

**HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL  
LITTER PREVENTION & RECYCLING  
EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

**Fiscal Year 2009  
July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009**



# HR CLEAN

## HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL LITTER PREVENTION & RECYCLING EDUCATION INITIATIVES

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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HR CLEAN is the recycling and litter prevention education program of Hampton Roads, and is a partnership through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC). It is a regional coalition of local and regional clean community, recycling, and environmental education coordinators that promotes litter prevention, recycling, community beautification, and general environmental awareness through educational projects designed to reach all sectors of the Hampton Roads region.

HR CLEAN member localities continue to enhance and expand the level of awareness among Hampton Roads residents about the need to reduce waste, prevent litter, and participate in local beautification and recycling programs. Radio and local television advertisements are the main media sources. Secondary sources are local publications and web advertisements on the media station websites. Using a mix of targeted television, radio, and print advertising, as well as updated website materials, HR CLEAN continues to provide the region with quality information.

The 2009 Regional Conference was held February 27, 2009, in Smithfield. The topic was “Are Plastic Bags Sacking the Environment?” The impacts of plastic bag litter and ways to prevent it were discussed. The event drew over 80 participants and regional media coverage, including articles in *The Virginian-Pilot*, the *Daily Press*, and the *Smithfield Times*. The event was sponsored by Republic Services, Inc. and Toter, Inc.

HR CLEAN continues to be a regional partner in HR Green, the umbrella committee for all four environmental education committees, including Fat Free Drains (HR FOG), HR STORM, and HR WET (Hampton Roads Water Efficiency Team). The HR FOG regional committee works to prevent sanitary sewer overflows and backups caused by fats, oils, and grease improperly entering the sanitary sewer system through drains and grease traps. HR STORM promotes stormwater management and pollution prevention and HR WET promotes water conservation. The four committees work together to expand message reach through economies of scale. They also promote the HR Green Mini-Grant program.

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### FAST POINTS

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- ❖ **HR CLEAN’s regional conference attracted over 80 attendees and regional media coverage.**
- ❖ **HR Green annual meeting generated many ideas and resulted in a group purchase of reusable grocery bags.**

- ❖ HR CLEAN attracts thousands of visits using free social networking tools under the umbrella of HR Green to spread HR CLEAN’s messages to more individuals in Hampton Roads. The David Wright videos were popular in the HRGreenVA YouTube video lineup.
- ❖ The David Wright Clean Community Tips were aired on WGNT and WVEC. HR CLEAN tips also were displayed on WGNT.com and WVEC.com.
- ❖ The HR CLEAN Recycling Guide was downloaded 7,700 times from [www.hrclean.org](http://www.hrclean.org).
- ❖ HR CLEAN distributed \$1,500 in Mini-Grants.

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#### NETWORKING

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HR CLEAN members value the networking opportunities that the monthly HR CLEAN meetings provide. Members learn creative ideas from other members and get input on ways to address issues in their own localities. They also share resources and contacts to broaden their knowledge, effectiveness, and reach. Below are several examples from committee members:

“Being a part of a coalition like HR Clean has made the first five months of my job painless. I am the new Litter Control Coordinator for the City of Suffolk. When I arrived in March, my work was cut out for me. The city was in the midst of a plastic bag recycling drive in ten schools, civic leagues desired to adopt portions of road to clean and more residents needed to know about the vast services the Suffolk Clean Community Commission and Litter Control Office offer. My fellow HR Cleaners provided the networking and resource avenue I needed to succeed in my new position.” *Hattie Lester, Litter Control Coordinator, City of Suffolk*

“I have found one of the most challenging aspects of my job as a Recycling/Clean Community Coordinator is keeping our programs fresh and up to date with the current economic and social situation in Hampton Roads. Through my associations with other members of HR Clean, I regularly gain new ideas, feedback on our programs, and learn about conditions affecting programs in other communities. HR Clean has provided a supportive environment that has helped me develop professionally.” *John Deuel, Executive Director, Keep Norfolk Beautiful*

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#### MEDIA

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The HRPDC, on behalf of HR CLEAN, continues to contract WVEC, WGNT, and Metro Traffic. Channel-13 will air the HR CLEAN spots during peak viewing times of shows such as The View,

Oprah and Jeopardy. A series of public service announcements that were produced by WVEC with the help of New York Met's third baseman, David Wright, in the winter of 2006 continue to air.

