance*

1. Aesthetics
2. Picking up after others
3. Odor
4. Pollution
5. Health

#### *Suggestions*

1. More education
2. More disposal facilities
3. More bags
4. Parental supervision on children walking dogs
5. Signage

#### *Barriers*

1. Don't care
2. Don't know it's a problem
3. Lazy
4. Don't want to handle waste
5. Lack of supplies
6. Lack of disposal facilities

#### *Encouragements*

1. Education - Need more knowledge of the problem
2. Peer pressure
3. Enforcement
4. More disposal facilities
5. Bags
6. Increase number of dog parks

#### Focus Group Notes

Hillsborough County Pet Waste Study  
Museum of Science & Industry Focus Group Session  
Museum of Science & Industry, Tampa  
April 3, 2009  
6:30 p.m.

This information session was part of the Annual Lakes, Ponds, and Streams Night sponsored by the Hillsborough County Stormwater Environmental Program. Seventeen people participated in the discussion session.

#### Moderator - John Walkinshaw

Mr. Walkinshaw provided a brief overview of the pet waste problem and rules for the focus group session.

#### Dog Walking Habits

This larger group represented both owners and non-owners of dogs. Participants came from various parts of Hillsborough County.



Most of the attendees were aware of the environmental impacts of pet waste. As with other groups, dog walking is considered a social event. Those who walk their dogs said they do pick up after their pets.

Participants described their neighbors as mixed regarding their dog walking habits. Some complained that common areas have become a depository for pet waste. Some people have been seen picking up after their pets only to throw the waste into the storm sewer.

### Pet Waste Issues

This group had limited awareness of pet waste's impact on water quality. Non-dog owners were even less aware. Aesthetics was the main concern. Some were concerned that their children play outside and step in the waste.

Those that were aware of environmental impacts offered the following concerns about pet waste in their communities:

- Aesthetics  
Both dog owners and non-owners strongly felt that the more pet waste visible, the worse it looked for the neighborhood. The group felt it could impact property values.
- Having to pick up after others  
There were complaints by participants that they had to pick up pet waste deposited by neighbor dogs. It was felt that people do not have respect for others or their community.
- Odor  
People walking in their communities noted that common areas where pet waste was deposited smell bad. Again, there was a theme from participants of lack of respect and responsibility by some pet owners.
- Pollution  
While the group was generally not aware of pet waste's impact on the environment, they were concerned about pollution in general. Some felt local water bodies were polluted. When a couple of the participants brought up the connection between water quality and pet waste, others began to recognize the pollution problem and the relationship to pet waste.
- Health  
Some of the participants were concerned that pet waste could present a health issue, especially, when it involves their children.

### Pet Waste Disposal Suggestions

- Need more education opportunities for the public
- The County needs to provide more ways to dispose of the pet waste
- Need distribution of plastic bags
- Parents should supervise children walking dogs
- Post signs in neighborhoods reminding people to pick up after their pets



Barriers to picking up after pets:

- People do not care
- People do not know it is a problem
- Lazy
- People do not want to handle the pet waste
- People do not have the proper materials (bags, etc.)
- Lack of convenient disposal facilities

The discussion turned to what would encourage people to pick up after their pets. Suggestions included:

- People need to know pet waste is a problem. They need to know what to do.
- Having neighbors make their disapproval known to offenders. Embarrass those for their bad behavior.
- Increase enforcement of rules and regulations
- Provide additional disposal options.
- Distribute bags.
- Increase the number of dog parks.

A participant from the Twelve Oaks community in west Hillsborough County was present, and said they have installed pet waste stations. They used metal trash cans, and plastic grocery bags. The Twelve Oaks community has seen improvements, and has had no incidents of vandalism of pet waste facilities in the community.

A participant mentioned that people are using the plastic grocery bags to pick up the pet waste. This may be taking care of one problem, but possibly creating another. The grocery bags take a very long time to break down in landfills. Need more biodegradable bags.

The participants offered some suggestions for educational activities. They included:

- Use utility bill inserts to provide information on pet waste.
- Print ads in the newspaper or use other media outlets to educate people about pet waste.
- Use door hangers in neighborhoods to educate homeowners.
- Enlist the help of speakers from the Extension Service, the Humane Society, Animal Control, or other organizations to go to homeowner associations and other groups to educate the public about pet waste.
- Use a high profile person in a public education ad campaign to gain popularity of picking up your pet waste.

Disposal methods were discussed:

#### Trash

More disposal facilities are needed to make it convenient for people to quickly dispose of pet waste. The County should provide special pet waste bins in parks, common places, and other public areas. It is easier to place the plastic bags in the trash can than other means of disposal. However, it was also brought up that placing the waste in the trash can cause other problems such as filling up landfills and possible groundwater pollution.

#### Toilet

The toilet was also designated as a disposal location for pet waste. However, there were several issues discussed. One, the process of getting the waste out of the plastic bag was difficult and messy. And then there was the problem of disposing of the used bag. This was a real turnoff to people. The second issue was additional use of water. More flushing meant more water use.

#### MOSI Focus Group Session Evaluation

This was a larger group of people from various regions of the County. They represented a good range of ages, backgrounds, and knowledge. The participants had limited awareness of the environmental impacts of pet waste. Many were able to recognize the relationship between deposited pet waste and how it enters water bodies as the discussion took place. The group emphasized the social aspects of dog walking. It provided an opportunity to meet their

neighbors, discuss community issues, and scan the neighborhood for problems. Participants also were concerned that certain areas in their neighborhoods attracted a lot of dog walkers and thus became a depository for large amounts of pet waste. They felt that education and convenient waste disposal were important to reducing the impact of pet waste. There was also concern because they had witnessed people picking up after their dogs and then depositing the bag in the storm sewer.

### **General Focus Group Sessions Reaction**

Focus groups are a great way to receive personal reactions from the public. It is an opportunity to speak one-on-one with individuals and also witness the group dynamic that results from the interaction of the participants. While the subject of pet waste is not usually the most exciting or interesting issue for people to discuss, we found that most people were quite opinionated and eager to discuss the topic once the sessions began.

As discussions progressed in each focus group session, pet waste was an issue for all even though the reasons differed. We also witnessed an increased awareness of the environmental issues regarding pet waste. Participants walked away from the sessions saying they now knew that pet waste can pollute water bodies and that residents need to pick up after their pets and dispose of the waste properly.



An observance of the focus group participants in general revealed that the higher the economic status of residents, the more likely they are to have knowledge of the pet waste problem and do pick up after their pets. The regions selected for the focus groups were partially based on information received from the County's Animal Services as to what areas had the greatest licensing of dogs. However, in some urban/suburban areas, there may be a larger dog population than that captured through dog licenses due to financial limitations of residents.

Reflections on the focus group participants:

- The more education and economic status of participants, the more likely they pickup after their dogs.
- Rural residents generally not concerned with problem as they feel they have plenty of room to for dogs to roam.
- Enforcement could encourage some to pickup pet waste but participants felt that resources were not available to be effective. Law enforcement officials have greater priorities. Homeowner associations should enforce rules.
- While some participants asked why wild animals were not considered a problem, they accepted the idea that there were not that many wild animals in their community and in more natural areas, wild animals were spread out. Once explained, participants appeared to understand the problem with a high concentration of dogs.

Key feedback:

- Dog walking is a social experience for most people
- Community aesthetics are important and pet waste can present a negative image
- Neighbor dogs are a problem
- Confusion over best disposal method
- Need to remember the bag
- Need more disposal bins

The general messages from the participants were:

- Need more education
- Need more and convenient disposal facilities
- Enforcement of existing rules

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## **The Public Opinion Survey**

As part of the process to receive input from the general public on pet waste issues, it was decided to conduct an informal, web-based survey. To encourage participation, the survey was limited to just a few questions. The survey received close to 200 responses.

### **Survey Highlights**

- Seventy-seven percent of respondents were female. In other surveys, it appears more women do the dog walking than men.
- The majority of respondents were between the ages of 20 and 49.
- Over 75 percent of the respondents had a household income of over \$41,000
- Seventy percent of the respondents walk their dogs
- Eighty percent of respondents say they pick up after their pets and dispose of the waste
- Forty-three percent of the respondents say that pollution is their primary reason for picking up after their pets. Sixty-two percent said that not stepping in the waste was their reason.
- Ninety-four percent of the respondents say they dispose of the pet waste in the trash or toilet
- Fifty-three percent of respondents say fines would motivate people the most into picking up after their pets. Forty-four percent say that the availability of disposal facilities for pet waste would motivate people the most. Forty-three percent say education is the best way. (Respondents were allowed to check off more than one response)
- Television, radio, and the web appeared to be the most popular way of receiving information about water quality and news.

