



Tips for Keeping Water Clean

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Conduct a water safe audit. Are there areas on your property that could be improved to alleviate potential impacts to local water sources?

Water quality begins with each of us—where we live, work, and play, and with the simple daily actions we take. Being concerned about the environment is a good start, but taking action to help improve it is the next important step. Here are a few ways you can make a difference to reduce non-point source pollution.

Outdoor Actions

- Compost grass clippings, leaves, and garden wastes either at home or in a municipal program. Never throw these wastes into a stream, storm sewer, or drainage ditch. When these materials are washed into streams and lakes, they decay, which in turn depletes the oxygen in the water for fish and other aquatic organisms.
- Plant trees, shrubs, and groundcovers, especially around water sources. Vegetation provides food and cover for wildlife and acts as a natural filter for runoff entering ponds, lakes, or streams. Plants can also prevent shoreline erosion and keep soil from washing into water sources.
- Maintain a healthy lawn. A dense, healthy lawn can be an excellent filter for pollutants. Before you apply fertilizers, test your soil so that you apply only what you need. Use the right fertilizer, at the right time, and in the proper amount. There are many natural-organic fertilizers that work well, keep the soil healthy, and have less potential for run-off than some chemical products.
- Practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM) around your home and garden. IPM reduces pest problems through a variety of cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical methods. Try to eliminate chemical use or keep pesticide use to a minimum by using them only when other methods are not successful.

Indoor Household Actions

- Never pour household hazardous products, such as paints or solvents, down the drain or discard with regular household trash. Use natural and less toxic alternatives whenever possible. Contact your County Solid Waste Management Office for information regarding hazardous waste collection in your area.

- Keep your septic system in good working order. Mow the leach field often, inspect your tank annually and pump it out at least every three to five years. Failing septic systems slowly leach organic wastes that can cause excessive algae growth and disease-producing pathogens in water sources.
- Clean up after pets. Dispose of pet waste in the garbage or by burying.

Maintenance Actions

- Carefully use, store, and dispose motor oil, gasoline, and other automotive products. Spilled motor oil, gasoline, and lubricants can quickly contaminate wells and streams and damage aquatic organisms. Use a funnel to add new oil or gas. Replace the lid and carefully store containers of petroleum products to avoid accidental spills. Recycle used motor oil and other automotive products by taking them to a service station or local recycling center.
- Maintain your vehicles in good condition to prevent leaks such as oil or antifreeze.
- Use a detergent with no phosphates when washing your vehicle.
- Use gravel, ashes, or calcium chloride instead of salt for traction or deicing driveways and sidewalks.

Watershed Considerations

- If you live in a flood plain of a stream or river, or along the shore of a water body, take extra precaution with household and yard maintenance. High water levels and spring runoff present a greater possibility of pollutants getting into water sources
- Protect wetlands since they absorb stormwater and filter pollutants.
- Learn where your water comes from and where it goes after you use it. By tracing your drinking water from its natural source to your tap and beyond will give you a greater sense of your local watershed.

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