**FY2009 Media Breakdown:**

TV and Radio Spots				Web Banner Ads		
MEDIA	ADS	REACH	FREQUENCY	IMPRESSIONS	CLICK - THRUS	CTR (Click-Thru Rate)
MetroTraffic	412	95.5%	3.5			
WGNT – CW <i>African-American</i>	40	33.9% 76.3%	3.2 3.2	5,052	5	.10%
WVEC – 13	110	59%	2.93	160,063	120	.07%
Project Green				300,611	164	.05%

The media campaign was created to reflect the demographics of Hampton Roads. According to the Norfolk DMA, thirty percent of households are African-American. Thirty percent of WGNT and WVEC viewers are African-American. WVEC was unable to provide reach and frequency information based on demographic.

**Web**

The average click-thru rate (CTR) for an online ad is .02 - .04%. CTR measures the percentage of viewers who click on an ad. After revising the HR CLEAN banner ad to include tips and a direct call to action, the banner ad achieved a .07% CTR. This is well-above average and much improved from our previous results of about .02%. These changes were carried over to the WGNT online campaign which achieved a CTR of .10%. The effort to improve the online campaign was successful and well-worth the time and effort required.

WVEC Banner Ad – The four images appear one at a time.



Project Green Rotating Ad – The five images appear one at a time and read from left to right.



WVEC has made a strong commitment to green initiatives. They created the Project Green section of [WVEC.com](http://WVEC.com) to promote green living. HR Green was given a small feature section on this page called the "HR Green Tip of the Month." The four committees take turns featuring a tip.

The HR CLEAN website is enhanced and updated frequently with information received from members and gathered by staff. From the website, users are able to apply for a HR Green Mini-Grant, email local representatives, and learn about the 3Rs: reduce, reuse, and recycle. Seasonal information and local recycling facilities are also found on the site. The following information was gathered for Fiscal Year 2009:

**WEBTRENDS FOR JULY 1 – JUNE 30**

- ❖ Visits – 42,889
- ❖ Average Visits Per Day – 118
- ❖ Direct Traffic – 70%
- ❖ Visitors from USA – 73%

**Most frequently viewed pages:**

1. [HR CLEAN Homepage](#)
2. [Virginia Statewide Litter Program](#)
3. [Recycling Drop-Off Center Locations](#)
4. [Mulch Mowing Information](#)
5. [What's New](#)

**Most frequently downloaded pages:**

1. [Recycling Directory](#) (7,713)
2. [We All Live on the Water NIE](#) (2,497)
3. [HR CLEAN Reports](#) (1,156)
4. [Activity Pages from the Family Activity Book](#) (917)
5. [Virginia Aquarium Stranding Response Presentation](#) (745)



The **number of visits** represents the number of times the site was visited by individual users. If an individual visited six times in the fiscal year, and clicked on ten pages each time, the number of visits counted would be six. Visits by non-humans (spiders, web crawlers, bots, etc.) were removed from the total number of visits.



The **direct traffic** represents traffic to the website in which the visitor typed the domain name directly into their browser, or the visitor bookmarked the site. Web traffic has decreased in the last couple of years, even with the new traffic being drawn in through social media sites. Web traffic also appears to be less influenced by media campaigns than in years past. The committee will redesign the website in FY2010 after the HR Green campaign is created. The website will be undergoing a

major transformation to improve usability, modernize the look, and include social media components.

The Committee has begun utilizing Web 2.0 social media sites like YouTube and Twitter to draw more traffic to the site. Staff added META tags to the site code to improve search engine optimization and help more users find the HR CLEAN site. A new page listing the Earth Day activities of participating communities increased traffic by 430 visits. The Earth Day page was promoted through Twitter. The effectiveness of social networking activities will be discussed in the next section.

### **Earth Day Activities Page – 430 Visits**

**Search Engine Optimization** – Spider traffic increased by 200% and additional search engines began indexing HR CLEAN pages. Backlinks also increased with additional sites adding HR CLEAN pages. A sampling of these sites includes [Ask Jeeves](#), [Clusty](#), and [Orange](#).

### **Page Rank Increases:**

Alexa: 50% increase in traffic rank from 16, 188, 241 to 8,034,923. On Alexa, the best rank is #1.

Google: Page rank moved from a consistent 5 to fluctuating between 5 and 4. On Google, the best rank is #1.