Specific survey results are as follows:

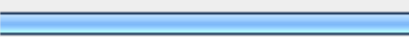
| 1. What is your zip code? |  | Response Count |
|---------------------------|--|----------------|
|                           |  | 13             |
| answered question         |  | 13             |
| skipped question          |  | 182            |

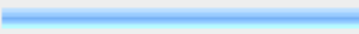
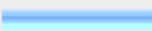
| 2. What is your gender? |             | Response Percent | Response Count |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|
| Male                    | <div></div> | 22.6%            | 44             |
| Female                  | <div></div> | 77.4%            | 151            |
| answered question       |             |                  | 195            |
| skipped question        |             |                  | 0              |

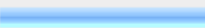
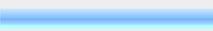
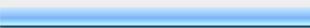
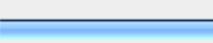


| 3. What is your age? |                        |  | Response Percent | Response Count |
|----------------------|------------------------|--|------------------|----------------|
| 20-29                | <div><div></div></div> |  | 20.7%            | 40             |
| 30-39                | <div><div></div></div> |  | 24.4%            | 47             |
| 40-49                | <div><div></div></div> |  | 23.3%            | 45             |
| 50-59                | <div><div></div></div> |  | 2.6%             | 5              |
| 60-69                | <div><div></div></div> |  | 1.0%             | 2              |
| 70 -79               | <div><div></div></div> |  | 0.5%             | 1              |
| 80-above             |                        |  | 0.0%             | 0              |
| answered question    |                        |  |                  | 193            |
| skipped question     |                        |  |                  | 2              |

| 4. What is your household income? |                        |  | Response Percent | Response Count |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------|----------------|
| Below \$20,000                    | <div><div></div></div> |  | 7.1%             | 13             |
| \$21,000 - \$40,000               | <div><div></div></div> |  | 16.9%            | 31             |
| \$60,000 - \$75,000               |                        |  | 0.0%             | 0              |
| \$41,000 - \$59,000               | <div><div></div></div> |  | 26.8%            | 49             |
| \$76,000 - \$100,000              | <div><div></div></div> |  | 23.0%            | 42             |
| Above \$100,000                   | <div><div></div></div> |  | 26.2%            | 48             |
| answered question                 |                        |  |                  | 183            |
| skipped question                  |                        |  |                  | 12             |

| 6. Which best represents you?                                                                                                                            |                  |                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                                                                                          | Response Percent | Response Count |
| I always pick up my pet's waste and dispose of it in the toilet/trash  | 80.4%            | 144            |
| The waste helps fertilize the grass                                     | 3.9%             | 7              |
| I pick up my pet's waste and dispose of it down the storm drain         | 1.1%             | 2              |
| I am sure someone else will be cleaning the area                        | 1.1%             | 2              |
| The pet waste will just wash away                                       | 13.4%            | 24             |
| answered question                                                                                                                                        |                  | 179            |
| skipped question                                                                                                                                         |                  | 16             |

| 5. Do you walk your pet(s)?                                                           |                  |                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                       | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Yes  | 70.8%            | 136            |
| No   | 29.2%            | 56             |
| answered question                                                                     |                  | 192            |
| skipped question                                                                      |                  | 3              |

| 7. If you pick up after your pet, why?                                                                                   |                  |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                                                          | Response Percent | Response Count |
| It looks bad                          | 55.2%            | 90             |
| Bad odor                              | 40.5%            | 66             |
| Bacteria                              | 42.3%            | 69             |
| I do not want to step in it           | 62.0%            | 101            |
| concern about polluting water bodies  | 42.9%            | 70             |
| answered question                                                                                                        |                  | 163            |
| skipped question                                                                                                         |                  | 32             |

| 8. What is the most difficult part of picking up after your pet? |  | Response Count |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--|----------------|
|                                                                  |  | 153            |
| answered question                                                |  | 153            |
| skipped question                                                 |  | 42             |

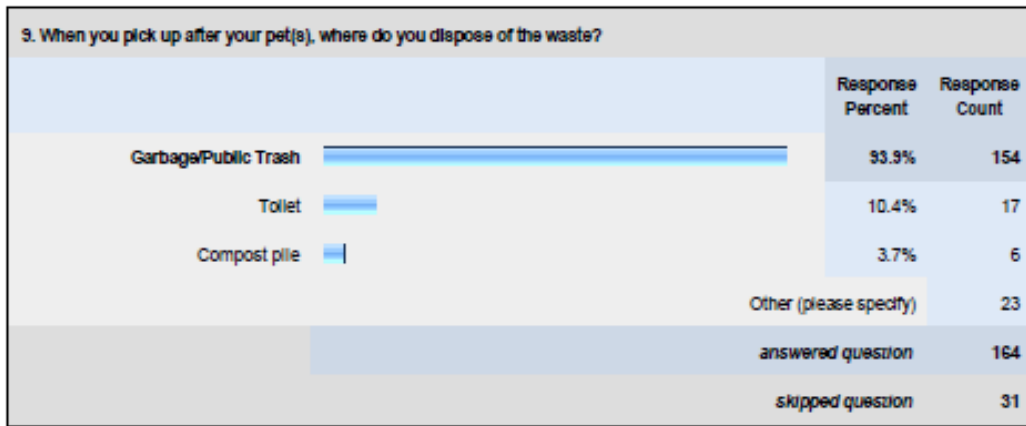


1. I have two dogs and have two leashes and a spring-loaded pooper scooper to carry.
2. There is no problem. It's called being responsible.
3. Don't want to use polluting plastic bags to pick up dog poo
4. Taking enough bags if they go more than expected.
5. Sometimes I forget to bring plastic bags with me, and the container in our neighborhood that has bags is empty a lot.
6. No problem. Why can't everybody do it?
7. Remembering to carry the bags and the ickiness of picking up dog doo.
8. You have to carry it around with you. There are no garbage cans around. At night, I can't see in areas that aren't well light.
9. Remembering to bring a baggies to clean it
10. When it's loose.
11. Consistency
12. You really don't want to know, do you?
13. Making sure to get all of it
14. Leaning over
15. No aspect is hard
16. Nothing is really difficult about it; I carry plastic grocery bags to pick up the poop and bring it home to throw in the garage can.
17. Nothing
18. Disposal afterwards....must carry it all the way home as there are no trash cans along walk route.
19. Having few places to dispose of it once picked up. Must carry the plastic bag for several blocks until I get home or pass trash can.
20. The smell can be unbearable at times and triggers my gag reflex immediately
21. It's germly and gross!
22. It's gross. I try to protect water resources and conserve but I won't do this.
23. Remembering to carry a "pick up" bag
24. Remembering to bring a bag or something for disposal.
25. Who wants to pick up poop and carry it around until the end of the walk?
26. That I have 3 dogs, and so if I miss one day of cleanup, there is a lot to pick up! And if it rains, it is harder to get out of the yard. I also have a little girl and we play outside often, so I am always concerned about it being in the yard where she plays.
27. Where would I put it in that is any different than where it is already (in the backyard)
28. Having a bag on hand to pick it up and having a way to dispose of it afterwards.
29. Proper disposal is most difficult.
30. When I can't see at night or when the grass is tall
31. I have 2 cats. They use a litter box or go in the areas around my yard- wooded area
32. Remembering the bags
33. I don't want to continue my walk carrying a bag of poop.
34. I live in an apt complex and the pet waste bags are too far away.
35. My neighbors never pick up after their pets. It sits to get disposed of into the ground with no concern towards others. So I pick up from my yard and dispose of it.
36. Having to walk around with it during a walk.
37. If you love your pet there is no difficult part, would you clean up after your children? Well pets are a part of a family, or at least they should be if you have them.
38. Remembering to bring bags
39. Lazy
40. Remembering the bag, but it is not difficult
41. Nothing.
42. I sometimes do not always have a poop baggy available every time my dog poops
43. I must watch her at all times or go look around after she comes inside to be sure she has not left waste in a place I didn't see
44. I feel bad using plastic bags.
45. Finding a convenient place to dispose of it.
46. My mom screaming about it being there in the first place.
47. The smell
48. Messy and hard to pick up at times.
49. I don't find it difficult. As a pet owner it is my responsibility to clean up after it.
50. Feel and smell

51. Inconvenient not difficult, however it hurts my back.
52. Sometimes it has a consistency that makes it difficult to grab it all
53. N/A
54. Grabbing it with the bag!
55. Dark outside and can't see when walking my pet
56. It is easy to forget something to pick it up with.
57. It's gross
58. Weather
59. ??
60. It is not difficult as long as you come prepared with "poop" bags...recycle plastic grocery bags!
61. When she has diarrhea.....can't spell.....sorry
62. We have an indoor cat that uses a litter box.
63. Not always knowing that she went.
64. The feel and smell of it.
65. No difficulty at all. It must be done.
66. Rain
67. Carrying the bag (before and after)
68. Disposing
69. The process--the smell
70. The embarrassment of carrying it.
71. Holding it until you get home.
72. I do not have a pet.
73. Carrying back home
74. Ick factor.
75. Remember to take a bag
76. Continuing to carry it for long distance if no trash receptacle available
77. There is none
78. When it's dark out it's hard to find.
79. It makes me sick. The site of feces makes me vomit
80. NOTHING
81. Smell
82. Remembering a bag on walks or outings
83. It's gross
84. N/A
85. There is no difficult part for me picking up after my pets. I know the dangers and will continue to clean up after them.
86. It's not hard at all.
87. Not difficult
88. It's embarrassing and very nasty to touch and smell
89. Nothing
90. Where to put it
91. None really
92. Getting my daughter to do it
93. None. I am a professional pooper scooper. I also pick up after many, many people's pets!
94. I currently don't have any pets, but a number of my neighbors in my mobile home park need to be educated on the necessity for this as they do not pick up when walking their dogs, or allowing their cats to roam free.
95. Disposing of it.
96. Not difficult at all.
97. It getting on me
98. Carrying it with you after the pet has gone.
99. If you go for long walks you may have to carry the waste with you for a long time if there are no disposal areas.
100. Carrying the bag home.
101. When it is dark outside.
102. Touching the hot poo w/a bag
103. Carrying the bag(s) the remaining walk
104. I do not have a pet
105. I forget to bring a clean-up bag along when I walk my dog. He eliminates 95% of the time in my back yard from where I pick it up and put it in the trash.



