

Watersheds and the Effects of Nonpoint Source Pollution

Nonpoint Source Pollution directly impacts the health of a watershed and the water quality within. This fact sheet explains a few ways to help prevent nonpoint source pollution.



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What is a watershed?

A watershed is the land that water flows across or under on its way to a stream, river, lake, or ocean. Everyone lives in a watershed.

What is nonpoint source pollution?

Nonpoint Source Pollution (NPS), often called people pollution, is pollution from runoff created when it rains. NPS results from everyday activities such as fertilizing the lawn, walking pets, changing motor oil, and littering.

When it rains pollutants generated by these activities are washed from our lawns, sidewalks, and streets into the storm drains that flow into our waterways. They can also soak into the ground contaminating the ground water below. Polluted stormwater can also cause beach closings, harm wildlife, destroy habitat and contaminate your drinking water.

What is your watershed address?

Where does the water that rains on your home go? After it leaves your lawn, street or sidewalk where is it headed? Does it flow downhill straight to a nearby stream or lake? Does it puddle in your backyard? Does it zip down a storm drain to the local creek? The destination of the rain, whether it's a puddle, pond, bay or lake is your watershed address.

What can you do to prevent NPS and help improve the health of your watershed?

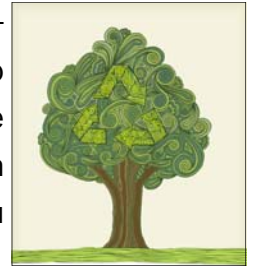
The answer to this is quite simple. Small changes in your daily lifestyle can improve our water quality. Turn over this page to find out how YOU can make a difference in YOUR watershed.



You Can Reduce Nonpoint Source Pollution

Don't litter — Put litter, including cigarette butts, in the trash. Never throw litter from your car or down storm drains. Recycle as much as possible.

Don't overuse fertilizers or pesticides — Overuse of fertilizers and pesticides causes water pollution which is harmful to humans, fish and wildlife. Do not apply fertilizer or pesticides before a heavy rainfall. Read the package directions before application. Remember, more is not better as using too much wastes money and will not work any better. Use compost as a fertilizer — you can make it yourself — and it's free!



Use mulch — Applying mulch in your yard and garden helps to hold soil in place, suppresses weed growth, and maintains soil moisture reducing the need for frequent watering. Mulch also adds organic matter which improves the soil.

Don't dump motor oil — Motor oil contains toxins that are harmful to animals, humans and wildlife. Do not dump used oil down storm drains or on the ground. Take used oil to a recycling center.



Clean up pet waste — Pet waste should be properly disposed. Animal wastes contain bacteria that will run into storm drains leading to our waterways.

Maintain septic systems — Inspect your septic system annually and have it pumped-out, as needed, depending on its use.

**Following these simple suggestions will result in
improved water quality,
a cleaner environment and healthier watersheds.**

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