The limited SEO techniques that were employed were helpful in making hrcclean.org more findable on the web. With continued META tag additions and SEO improvements, hrcclean.org should draw more traffic through search engines.

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## **Social Networking**

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In July 2008, HR CLEAN began using social networking tools to reach a wider range of Hampton Roads residents year-round. Ad campaigns on television and the radio are effective, but expensive. To supplement the existing media campaign, and to provide more content to web users, the HR Green committees began posting items to sites such as YouTube, Digg, Twitter, and Delicious.

### **Delicious**

The site allows HR Green to bookmark articles and resources on green and environmental topics important to Hampton Roads. The bookmarks can be shared with other Delicious users. Bookmarks are labeled by topic for easy sorting.

### **Digg/Reddit**

News articles and videos on green and environmental topics important to Hampton Roads are “dugg” or “tagged” using the site. The articles are shared with those in HR Green’s network and made available to others.

### **YouTube**

HR CLEAN posted video to YouTube at [www.YouTube.com/HRGreenVA](http://www.YouTube.com/HRGreenVA) and [www.YouTube.com/HRPDC](http://www.YouTube.com/HRPDC). HR CLEAN’s David Wright public service announcements draw traffic from YouTube searches, embedded video players on other sites, and other sources. From July










1, 2009 to June 30, 2009, HR CLEAN videos on YouTube were viewed 2471 times. Traffic comes first from users in Virginia, followed by New Yorkers. YouTube is a free service that allows the committee to provide a visual message to those in Hampton Roads, year-round.



### Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging site that allows users to post short messages to followers. Its use has exploded among the general population and moved beyond “early adopters.” Messages can be sent or received using the internet, the computer desktop, or a cell phone. Individual users choose accounts to “follow”, so those receiving the “tweets” are interested in the message content. HR Green set up an account at [www.twitter.com/HRGreen](http://www.twitter.com/HRGreen) or [@HRGreen](https://twitter.com/HRGreen). Regular messages updating followers about programs, tips, events, and website content are distributed to users. Twitter users regularly follow links in Twitter posts directly to [www.hrclean.org](http://www.hrclean.org) and other HRPDC sites. Since August 2008, [@HRGreen](https://twitter.com/HRGreen) gained 640 followers. Other local government Twitter accounts also follow [@HRGreen](https://twitter.com/HRGreen), including: [@CVB](https://twitter.com/CVB) (City of Virginia Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau) and [@NorfolkKNB](https://twitter.com/NorfolkKNB) (Keep Norfolk Beautiful). Twitter users have contacted [@HRGreen](https://twitter.com/HRGreen) through the medium to find information on recycling locations and mini-grant programs.

The conversation below was read by many and directed over 70 click-thrus to the HR CLEAN site:

	<a href="https://twitter.com/bloominglater">@bloominglater</a> : <a href="https://twitter.com/HRGreen">@HRGreen</a> i'd love to see a seminar on "how to recycle." hubby's from canada and appalled, but i don't even know where to go for cans, etc.
	<a href="https://twitter.com/HRGreen">@HRGreen</a> : <a href="https://twitter.com/bloominglater">@bloominglater</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/NorfolkKNB">@NorfolkKNB</a> Recycling seminar is great idea. Recycling resources: <a href="http://twurl.nl/3t1djs">http://twurl.nl/3t1djs</a> (expand ----) and <a href="http://twurl.nl/ua7lqn">http://twurl.nl/ua7lqn</a> (expand ----)
	<a href="https://twitter.com/HRGreen">@HRGreen</a> : <a href="https://twitter.com/bloominglater">@bloominglater</a> A list of what your locality recycles is available here. <a href="http://twurl.nl/zf34io">http://twurl.nl/zf34io</a> (expand ----)
	<a href="https://twitter.com/HRGreen">@HRGreen</a> : <a href="https://twitter.com/bloominglater">@bloominglater</a> And here is a list of drop-off recycling locations by Hampton Roads community. <a href="http://twurl.nl/npt4dy">http://twurl.nl/npt4dy</a> (expand ----)
	<a href="https://twitter.com/HRGreen">@HRGreen</a> : <a href="https://twitter.com/bloominglater">@bloominglater</a> For items your locality does not recycle, check the HR CLEAN recycling directory. <a href="http://twurl.nl/aiim62">http://twurl.nl/aiim62</a> (expand ----)
	<a href="https://twitter.com/bloominglater">@bloominglater</a> : <a href="https://twitter.com/HRGreen">@HRGreen</a> fantastic! does one of those links tell me how to recycle paint? i haven't checked yet. thanks for the GREAT resources!
	<a href="https://twitter.com/HRGreen">@HRGreen</a> : <a href="https://twitter.com/bloominglater">@bloominglater</a> Paint is collected at household hazardous waste (HHW) or household chemical collection (HCC). <a href="http://twurl.nl/4d7coe">http://twurl.nl/4d7coe</a> (expand ----)