106. Laziness
107. Bad odor
108. Its gross and holding the dog's leash while doing it can be difficult.
109. In one word: Humility.
110. Absolutely nothing!
111. A place of disposal nearby
112. It's not. I just take a bag with me when I walk the dog and then throw it away in one of the trash cans provided by the subdivision along the streets
113. Remembering to bring bags
114. While out walking you have to carry it to a trash can which can me yucky sometimes :-)
115. Sometimes I do not find it for a few days.
116. The smell until garbage day
117. There is nowhere to dispose of the waste. If there were trash bins available this would help a lot.
118. Making sure I always have a bag with me when we leave the house.
119. What to put it in, in the garbage can.
120. Nothing - he's very little
121. Disposing of it when you are on a long walk and depending on the dog's diet... sometimes it can be more unpleasant than usual
122. Consistency of the remains.
123. Seeing it at night.
124. My pet is an indoor cat
125. Remembering to do it.
126. Remembering to bring a bag
127. Do not own a pet! Pet owners are not very responsible for their dogs mess!
128. Having to carry the pop bag around
129. Not always seeing where she's gone.
130. Since I pick up after my Yorkshire Terrier 100% of the time, there is no "difficult part".
131. It's not always solid
132. The daily routine...
133. I want there to be more trash cans so I don't have to carry the poop bag so far.
134. My pets are indoor cats and are in a harness/leash combo when they go outside. Most litters are not environmentally friendly or do not clean up easily.
135. Access to bags. Concerned that bagging it may not be the best environmental option.
136. You should ask what type of pet I have. I have 2 cats so the litter box is what I am cleaning up.
137. It is not difficult
138. Remembering to bring baggies
139. Remembering the plastic bag.
140. For me, I don't have a problem.
141. We have a large concrete pen for them, so our yard does not become inundated with feces. It's easy to clean. Pooper scoop it into a trash bag and leave it out for the garbage collector.
142. It's gross but no one else will do it.
143. Bending over.
144. Making sure I have bags and having to carry it until I get home.
145. I have goats and they have lots of little pellets.
146. None-it is my responsibility as their mother to clean up after them
147. Locating waste in low light (early morning or evening)
148. If the sun has set or not yet risen, it can be hard to find.
149. None
150. Disposal
151. Time to do it.
152. Keeping a steady supply of bags
153. Remembering to bring a plastic bag to pick up the poop with/in



| 10. How do you feel about neighbor pets using your yard or public area to deposit waste? |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                          | Response Count |
|                                                                                          | 169            |
| answered question                                                                        | 169            |
| skipped question                                                                         | 26             |

1. Don't like it. Mon
2. I'm not too happy about it. For some people I give them a plastic bag to clean it up.
3. It upsets me when they do not clean up after their dog. Sometimes I step in it when I go to get my mail or bring in my trash can. I think it is very rude when they don't pick it up.
4. I think it is abhorrent and not only a public nuisance, but a health hazard.
5. I feel it shouldn't be done
6. I have a fence, so they can't do that. If they did, I would be upset.
7. Very inconsiderate.
8. Absolutely hate it. We almost had a physical altercation with a neighbor who insisted on trespassing far into our yard to let her dog poop!
9. Don't like it.
10. Very aggravating!
11. Hate it
12. I'm not thrilled about it but its nature...they have to go somewhere.
13. They should not do it, as part of the community and by regulation
14. Dislike it very much
15. Pets are going to "go" where it suits them; I get a little annoyed when owners don't pick up the poop, but it's easy enough for me to pick it up myself.
16. Disgusted - dog feces is one of the many ways disease is spread among animals
17. Hate it!
18. I don't mind if they clean up, but some don't.
19. I don't like it when people allow their animals to poop on the lawn and then they do nothing about it, not pick it up. That is just disgusting and I would not do it to someone else so I would expect others to have the same else courtesy to do the same.
20. I wouldn't appreciate it.
21. It's okay, until it gets out of hand.
22. No big deal, they can't help where the dog ends up going to the bathroom and they may not always remember to bring a bag so I just go out and pick it up.
23. It bothers me. One of my neighbors goes out of her way to use other yards and driveways. She never picks it up. Another neighborhood dog just goes in the street almost daily and people just drive over it.
24. Not good. However, most people are responsible and pick up after their pets.
25. I think it would be very rude for someone to let their animal defecate on your property, and not clean up after them. It is common courtesy to clean up after your pet.

26. They need to clean up their messes  
27. There aren't any people who walk their pets on my street  
28. I feel it is rude and inconsiderate.  
29. I have a big yard so it isn't usually a problem. Stepping in it on sidewalks is.  
30. I don't mind other pets going on my yard as long as the owners pick up after them  
31. I do not want any dogs going in my yard and I think people with dogs should clean up if they go in public areas or somewhere other than their own yard.  
32. I don't want it in my yard but do not mind in public areas.  
33. Doesn't bother me  
34. I think it is disrespectful that they walk their animals in other people's yards and don't pick up the waste left behind.  
35. It is unsanitary and disgusting.  
36. If the people would pick up after their pets I would not care.  
37. I don't have a pet at present, but do a lot of hiking in areas where other hikers let their dogs run loose. Hopefully many people who enjoy the outdoors would respond to information about what pet waste does to the environment - it's especially gross when you see dogs pooping on the shores of ponds in the wellfields where our water comes from, like Cypress Creek and Lake Park.  
38. Frown upon it  
39. Not right to do  
40. Everyone should pick up after their pets  
41. As long as the owner cleans up, nothing. Otherwise not too happy. Cats are my bigger pet peeve.  
42. I do not mind as long as they pick up the waste from the yard  
43. I think its rude unsanitary lazy and gross  
44. Fine, as long as they pick it up!  
45. I do not appreciate it.  
46. Fine, only if they pick up after their pet.  
47. They are very disrespectful.  
48. Hate it  
49. Seems like I'm wasting my time trying to do the right thing for the environment and health of others.  
50. People should not have pets if they can't properly care for them and their surroundings....  
51. It's disgusting, rude, and irresponsible.  
52. I find it terribly annoying  
53. They should pick up after their pets. That's what I do when my pets go to their yard  
54. If they pick it up, I don't mind.  
55. I don't mind. I think my grass favors the extra nitrogen.  
56. I don't like it.  
57. I don't have a pet, so I don't appreciate my neighbor's using my yard to deposit waste because my children have to play in my yard and my husband has to mow the lawn. When inconsiderate neighbors use my yard for their pets AND not clean it up, I think it's very rude and extremely inconsiderate.  
58. I GET UPSET BECAUSE WHEN I HAD A DOG, I PICKED HIS UP IN THEIR YARDS.  
59. It makes me VERY angry!  
60. Feel it's very rude  
61. I think it is disgusting.  
62. It's inconsiderate Sat,  
63. I do not appreciate it, we clean up our yard after our dog, and we shouldn't have to deal with someone else's pets waste in our yard or in public. As a pet owner it should be your responsibility to clean up after your pet. Others (especially children) should not have to be exposed to someone else's pets waste.  
64. Yuk!  
65. I would not like it one bit, but fortunately we have caring dog owners in our neighborhood.  
66. I have a fenced in yard for my dogs. If you use public land you need to pick up the waste!  
67. It's gross, and it's unsanitary.  
68. I don't like it.  
69. Not usually a problem unless it is a LARGE dog.  
70. I hate it!

