

WATER AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE E-BULLETIN

Brought to you by Waterwise and Kathryn Rathouse Social Research, December 22, 2009

From everyone at Waterwise and Kathryn Rathouse, we wish you a very merry Christmas and a wonderful new year.

1. Down the drain: the use of sewers for food and drink waste disposal

An estimated 1.8 million tonnes of food and drink waste is let down drains each year in the UK, excluding a further 1.7 million tonnes of added water. Overall householders tended to feel that disposal of liquids, particularly drink, via the sink is not a problem though some felt that there might be alternatives. There was a belief in general, that it is better to dispose of liquids via the sewerage system than to put them in the household bin. WRAP have published these findings from their study in which householders recorded the quantities of food and drink that they were disposing of down the drain. Disposing of food and drink down the drain is estimated to cost consumers £2.7 billion annually.

The report can be found on WRAP's website at

http://www.wrap.org.uk/retail/case_studies_research/report_down_the.html.

What are you doing to encourage more responsible disposal of food and drink waste in domestic and non-domestic settings? Please let us know and we will summarise initiatives in the next e-bulletin. We really liked this seasonal suggestion last December from Thames Water

<http://www.thameswater.co.uk/cps/rde/xchg/corp/hs.xsl/8599.htm!>

2. Rivers on the Edge

WWF have made a film for their 'Rivers on the Edge' project with the help of TV presenter Charles Rangel Wilson. The film aims to make the link between the water we use in our homes and the natural world. It focuses on what is special about chalk streams and how water efficiency can play a big part in helping conserve them. The video as well as more info about the project can be found at

http://www.wwf.org.uk/what_we_do/safeguarding_the_natural_world/rivers_and_lakes/rivers_on_the_edge_film.cfm.

3. Local identity and the role of individual differences

Every summer the island of Elba faces a water shortage that can leave residents without potable water, sometimes for a whole week. This study on Elba looked at who was most (and least) likely to try to save water during such a shortage. The study found the highest levels of self-reported water conservation behaviour among pro social persons (who are concerned about collective interest above self interest) with high local identity (who feel part of a community). Conversely the lowest levels were found among pro self persons (who value self interest above collective interest) with low local identity (who do not feel strongly that they are part of a community). This probably isn't a huge surprise.

What do these findings mean for promoting water efficiency? The study's authors suggest that practitioners try to boost people's sense of community. We think the findings also give clues about who is most amenable to saving water during extreme shortages and therefore highlight where we might need to focus most effort i.e. on people who are **not** concerned about collective interests and don't feel strongly attached to their community.

The journal abstract may be found at

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119392179/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0>.

4. Public attitudes to environmental change: a selective review of theory and practice

The report's authors summarise a selection of academic and non-academic evidence relevant to public attitudes to environmental change in the UK. Unfortunately water is not included in the review but many

of the findings are nevertheless relevant, particularly that there is no simple relationship between attitudes, engagement and behaviour change – wider factors need to be addressed as well.

You can download the executive summary and the full report at <http://www.lwec.org.uk/news-archive/2009/30102009-report-published-public-attitudes-environmental-change>.

5. Diffusion of environmental behaviours: the role of influential individuals in social networks

This newly published Defra funded research from Brook Lyndhurst, Opinion Leader Research and Dr Julie Barnett of the University of Surrey investigates the notion of 'green' mavens, with a view to identifying specific opportunities for communications and policy.

In mainstream commercial marketing, the concept of a 'maven' is increasingly well established. A maven is an individual with two key attributes: they have specialist or detailed knowledge about consumer products and they are perceived as a trusted and reliable source of information by other individuals in their social network. It is hypothesised - and increasingly supported by evidence - that a maven can play a critical role in the success or failure of new products, since their advice carries particular weight with consumers.

Following research into the nature of and drivers for pro-environmental behaviours over the past couple of years, this study asks what is the possible role of 'green' mavens. If they do exist, where are they, what are their characteristics, and how do they function? In the context of the wider forces shaping pro-environmental behaviour - social norms, mainstream advertising, levels of trust in the government and so forth - an understanding of the present and potential role of mavens would be extremely valuable to all those hoping to promote the rapid take-up of new pro-environmental behaviours among the British population.

A summary and the full report can be downloaded from <http://www.brooklyndhurst.co.uk/the-diffusion-of-environmental-behaviours-the-role-of-influential-individuals-in-social-networks-110/>.

We have noticed that influential individuals are beginning to be used to promote water efficiency. For instance, Thames Water through the Nag <http://www.thenag.net/> asked people who already had Hippos if they'd like five more to give to their family and friends. Bournemouth and Hampshire Water's water champions scheme signs up keen water savers to spread the message. If you know of any more examples, we'd love to hear of them. We'll include responses in the next e-bulletin.

The purpose of this e-Bulletin is to share research and other activities related to water and people. We release about two e-Bulletins per month. We hope that the e-Bulletin will be interactive; we ask that subscribers email us with news, announcements, events, requests for information, opportunities for collaboration and other information to include in future W&BC e-Bulletins.

To un/subscribe, please email Joanne at jzygmunt@waterwise.org.uk. Past issues are available at http://www.waterwise.org.uk/reducing_water_wastage_in_the_uk/research/water_and_behaviour_change_bulletin.html.

Best wishes,
Joanne and Kathryn