Through Twitter, [@HRGreen](https://twitter.com/HRGreen) has sent out 254 trackable messages resulting in 4910 click-thrus from Twitter to a site link provided. In the last four months, each post has received an average of 25 click-thrus, directly increasing site traffic to the HR Green websites and the YouTube account. Of those, 1800 click-thrus went to HR CLEAN content, the equivalent of 15 days of site visits. In the past six months, each post received an average of 22 click-throughs directly increasing site traffic to the HR

Green websites. A good click-through rate is 2 to 3%. From January 2009 to June 2009, the average @HRGreen CTR was 6.1%

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### Topical Campaigns

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- **Plastic Bags** – Several members of HR CLEAN participate on the Plastic Bag Advisory Council which was formed because of the negative impact of littered plastic bags on crops and farmers. HR CLEAN maintained ties with the Advisory Council while planning their own plastic bag regional conference. The effort was led by Lorna Frazier-Lindsey (Gloucester), Mayi Henriquez (Newport News), Tammy Rojek (Williamsburg), and Ralph Anderson (Isle of Wight). The conference topic was “Are Plastic Bags Sacking the Environment?” The event was held at the Smithfield Center on February 27, 2009 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Over 80 individuals attended the event which was covered by the local media. Articles appeared in the *Daily Press*, the *Smithfield Times*, and *The Virginian-Pilot*. Conference presentations and articles were posted to [www.hrclean.org](http://www.hrclean.org). The event was sponsored by Republic Services, Inc. and Toter, Inc.
- **Promotional Materials** – The committee distributed 20% more promotional items in FY 2009 than in FY 2008. HR CLEAN has not reordered items since 2006 due to budgeting priorities. However, the committee is proactively using remaining items and items that were purchased through HR Green. This year the committee focused on plastic bag litter and recycling. The committee purchased reusable grocery bags as a group purchase through HR Green. The reusable bag reinforces the message to bring your own bag to the store while promoting HR CLEAN and the other committees of HR Green. The group buy resulted in extremely low pricing. The bags will be delivered early FY10. Below is a list of items distributed in FY09 and in the previous fiscal year. Additional HR CLEAN promotional items distributed through the HR WET trailer are not included.

<b>HR CLEAN PROMOTIONAL GIVEAWAYS</b>		
<b>ITEM</b>	<b>FY 08</b>	<b>FY 09</b>
Bookmark	75	0
Family Activity Book	6653	*6671
Hurricane Guides	0	580
Litter Fact Sheet	370	435
Mini-Grant Bucks	500	430
<i>We All Live on the Water</i> (NIE)	0	493
This Kid Fights Litter Sticker	100	600
<b>Total</b>	<b>7698</b>	<b>9209</b>
*An additional 312 Family Activity Booklets were distributed through the HR WET Trailer in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of FY09.		

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## HR GREEN PARTNERSHIPS

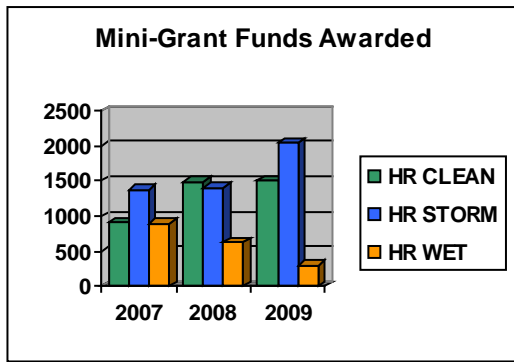
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HR CLEAN continues to be an active partner with Fat Free Drains (HR FOG), HR STORM and HR WET, the HRPDC's other three other environmental education committees. Combined, these four committees form HR Green. By combining messages, the committees are able to save resources by pooling funding for a larger media impact.