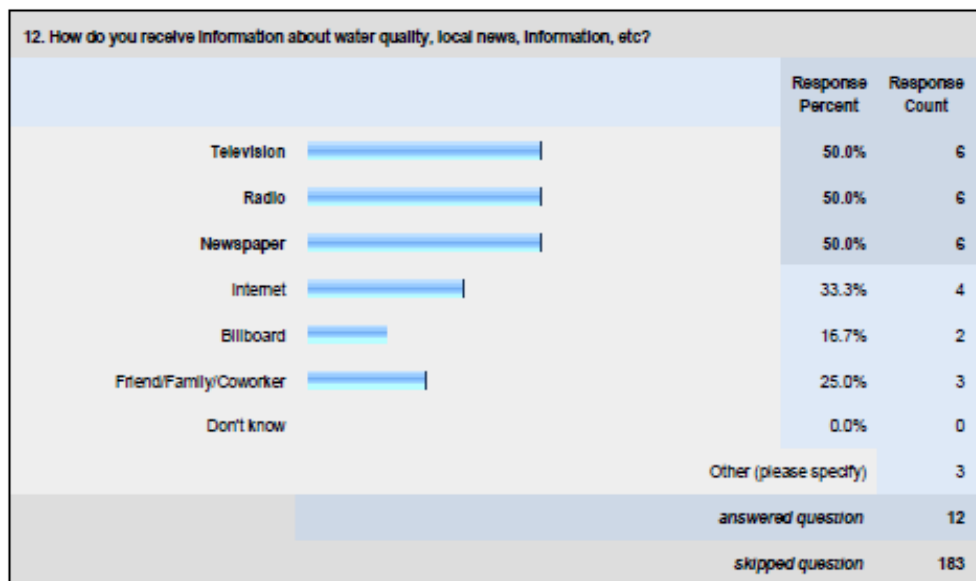
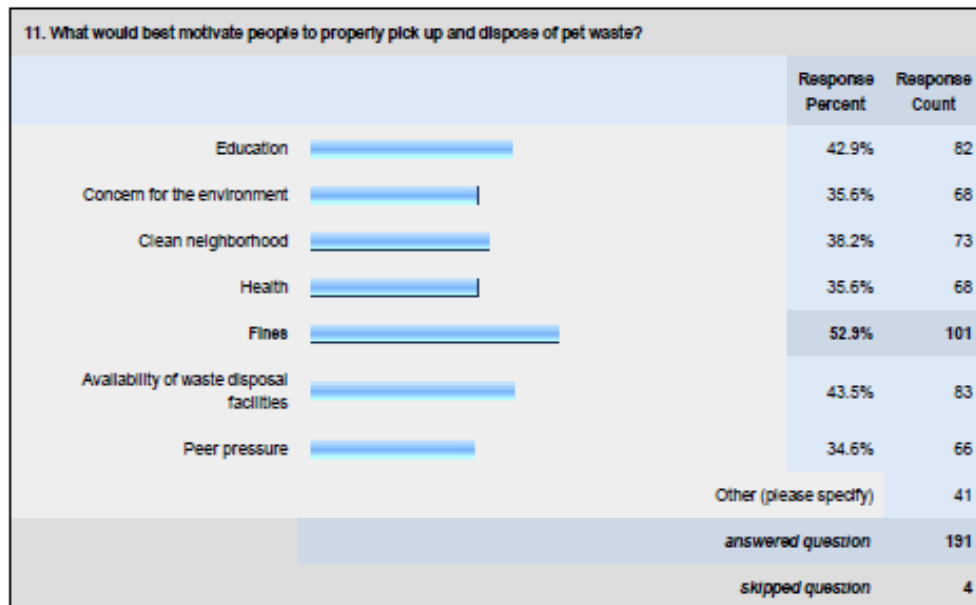
71. I think it is disgusting. There is no respect for private property. It is a constant battle. They have no consideration for their neighbors.
72. Don't care as long as they clean it up.
73. No problem as long as they pick it up.
74. I hate it!
75. Extremely irritating if not picked up
76. It annoys me tremendously
77. Don't like it.
78. I do not have a pet and I get very upset when neighbors use my yard for pet waste. They need to use their own.
79. I don't allow it in my yard.
80. Lazy and inconsiderate
81. I don't like it.
82. Frustrated
83. I expect others to pick up after their dogs and do not like it when they don't.
84. Gross, I don't want my pet to get their germs. I also don't want to step in it!
85. As long as it's not in an area where residents walk
86. IT IS VERY UPSETTING
87. No problems
88. It's rude
89. It's only ok if they pick up after them
90. I hate when neighbors allow their pets to use my yard without picking up the waste afterwards.
91. It's disgusting and I'm irritated that I pick up and other are not responsible pet owners and do not pick up. I will do anything to promote picking up after animals.
92. Do not appreciate it, especially when I step in it or go over it with the mower
93. It's very annoying when people let their dogs run loose and/or don't scoop their pets poop.
94. Don't like it
95. They better not be disposing of it in my yard!! but if it's a public area then I guess there's nothing I can really do about it
96. It makes me angry. My kids play in those areas and should not have to worry about rolling in doggy dodo in their own yard.
97. I don't like it
98. Inappropriate
99. Do not like it
100. I don't mind if they use my yard or a public area. I do mind if they don't clean up after their pet.
101. Absolutely irritating - please see above.
102. OK as long as they pick up after their pet
103. Do not like it at all. But do pick up after other people's pets if I see in my yard.
104. I resent it. When I had a dog, I always picked up after the dog. I expect other people to do the same. My neighbors actually encourage their dog to use my yard instead of theirs!
105. I don't approve of it
106. I hate it.
107. Disgusted
108. Very Irresponsible!
109. I think everyone should keep the public & common areas clean and waste free for everyone's use and enjoyment.
110. Angry
111. I think it is unnecessary and tacky.
112. N/A fenced yard and really upset with loose running dogs. Some people are just worthless and should not be allowed to keep pets. I live in a rural area and idiots feel that they can let their dogs run in the "country". I have had many livestock type animals killed by the pets of, uh, jerks.
113. I do not like it
114. OK if they pick it up.
115. Inconsiderate
116. Should not be like that





117. It's absolutely DISGUSTING. You can always tell when it isn't your dog's waste in your yard.
118. My yard - don't like public area meant as a dog walk area okay public area meant for public people == not okay
119. I greatly dislike it and would not be opposed to fines for such acts if I did not feel it would lead to the animals being punished more than the owners.
120. Don't have a problem with it as long as they pick up after themselves
121. Negative
122. As long as they clean up afterwards it's not an issue
123. Disgusted
124. Ok with it as long as they pick it up
125. Dislike when they do not pick up after their pets
126. I don't really like it because I step in it.
127. Rude
128. I don't like it but I can see why it happens.
129. Disrespectful
130. I strongly dislike it
131. Don't like it.
132. As long as they clean it up I am ok with it.
133. Don't really like it
134. Fine, as long as they pick up after their pet
135. Very irresponsible, lack of concern for others property.
136. It infuriates me.
137. Badd
138. Dislike it.
139. Negative
140. I hate it when I have to watch where I step due to others lazy habits.
141. Do not like it
142. It's okay as long as they pick up after it.
143. It sickens me and I abhor people's ignorance and indifference to others in their neighborhood.
144. It depends on where because some public areas are unlikely to get foot traffic. I mostly worry about the health issues to people.
145. I HATE IT>>>> There is no reason for it!!
146. Gross!
147. I find it to be very annoying. Some pets roam free & their owners do not care to follow through on cleaning up after them.
148. I strongly object.
149. NOT appropriate! I doubt people think of the cumulative impact pets have on the environment. I do see more people picking up after their pets in my neighborhood.
150. Hate it
151. Disgusting, unsanitary and rude.
152. In my yard, I don't like it, but I don't complain if they pick it up. In a public area, it is expected it will happen. However, not enough people pick up after their pets.
153. I don't like it, but I never see them do it. I just see that they stopped and different pick up afterwards.
154. I don't really have that problem, but I wouldn't like it.
155. I hate it! I do not let my dogs do it in their yard, so why should they. I have a beautiful lawn and it I do not notice it the grass turns brown and dies. I do not like the smell or the look either.
156. I don't like it one bit.
157. Liquid is acceptable, but I expect/hope they will pick up solid waste.
158. Do not like it
159. Bad manners!
160. I don't like it.
161. Waste should be put in the waste cans along the sidewalks in the neighborhood
162. It's disgusting... I mean if it was in their yard ok, but if it's in mine then have some respect and pick it up
163. I loathe it!
164. I don't like it!
165. Disgusted

166. I don't like it.  
 167. It doesn't bother me, as long as they remove the waste and properly dispose it  
 168. Disgusting  
 169. It angers me!



## Survey Questions with Open-Responses

In the web survey, there were two questions with options for open-ended answers. We reviewed the answers to see if there were trends in the responses.

In question number 8, respondents were asked “What is the most difficult part of picking up after your pet?”

The top responses were:

1. Forgetting bags
2. No convenient disposal facility
3. Embarrassment or discomfort of carrying the waste
4. “Ick” factor
5. Odor

The responses were consistent with what was revealed in the focus group sessions. Availability of bags and disposal facilities were issues in both the focus group sessions and the survey. The “Ick” factor of the waste also plays a role in picking up after pets.

In question number 10, respondents were asked “How do you feel about neighbor pets using your yard or public area to deposit waste?”

The top responses were:

1. Rude, disrespectful, inconsiderate
2. Degraded aesthetics
3. Concern over stepping in it
4. Health issue

In these responses we see the concern over what neighbors do with their animals. This provoked anger and disgust with both focus group members and the survey participants.

The research has exposed common themes and issues. The key responses in this research are consistent with the responses from other surveys that have taken place.

## Hybrid Research Vehicle Data

In today’s society, gathering information from people can be a difficult task. Busy lives and multiple commitments can make it difficult to get people out of their homes and into a focus group session. In order to reach a few people who were interested in attending a focus group but could not find time in their schedule, we decided to develop an enhanced web-based survey form to receive more detailed information from these selected individuals. While this technique does not provide the interaction of an in-person focus group session, GPI-SE staff felt that it was important to capture their input.

