

HEALTHY HOUSEHOLD HABITS FOR CLEAN WATER

As stormwater flows over driveways, lawns and sidewalks, it picks up debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants. Stormwater can flow into a storm sewer system or directly to a lake, stream, river or wetland. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, and providing drinking water. Polluted runoff is the nation's greatest threat to clean water. By practicing healthy household habits, homeowners can keep common pollutants like pesticides, pet waste, grass clippings, and automotive fluids off the ground and out of stormwater. Adopt these healthy household habits and help protect lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands.

- Clean up spilled automotive fluids with an absorbent material like kitty litter or sand, and don't rinse the spills into a nearby storm drain.
- Recycle used oil and other automotive fluids at participating service stations. Don't dump these chemicals down the storm drain or dispose of them in your trash.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly. When necessary, use these chemicals in the recommended amounts. Avoid application if the forecast calls for rain; otherwise, chemicals will be washed into your local stream.
- Select native plants and grasses that are drought-resistant and pest-resistant. Native plants require less water, fertilizer and pesticides.
- Cover piles of dirt and mulch being used in landscaping projects to prevent these pollutants from blowing or washing off your yard and into local waterbodies.
- Vegetate bare spots in your yard to prevent soil erosion.
- During home repair and improvement projects, use hazardous substances (paint, solvents and cleaners) in the smallest amount possible, and follow the directions on the label. Store substances properly to avoid leaks and spills. Clean paint brushes in the sink, not outdoors. Properly dispose of excess paints through the household hazardous waste collection program sponsored by SWALCO.
- Only drain your pool when a test kit does not detect chlorine levels.
- Have your septic system inspected by a professional at least every 3 years, and have the septic tank pumped as necessary (usually every 3 to 5 years).
- Flush responsibly. Flushing household chemicals like paint, pesticides, oil and antifreeze can destroy the biological treatment taking place in the septic system.
- When walking your pet, remember to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method. Leaving pet waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local waterbodies.

Remember to share good habits with your neighbors! Make your home the solution to storm water pollution!

From Village Engineer Gordon – March 2009