**Newspapers in Education (NIE)** – While the copies of the We All Live on the Water NIE piece have all been distributed, the publication remains popular. HRPDC staff receives several requests each month for the piece and over 5,000 copies were downloaded from HR Green websites. The piece will be reprinted and distributed to fourth grade students in fall 2009.

**Mini-Grants** – HR Green also offers the region a joint mini-grant program. Schools and youth groups are eligible to receive up to \$500 toward environmental projects that meet the goals of HR CLEAN, Fat Free Drains, HR STORM and HR WET. (HR CLEAN offers up to \$250 per project.)

In the FY09, HR Green awarded \$3,841 to 13 different youth groups working on projects related to the missions and goals of the committees. Through participation in the HR Green Mini-Grant program, 2,859 Hampton Roads youth were reached. HR CLEAN awarded the \$1,500 budget to six different projects.



A Litter Cops project was implemented at Emily Spong and Mt. Hermon Preschools. The children created their own "litter cops" badges and took turns policing the school for "litterbugs." The children also colored worksheets on litter and brought littering literature home to their parents. The Salter's Creek Watershed project Booker T. Washington Middle School in Newport News had middle school students track litter on satellite photos from the school through Hampton Roads. The students also cleaned the school grounds every week. Ghent School in Norfolk focused on environmental stewardship and included litter cleanups, stormwater management, and butterfly gardens in their project. The Willard Elementary Model School in Norfolk planted a flower garden. Their efforts started by germinating the seeds in the classrooms. Norfolk Highlands Elementary School in Norfolk planted a pumpkin patch by drying seeds then germinating them in the spring. The full-grown pumpkins will be used the following fall in school projects. The students at Larchmont Elementary in Norfolk began recycling. The school's recycling club collected the materials each week.

**Mini-Grant Email** – The HR Green committees wished to increase applications to the mini-grant program. The committees decided to create an e-newsletter style promotional piece. The piece included information on the Mini-Grant program, descriptions of past projects, and links to the application. HRPDC staff e-mailed the document to 113 contacts, including HR Green members. The HR Green members also forwarded the email to their contacts. Since the email was distributed, applications have increased. Since the program's inception in 2001, approximately five applications were submitted in the month of July. In July 2009, five applications were submitted.

**HR Green Annual Meeting** – Members from all four committees met for an all-day meeting to discuss areas of message crossover and brainstorm ways to work together to improve message reach. The committees decided to purchase reusable bags with the HR Green logo and web address on one side and the four committee logos on the reverse side. The group purchase will reduce the cost of a reusable bag order for all the committees individually. The reusable bag is particularly relevant to HR CLEAN because of its involvement in the Plastic Bag Advisory Council, school plastic bag recycling projects, and the organization of the plastic bag conference.

**Media** – During the past year, momentum has increased to dovetail the committees’ messages under the umbrella of HR Green. The work of several of the committees are tied to federal and/or state programmatic and regulatory initiatives, making milestones and measures of success an issue of increased importance. Examples of these requirements include the Regional Special Order by Consent with the Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (VPDES) Permits, HB 1177 (372 Acts of Assembly 2004), enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 2004, water supply planning requirements as well as various existing and drafted laws on littering and recycling.

To address these concerns and to further develop the transition to the HR Green brand, the committees of HR Green decided to seek outside media and advertising assistance in creating a joint communication plan. The request for proposal will be brought before the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission Board members in September 2009.

**Member Representation** – Members of HR CLEAN also represent the region on various national, state and local committees such as:

- The National Recycling Coalition (NRC)
- North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE)
- Keep America Beautiful (KAB) and Keep Virginia Beautiful
- The Virginia Recycling Association (VRA)
- The Virginia Council for Litter Prevention and Recycling
- The Litter Control and Recycling Fund Advisory Board
- Hampton Roads Alliance for Environmental Education (HRAEE)
- Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA)
- American Public Works Association (APWA)

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## CONCLUSION

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HR CLEAN member localities continue to enhance and expand the level of awareness among Hampton Roads residents about the need to reduce waste, prevent litter, and participate in local beautification and recycling programs. Education and awareness of these environmental needs remains a goal of HR CLEAN. “Hampton Roads is Too Good to Waste” and HR CLEAN is committed to educating local citizens and visitors about the importance of keeping Hampton Roads beautiful.