### **Focus Group Participant Pet Waste Disposal Survey**

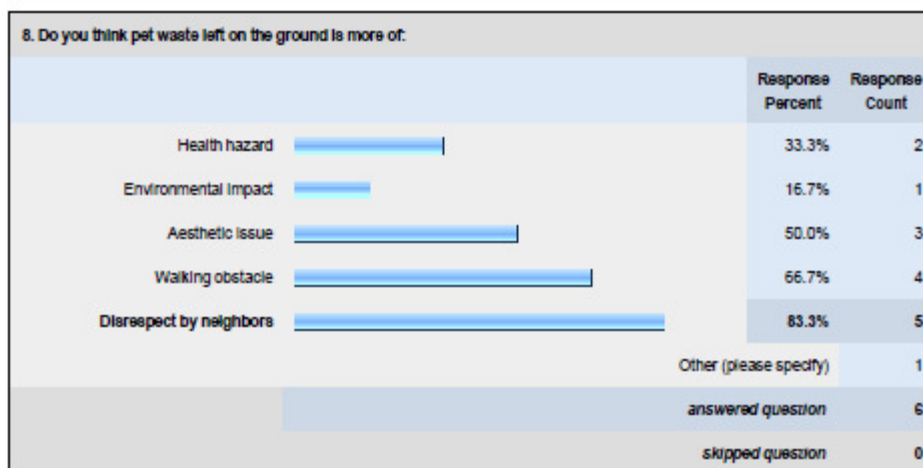
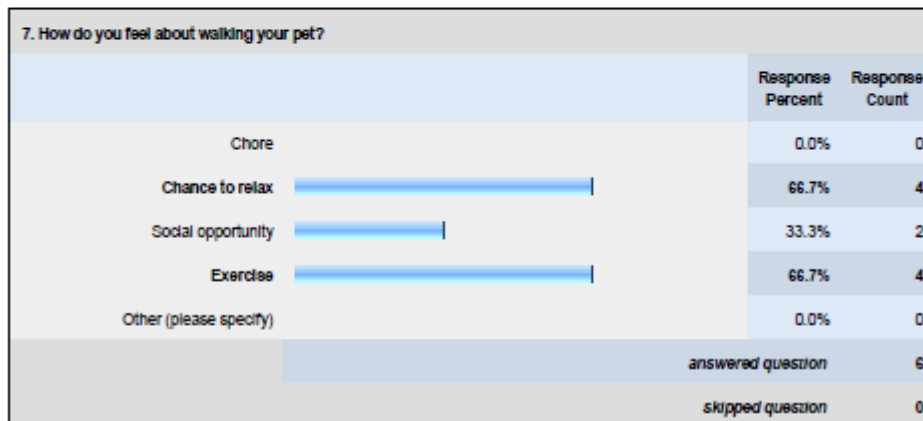
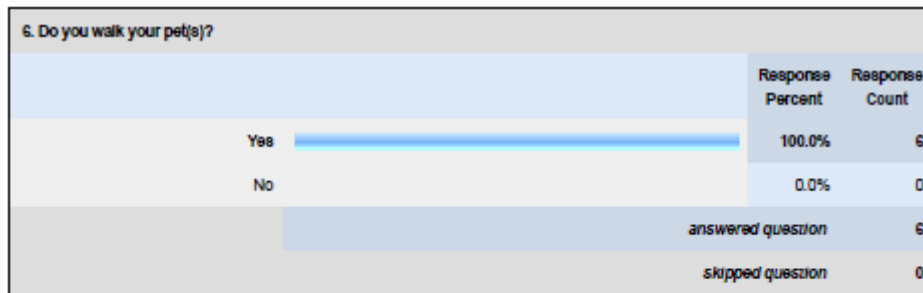
| 1. What is your zip code? |                |
|---------------------------|----------------|
|                           | Response Count |
|                           | 6              |
| answered question         | 6              |
| skipped question          | 0              |

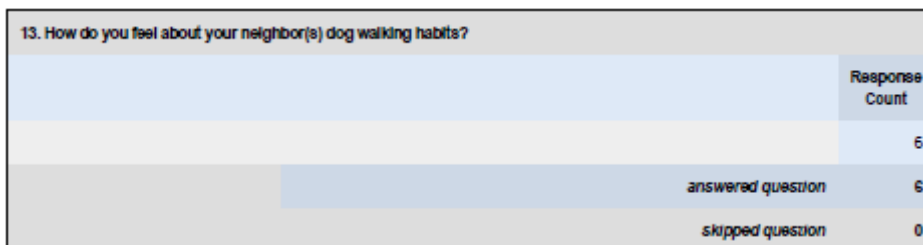
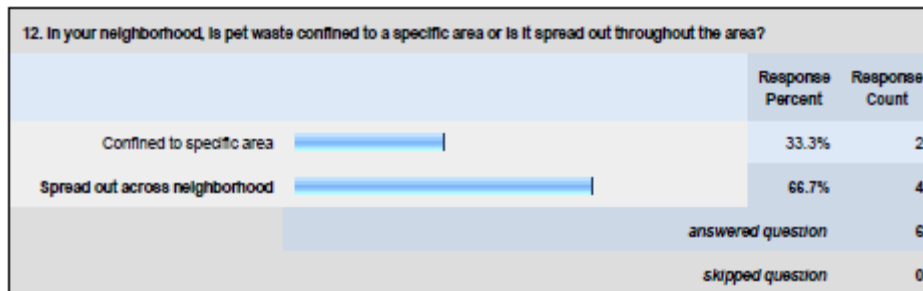
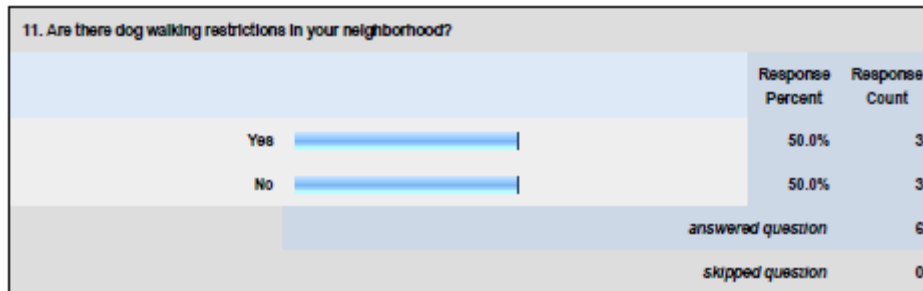
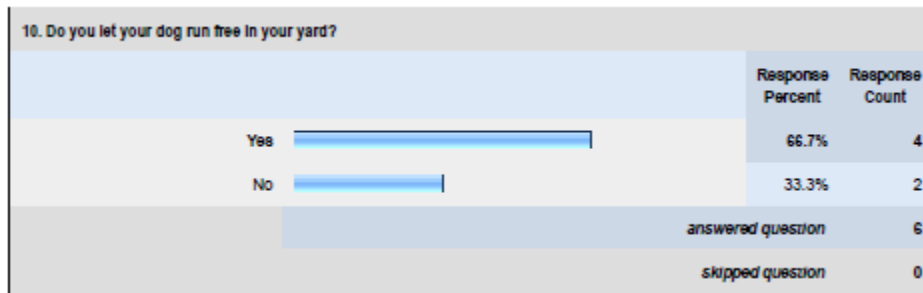
| 2. What is your gender?                                                                  |                  |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                          | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Male    | 33.3%            | 2              |
| Female  | 66.7%            | 4              |
| answered question                                                                        |                  | 6              |
| skipped question                                                                         |                  | 0              |

| 3. What is your age?                                                                    |                  |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                         | Response Percent | Response Count |
| 20-29  | 16.7%            | 1              |
| 30-39  | 83.3%            | 5              |
| 40-49                                                                                   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| 50-59                                                                                   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| 60-69                                                                                   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| 70-79                                                                                   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| 80-above                                                                                | 0.0%             | 0              |
| answered question                                                                       |                  | 6              |
| skipped question                                                                        |                  | 0              |

| 4. What is your household income?                                                                        |                  |                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                                          | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Below \$20,000                                                                                           | 0.0%             | 0              |
| \$21,000 - \$40,000                                                                                      | 0.0%             | 0              |
| \$41,000 - \$59,000   | 16.7%            | 1              |
| \$60,000 - \$75,000   | 16.7%            | 1              |
| \$76,000 - \$100,000  | 16.7%            | 1              |
| Above \$100,000       | 50.0%            | 3              |
| answered question                                                                                        |                  | 6              |
| skipped question                                                                                         |                  | 0              |

| 5. What is your education level?                                                                     |                  |                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                                                      | Response Percent | Response Count |
| <12 years                                                                                            | 0.0%             | 0              |
| 12 years                                                                                             | 0.0%             | 0              |
| 14 years          | 16.7%            | 1              |
| 16 years          | 66.7%            | 4              |
| 18 years & above  | 16.7%            | 1              |
| answered question                                                                                    |                  | 6              |
| skipped question                                                                                     |                  | 0              |





1. They are good as far as I know
2. Most do not adequately pick up their pet's waste. Especially people with small dogs.
3. Fair. People do not walk their dogs, most tend to hover around one grassy patch outside of the building. In addition, do not pick up after their pets - I usually pick up my pet's waste along with someone else's. Areas where people "squat" with their dogs are damaged and polluted, the grass is dead, rancid smell.
4. They're fine
5. Walking habits-fine. Picking up-not good
6. I live on Harbour Island where there are many doggy waste stations-there is NO excuse for people to not pick up after their dogs, yet they DON'T! I end up picking up at least 3-4 other dog's waste while picking up my own.



