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### **RSEP and LCC Release Stormwater Survey Data**

*South Burlington, VT*—Findings released today indicate that residents do not have a clear idea of where stormwater goes and are generally unaware of the effect of their daily actions on sediment and contaminant levels in runoff and our waterways. The Regional Stormwater Education Program (RSEP) and the Lake Champlain Committee (LCC) released the results of a survey of 400 Chittenden County residents' knowledge and awareness of stormwater-related issues.

“Sediment is the leading cause of water quality problems in urban streams. Sources of sediment include runoff from impervious surfaces and lawns,” said Mike Winslow, staff scientist for the LCC. “These survey results tell us that people aren't connecting their personal actions to problems in local waterways.”

Nearly 2 out of 3 survey respondents did not know that water from their outdoor lawn and garden runs directly into storm drains or creeks, rivers and Lake Champlain— untreated. In contrast, 81.8% understood that their kitchen/bath water was treated at either a waste treatment plant or through a septic system. Dirty stormwater can pose health hazards, kill fish and wildlife, cause beach closings, and lead to flooding.

“Household-generated polluted runoff is a significant contributor to the overall water pollution problem in the Lake Champlain region and Vermont. Household-generated pollutants, such as nutrients from garden fertilizers, pesticides and animal wastes— and behaviors such as washing cars on paved driveways or digging for home landscaping projects without banking or berming— are negatively affecting the areas' water quality,” said Bryan Osborne, vice-chair of the RSEP.

A clear majority (57.2%) of respondents wash their cars at home. Of those who wash their car at home more than once a month, 68.3% always wash their car on a paved surface. Over half of respondents believe (incorrectly) there is very little or no impact from hosing sand, gravel and other debris off driveways and into street gutters. A majority of respondents (55.8%) believe (incorrectly) there is little or no impact on water quality in this region from erosion from small home/garden construction projects. In contrast, 69.1% understand that roads and pavement for large-scale commercial and residential development has a significant stormwater-related effect.

Animal waste is a leading source of bacteria pollution in our waterways. Regardless of whether they walk their dog(s) or have their own yard, a significant number of dog owners (3 out of 10 people who walk their dog and 4 out of 10 people with a yard) do not deposit their pet's waste in the trash or toilet.

To increase public awareness about the causes of and solutions to polluted runoff, the RSEP will implement an educational campaign to spread the word about simple steps residents can take to minimize the impact of their actions on stormwater contamination. This campaign will include basic information about runoff, focusing on the topics and behaviors identified in the survey as least understood. By increasing residents' awareness of the impact of their everyday actions on the stormwater system, specifically home/lawn work, home construction and landscaping

projects, car washing, and other activities on paved driveways, and appropriate pet waste disposal, the RSEP hopes to improve water quality in local waterways and Lake Champlain.

The RSEP is a collaborative effort between eight Chittenden County towns, (Burlington, South Burlington, Colchester, Essex, Essex Junction, Winooski, Shelburne, and Williston), the Burlington International Airport, Vermont Agency of Transportation, and the University of Vermont. The LCC is a non-profit organization focused on the health of Lake Champlain and its watershed.

For more information about the RSEP and its educational program contact Bryan Osborne, Colchester's Director of Public Works at (802) 654-0716. For more information about the stormwater survey results or water quality, contact Mike Winslow from the LCC at 658-1461.

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