

Controlling Water Pollution in Your Home and Neighborhood

Your actions at home and in your neighborhood have a direct impact on the health of our lakes and streams. **Stormwater** can carry harmful pollutants from yards and roads directly into our waterways, where they can harm fish and wildlife. It's up to us to keep pollutants from flowing down the drain and harming our rivers and lakes!



What exactly is Stormwater?

Stormwater is all the water that falls from the sky, like rain or snow. When it rains, stormwater runs off from our roofs and streets and flows into storm drains. Along the way, stormwater picks up whatever it touches, like oil from the road, yard chemicals, and pet waste. But the water is not treated or cleaned in wastewater facilities; whatever goes down the storm drains flows directly into our rivers and lakes.

No dumping down the drain

Everything we put down indoor drains does go to our local wastewater treatment facilities. But these treatment centers cannot clean some pollutants from the water before it is reenters lakes in streams. It is important to be mindful of what goes down the drain, even inside your home. You can help reduce water pollution by taking steps to keep common household pollutants out of our local waterways.

- Cool and throw small amounts of cooking oils and grease in your household trash.
- Take back old medicine to local police stations and pharmacies. Find one near you at takebackyourmeds.org.
- Take most **household hazardous waste** to one of the [three transfer stations](#) in Clark County.
- Take electronics and batteries to a collection center to be reused or recycled.
- Visit clarkgreenneighbors.org to learn more about where to take specific items for proper disposal or to be recycled.



Household hazardous waste is any waste that could harm human health or the environment if it is used or disposed of incorrectly. This includes automotive products, cleaners, paints and solvents, and pesticides.

Our cars have pollution beyond the tailpipe

Our cars are major sources of water pollution—car exhaust, tire particles, and fluid leaks accumulate on roads where they can be carried by stormwater into our streams and lakes.

- Get regular maintenance on your car to help reduce the amount of air and water pollution it produces.
- Don't Drip and Drive! Oil and other car fluid leaks are toxic and harmful to our fish and wildlife.
- Visit fixthoseleaks.org to learn more and to access resources, including FREE car leak inspections and discounts on repairs.
- When possible, take other sources of transportation: get a ride with a friend, ride a bike, or take public transit.
- Take your car to the carwash. If cars are washed at home, all the car's grim and pollution and the soap we use to clean it are also washed right into our storm drains. Carwashes capture and treat the water they use, keeping any pollutants out of our waterways.



You can check our own car for leaks by sliding a large piece of paper or cardboard underneath it and leaving it overnight. Use the location and color of any stains to identify the source of the leak.

Did you know? Every time you drive small pieces of plastic (called **microplastics**), rubber, and other chemicals flake off your car's tires onto roadways, where they are picked up by stormwater runoff. Recent studies have linked mass deaths of coho salmon after rainstorms here in the Pacific Northwest to a chemical found in car tires.

Cleaner Cleaning

Many soaps and detergents contain high amounts of nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus. When these nutrients build up in excessive amounts in ponds and lakes, they can cause toxic algal blooms which use up oxygen in the water and disrupt the food web.

- Look for a phosphate free label on soaps and detergents.
- Take your car to a commercial car wash where the water and soap used will be captured and treated. If you do wash your car at home, you can take steps to keep our stormwater clean by using towels to soak up and divert water or wash your car on the lawn where the grass and soil can filter out pollutants.



Stop the Sediment

Dirt and yard debris (like leaves or sticks) can clog storm drains and cause excessive buildup of soil particles, or sediment, in rivers and lakes—which disrupts ecosystems and harms fish habitats.



- Sweep up and compost leaves and other yard debris that fall on hard surfaces. Avoid power washing or cleaning outdoor surfaces with water.
- Use cat litter or sawdust to absorb liquid spills before sweeping.
- Have a spill you don't know how to clean up? Call the WA Dept. of Ecology Spill Hotline for Advice: 360.407.6300.

Pick up the poop, be poop smart

Just like human waste, animal poop is a pollutant that can add both harmful bacteria and excess nutrients to our waterways.

- Always scoop, bag and throw away your dogs' poop ...even in your OWN yard!
- Visit cleanwaterdogs.com to take the Canines for Clean Water pledge and get a free bandana for your dog.
- Collect, cover, and compost manure from horses and other livestock.
- If you have a septic system, have it regularly inspected, cleaned, and maintained.
- Visit poo-smartclark.org to learn more about how to protect our waterways from animal and human poop.



Did you know? Dogs in Clark County generate over 13,000 tons of poop every year. This poop is found in significant levels in all our waterways!

Yardwork

Because stormwater can pick up yard chemicals and dirt from your yard, how you manage your yard can have a big impact on water quality and watershed health.



- Reduce or eliminate your use of chemical inputs like pesticides and fertilizers whenever possible. If you do use pesticides, avoid spraying in or near water and on or before rainy days, use limited amounts, and apply directly to needed areas rather than broadly spreading.
- Plant vegetation on bare soil to reduce erosion that can clog drains and cause to sediment pollution. Use native plants to reduce the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and other supplements.

For more information

To learn more about how to reduce your impact on our waterways visit clarkcd.org/watershedstewards or stormwaterpartners.com.

Visit naturallyardcare.org or growsmartgrowsafe.org to learn more about natural and low-impact yard care strategies.

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