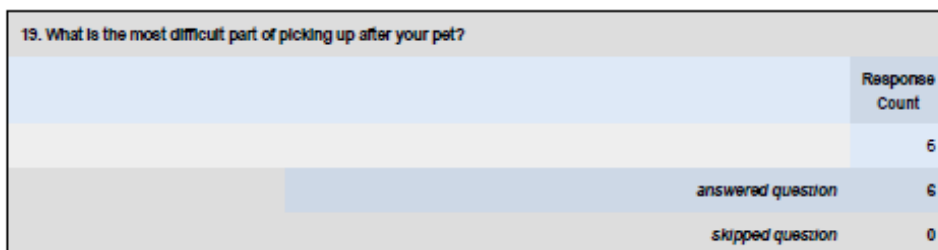
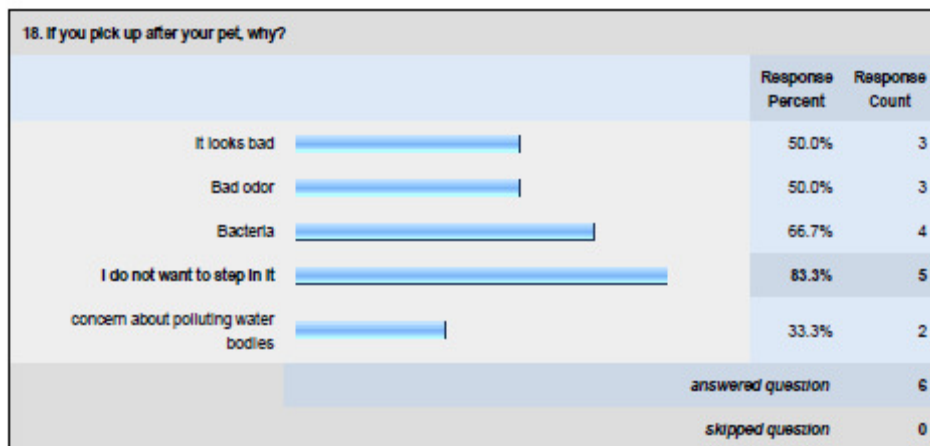
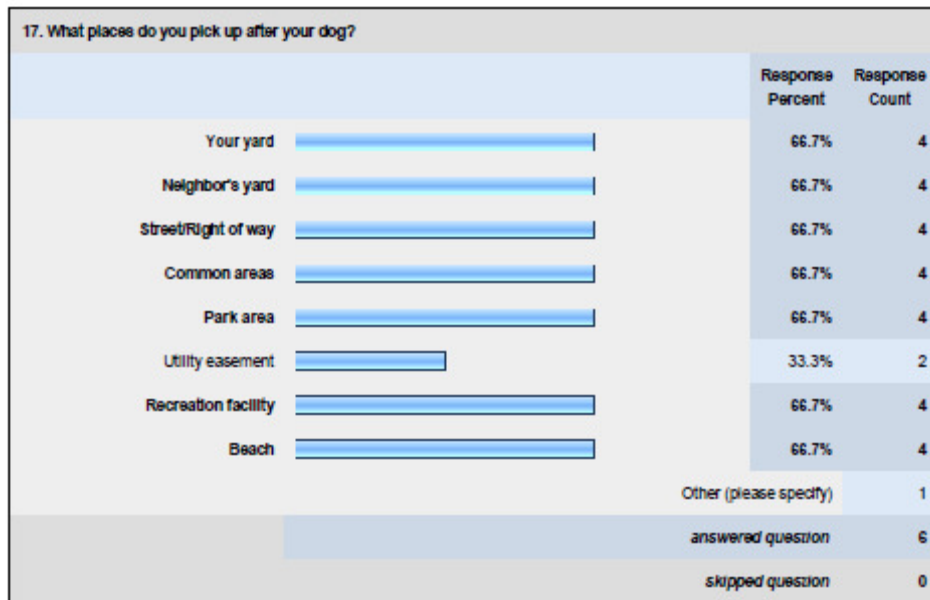


| 14. List some reasons why you think people do not pick up after their pets. |                |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--|
|                                                                             | Response Count |  |
|                                                                             | 6              |  |
| answered question                                                           | 6              |  |
| skipped question                                                            | 0              |  |

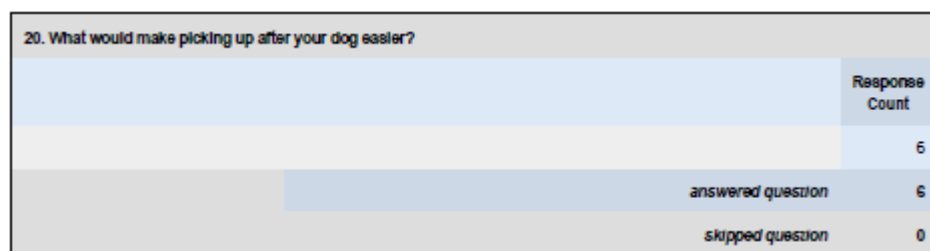
1. Lazy
2. Laziness. People are too busy talking on their cell phones while walking their dogs.
3. Lack of understanding/education of what pet waste does to the environment Forgot a bag (although readily accessible around) or not a garbage nearby so have to carry (opportunities here) Lack of reminders to pick up waste
4. Laziness
5. 1. Think since they have a small dog, it isn't necessary because the waste is small, 2. Girls-think it is gross, 3. Lazy, 4. Selfish, 5. Lack of intelligence
6. They're Lazy They "don't have a bag" They don't realize the impact of dog waste and our environment (getting into the water systems etc) or the impact of health issues (ex. parvo)

| 15. Which best represents you?                                        |                  |                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                                                       | Response Percent | Response Count |
| I always pick up my pet's waste and dispose of it in the toilet/trash | 83.3%            | 5              |
| The waste helps fertilize the grass                                   | 0.0%             | 0              |
| I pick up my pet's waste and dispose of it down the storm drain       | 0.0%             | 0              |
| I am sure someone else will be cleaning the area                      | 16.7%            | 1              |
| The pet waste will just wash away                                     | 0.0%             | 0              |
| answered question                                                     |                  | 6              |
| skipped question                                                      |                  | 0              |

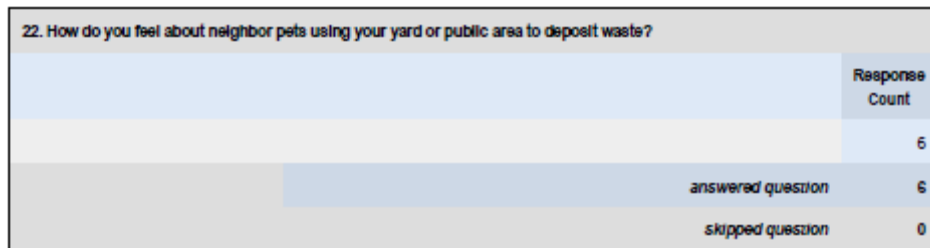
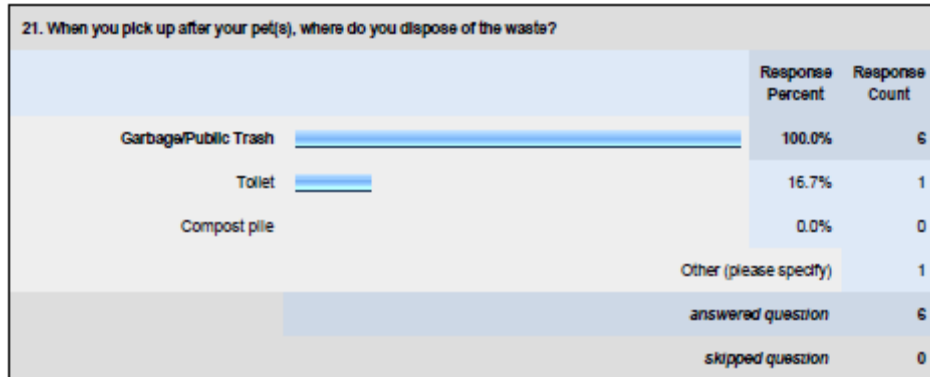
| 16. How often do you pick up after your dog? |                  |                |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                                              | Response Percent | Response Count |
| Always                                       | 83.3%            | 5              |
| Sometimes                                    | 16.7%            | 1              |
| Never                                        | 0.0%             | 0              |
| Other (please specify)                       |                  | 0              |
| answered question                            |                  | 6              |
| skipped question                             |                  | 0              |



