

RI cartoonist lends style to stormwater project

By Chip Young
Special to The Interchange

Don Bousquet, the award-winning cartoonist whose cartoons celebrate the unique quirks of Rhode Islanders, has donated his stylized artwork to assist the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT)-funded Rhode Island Stormwater Solutions project, which advocates for clean local waterways.

RI Stormwater Solutions is using Bousquet's images in the form of stickers, editorial cartoons and fact sheets to help educate local citizens on how to keep their beaches, rivers and drinking water clean and safe from the impacts of rainwater that runs off roads, roofs, parking lot and lawns. This runoff can carry pollutants like oil and gas residues, pet waste and fertilizer into local waterways. The images are ready-to-use in a free information packet available from its website (www.ristormwatersolutions.org) to municipalities, educational and professional groups, and nonprofit organizations, and are being distributed at local farmers markets, public forums and special events statewide.

"We wanted to show that all of us can take simple steps to cut down on stormwater pollution," said Lorraine Joubert, Director of RI Stormwater Solutions. "It's easy and only requires simple things such as picking up after your dog, sweeping instead of hosing down driveways, and keeping trash and leaves out of storm drains. We thought Don's uniquely Rhode Island characters would be a fun way to show how all of us can make small changes in

our own quirky habits and make a big difference in keeping local waters clean and Don's trademark quahogs healthy."

Bousquet's cartoons and popular series of books have garnered praise from all quarters, and his distinctively drawn and fully accented characters, and off-the-wall views of life in Rhode Island, have kept him in the eyes, minds and hearts of citizens of the state for decades. A resident of South Kingstown, he also plies a side career with his son, Nathan, taking aerial photos of Rhode Island sites from a specially

mounted camera aboard a small, lightweight, radio-controlled plane.

"Storm drains are a huge part of my life," Bousquet explained, tongue firmly in cheek. "I lie awake at night and imagine nothing but clear rainwater swirling down a pristine storm drain."

Stormwater pollution is now the major water quality problem in the United States. In Rhode Island, it is a major source of contamination to the waters residents drink, and in which they fish and swim. When rain falls onto pavement and other impermeable surfaces, it picks up pollutants, such as oil and other spills, road sand and sediment from construction sites, fertilizers and yard waste, animal waste, and trash. Improper connections between storm drains and sanitary sewers can also add raw sewage high in disease-causing bacteria. RI Stormwater Solutions helps municipalities, state and local organizations, and members of

the general public learn about these impacts and what steps they can take to prevent water pollution.

RI Stormwater Solutions is a project of the URI Cooperative Extension and URI Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) program, funded by RIDOT, in partnership with the RI Department of Environmental Management and local municipalities.



ristormwatersolutions.org

know where
it goes

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