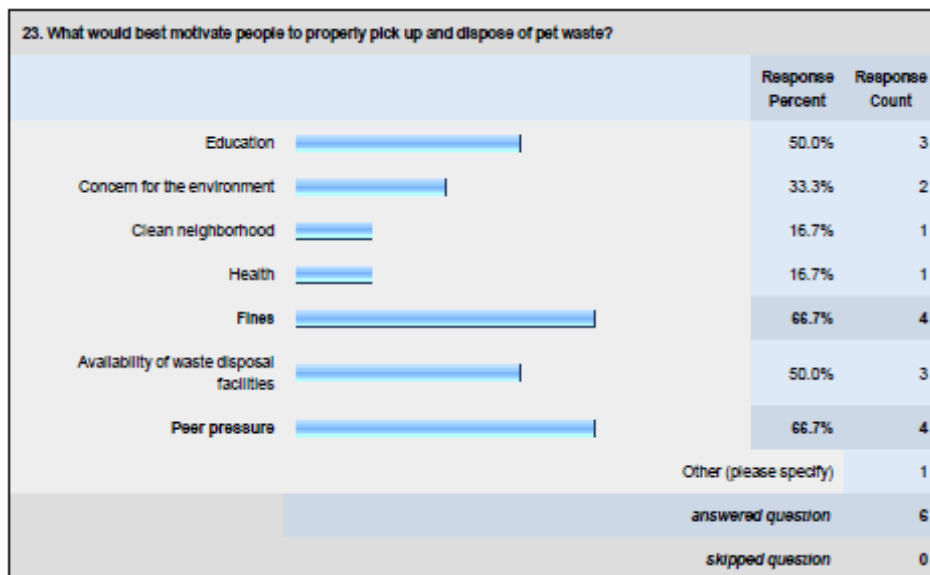
1. Nothing
2. Nothing
3. None
4. Finding a plastic bag
5. N/A
6. There is none-it's my job as his "parent"

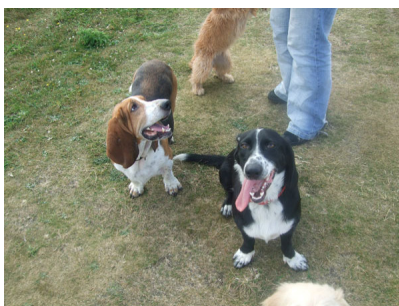
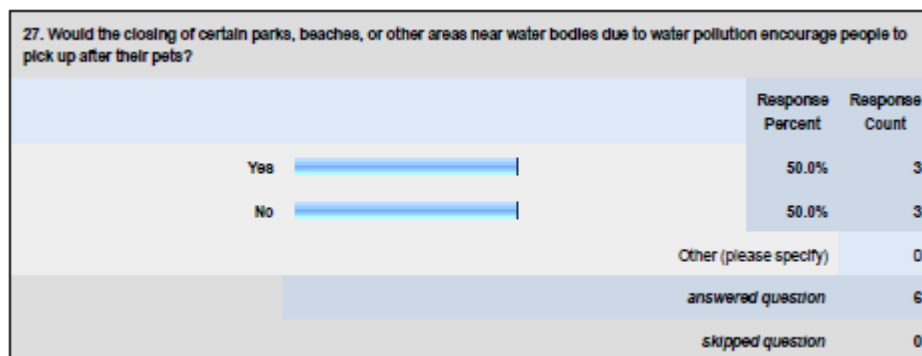
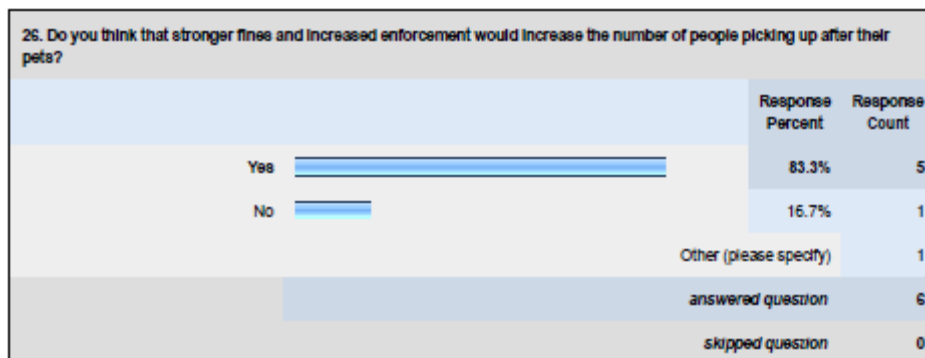
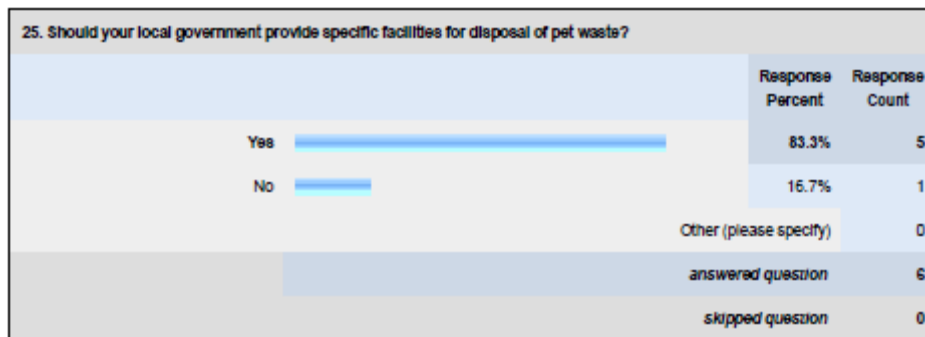


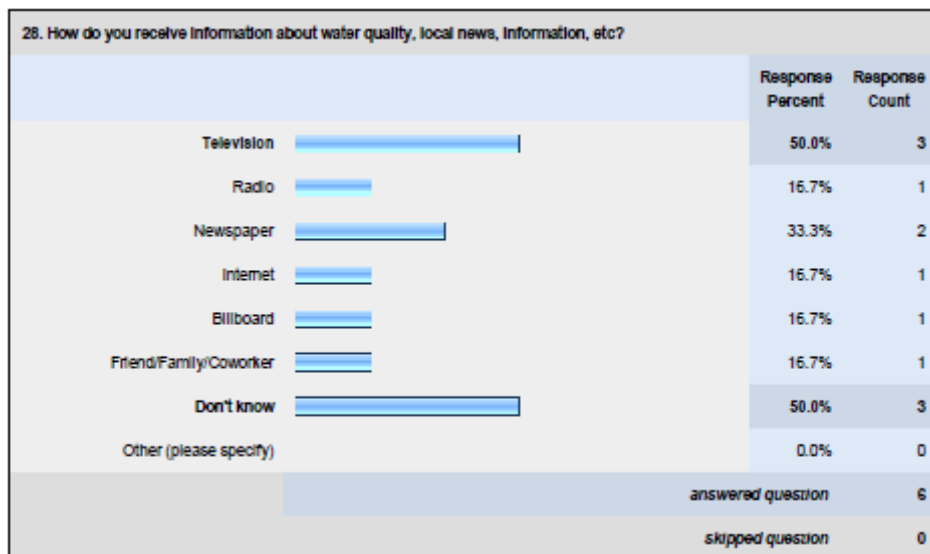
1. If someone else would do it
2. More receptacles, rather than carrying it home to throw away.
3. More garbage disposals and bag options
4. If someone gave me bags
5. N/A
6. More waste stations in public areas....I bring my own bags, but not everyone does.



1. Not good
2. Tired of stepping in it
3. Invasion of my privacy and personal health
4. Not cool
5. All right
6. If they pick it up, it's ok. If they don't, I say something to them







## Recommendations

Pet waste is a subject that tends not to interest people until you get them into a discussion. As people realize the impact of pet waste in their community, then their interest tends to increase. GPI-SE staff spent a great deal of time receiving input from residents. The discussions proved to be lively, well thought out, and serious in nature.

In focus group discussions, the issue of pet waste turned from an aesthetic problem to a pollution problem. The public had numerous suggestions and ideas to help reduce the pollution impacts. The suggestions from participants were valuable in developing recommendations for a pet waste education program.



Based on the comprehensive research, GPI-SE staff has developed a number of recommendations for an effective education program. The recommendations include both educational efforts and some facility/equipment availability.

### Cooperative Education Program

Develop a consistent, countywide education program that incorporates partners such as the municipal governments, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, and Keep Hillsborough County Beautiful. The inclusion of all parties is important for delivering a consistent program that avoids competing messages. The effort should include the following components:

#### *Collateral piece*

A collateral piece that can be economically reproduced and provides basic information on watersheds, impacts of pet waste on the environment, and what individuals can do to reduce the pollution from pet waste. The collateral piece should be developed with support and input of all parties. Existing materials could be updated and adjusted for this purpose. The material should include why pet waste causes pollution, its impact to water bodies, and how to properly pick up and dispose of the pet waste. Information could also be provided on types of bags, where to get bags, availability of disposal bins, and local contact information.

*Slide presentation*

A slide presentation should be developed to present information about watersheds, pet waste, and actions that the public can take to reduce pollution. The presentation can be used by all parties in taking the message to community groups, schools, and other organizations. The presentation should discuss the impacts of pet waste on water bodies, proper collection and disposal methods, and where to get help.

*Reminders*

A common response from focus group participants and survey takers when asked what prevented them from picking up after their pet was forgetting to bring a bag. Based on these responses, it is imperative to identify an item that will provide a specific reminder to “take a bag.” The reminder could be a tag for the leash, a bag dispenser to attach to the leash, or some other item that becomes part of the dog walking process.

*TV message for government channel*

Develop a video message to be utilized by government TV channels. There may also be an opportunity to have it aired for free on other channels. Television continues to be a primary source of information for the public. The message could be produced by the County or some external funding may be found for production externally.

*Pet waste section for web site*

Add a specific pet waste information section to the existing County web site. Content of the collateral piece, the speaking presentation, and a link to the web survey could be included. Links to other external web sites can be added.

*Common area signage*

The County could offer to provide standard signage for local communities reminding people to pick up after their pets. The signs could be placed in parks, common areas, utility right-of-ways, and other public areas. The signs should be consistent and promote the pet waste section of the County web site for more information.

*Speaker program/  
Speaker's bureau  
outreach*

The focus group sessions demonstrated that the sharing of information is important to encourage the public to think about their actions. Getting out and speaking to groups can offer an opportunity to not only provide good information but to also interact with the audience. This process allows the exchange of ideas and suggestions. Feedback from these interactions can help further fine-tune outreach efforts and be more effective in helping the public make behavior changes. The program can be implemented through the use of professional presenters, County/organization staff, and other volunteers.



*Givaways – bag  
dispenser/biodegradable  
bags*

A number of existing programs taking place in communities include some sort of giveaway as part of the education effort. These items varied from bag dispensers, bag containers, magnets, bookmarks, door hangers, and such. Useful items like bag dispensers and biodegradable bags help the public accomplish the goal.

*Continue web-based survey for program feedback purposes*

A web-based public opinion survey was developed as part of the research effort to collect input from the public. GPI-SE staff recommends the continuation of the survey with some possible adjustments. This will provide an opportunity to receive continuing feedback and other information. Links to the survey can be expanded to other web sites. Information should be shared with program partners.

*Web Listserv/  
Social networks*

The web serves as a major source of information for people today. The technology continues to offer additional ways of communication. Such web-based activities as broadcast emails and listservs continue to be utilized for distribution of information; new social networks have developed through web sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, and others. GPI-SE staff recommends the establishment of pet waste forums on these web sites.

In addition to an education program, the research revealed the need for other outreach efforts. GPI-SE staff identified pet-related entities in the community that could help in the educational efforts. Some of these entities are already involved with pets and pet waste issues. They are homeowner associations, veterinarians, pet supply stores, and dog clubs/groups. This also includes dog trainers.

## Outreach Efforts

*Homeowner associations/  
Civic associations*

Many pet waste focus group participants live in communities with homeowner associations. These organizations operate like local governments for these communities. They supply services and make rules. Most homeowner associations have deed restrictions. Dog walking rules are part of many of these documents. It was clear from focus group participants that homeowner associations need to do a better job of enforcement. There were a couple of homeowner association representatives in the focus groups. They responded that rules are enforced and some have actually placed disposal bins and signage in their communities. They also made some suggestions how the County could help them. The homeowner groups would be interested in the County using its purchasing power to buy pet waste stations, disposal bins, and bags and then resell them to the homeowner associations at cost. For those associations that would like to install the equipment and/or distribute the bags, this would save them some money. However, some association representatives said that even with disposal bins, the cost of maintaining the bins could be a problem. In many communities, there are only volunteers working with the associations and it would be difficult for volunteers to maintain a regular schedule of emptying the disposal bins and then disposing of the collected pet waste. So not all homeowner associations can participate in pet waste collection but it may be worthwhile to take advantage of those that would be willing to place disposal bins and maintain them. GPI-SE staff recommend that the County purchase some pet waste stations or disposal bins and work a few homeowner associations to see if this effort is successful. If results are good, then the program could be expanded.





### *Veterinarians*

Veterinarian offices usually are helpful with providing information about pet issues and external activities such as training and dog walking companies. These facilities could provide an opportunity to distribute the collateral material. A simple flier could also be developed to post in these offices. In some cases, there may need to be an effort to educate veterinarians and their staff on pet waste environmental issues. Some form of feedback could be collected from these facilities.

### *Pet Supply Stores*

There are many pet supply stores in Hillsborough County. Many offer community bulletin boards. In addition, many offer classes and other services to their customers. The County could work with these stores to distribute information about pet waste. Information could also be distributed through the classes.

### *Dog clubs/groups*

Many focus group participants felt that dog walking was a social experience. They get to meet their neighbors and check out what is happening in the community. In some areas, clubs have formed for the purpose of socializing with dog owners. In addition, there are the traditional dog clubs that highlight a specific breed of dog or a specific dog-related activity. The groups offer an opportunity to provide pet waste education and other information on environmental protection. GPI-SE staff recommends the development of an outreach effort to work with these formal and informal organizations.

## **Facility/Equipment needs**

There were some infrastructure needs identified by focus group and survey participants. They felt that the easier you could make the task of picking up after your pet, the more compliance you would receive. Among items identified by the participants were the availability of bags, disposal bins, and more dog walking areas. Participants were looking to the County to provide these items. One interesting proposal suggested was to increase the dog license fee by two or three dollars to pay for the education program and equipment. The response from all in each group was favorable for such an increase.

### *Disposal Bags*

Remember the Bags! Where are the bags! These exclamations were prevalent in feedback from both focus group and survey participants. Also important was the type of bag available. The availability of bags appears to play a major role in getting pet waste picked up. While procurement of bags may not represent a major cost, the distribution of the bags and restocking can require a major manpower effort. In the current economic climate, the use of staff for this purpose will be extremely limited. Volunteers can certainly help with distribution but they are not always reliable.

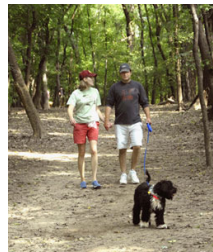


### *Disposal Bins*

One of the barriers identified to picking up after pets was the embarrassment or awkwardness of carrying the bag back home. It was apparent that more disposal bins are needed. Two of the focus group sessions included officers in homeowners associations. One of the associations provides bins in some common areas for disposal. However, the representative of another homeowners group said that they have looked at putting bins out but they were put off by the cost and maintenance issues. It was pointed out that while the cost of the bins initially were not bad, questions were asked as to who would maintain the bins, collect the waste, and dispose of it on a frequent schedule. If you are distributing free bags, then there is the cost of the bags and dispensers plus restocking dispensers. And they were also concerned about vandalism and theft. It was suggested that the County purchase a large number of bins at large order discount and then resell them to homeowner associations at cost. Based on these comments, GPI-SE staff recommends that the County look into the concept of purchasing bins, dispensers, and bags at wholesale costs and then offering them to homeowner associations at cost. Some of these bins could also be used by the County Parks and Recreation Department.



### *Designated dog walking areas*



In both the focus groups and survey, there were many comments about the use of common areas for dog walking. These areas tend to be the depository of lots of pet waste. In some communities, there are numerous locations including front entrances, landscape areas, utility right-of-ways, playgrounds, and other property that belongs to the community in general. GPI-SE staff suggests that the County work with homeowner groups to develop designated dog walking areas in the community, similar to dog parks opening at County facilities, where there could be bag dispensers and collection bins. This would encourage people to seek a place where they are welcomed and the facilities are available. It would also reduce the efforts that homeowner associations would need since the collection facilities would be in one or two areas versus scattered throughout the community. This concept also relates to the social nature of dog walking by providing a gathering space. We do not think that this would eliminate all waste deposited in other areas as there will always be individuals that do not follow the rules or share the concern of neighbors, however, it could produce a significant reduction in scattered pet waste.

### *Pet license fee/ fines increase*

GPI-SE staff recommends the County investigate the possibility of increasing pet license fees. This interesting suggestion was proposed by several of the participants in the focus groups. A two dollar increase in tag fees could generate some funding for pet waste education efforts. This small increase would not be a burden on most pet owners. Another source of additional funding could come from a small increase in fines. These increases would support programs that impact directly on those paying the fee.

## Conclusion

These recommendations can be implemented as a group or individually as time and funding is available. GPI-SE staff strongly encourage partnering with other local governments and agencies in a comprehensive education program. Through coordination, a common message can be delivered across the Tampa Bay region. Such entities as the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, Keep Hillsborough County Beautiful, and the cities of Tampa, Temple Terrace, and Plant City should be included in the education program.



A pilot education program targeting a specific area of the County could provide the opportunity to test the components of the outreach efforts. Follow-up surveys and collection of data from disposal facilities can help in determining the effectiveness of the program. Any changes that may be needed in the program can be made prior to taking the education program Countywide.

GPI-SE staff also recommends the continuation of the web survey as a vehicle to receive input from the public. This feedback mechanism provides an opportunity to stay in touch with residents and to track progress in behavior changes that take place.

One additional issue continues to generate questions from the public but the answers are limited at this time. The issue is how to properly dispose of collected pet waste. This is a problem facing not only Hillsborough County but the world. Current disposal options all have problems.

Use of toilets can create additional water use which does not support water conservation efforts. Even after the waste is deposited in the toilet, there is the problem of the leftover bag and residue left on the bag's surface. This also represents part of the "ick" factor respondents reacted to.

Disposing of the waste bags also has its problems. Use of grocery bags result in long-lasting plastic in landfills. Biodegradable bags have a shorter life. However, there is still the massive collection of pet waste in landfills. While modern landfills offer protection to groundwater, leakage and runoff could have an impact on water supplies. To be fair to dog owners, cat litter and cat waste also contribute to the landfill loadings.

Composting of pet waste has also had limited results because the process is difficult and requires specific conditions to be successful. This is a much more difficult effort than composting food waste. While some composting kits are available commercially, its appeal is limited.

Hillsborough County should join others in encouraging additional scientific research into these disposal issues. Incineration of pet waste may be an answer but not all waste collectors have access to incinerators and there may be other environmental and cost considerations resulting from the process. Disposing of pet waste is still a work in progress.