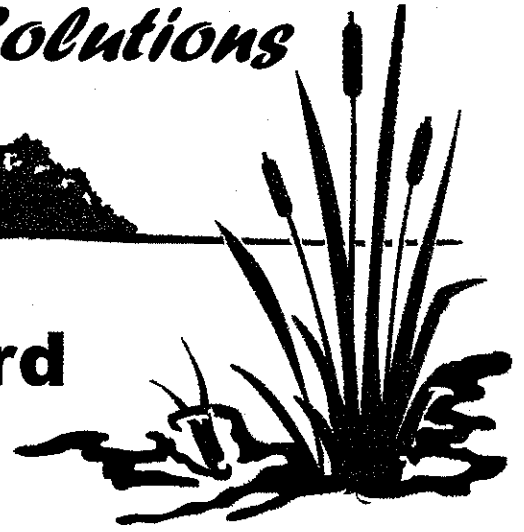
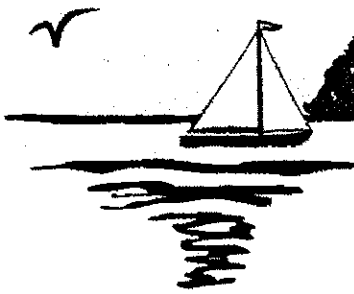


Water Pollution Solutions



Home and Yard

You may not be surprised to learn that the health of lakes, ponds and streams is linked to various activities occurring throughout your watershed. But what may surprise you is that many sources of pollution can start in your own back yard! Activities such as yardwork, car maintenance, salting the steps in winter and even walking the dog, can impact ground and surface waters. This publication will give you tips to help minimize impacts your household may have on a lake, pond or stream in your watershed.

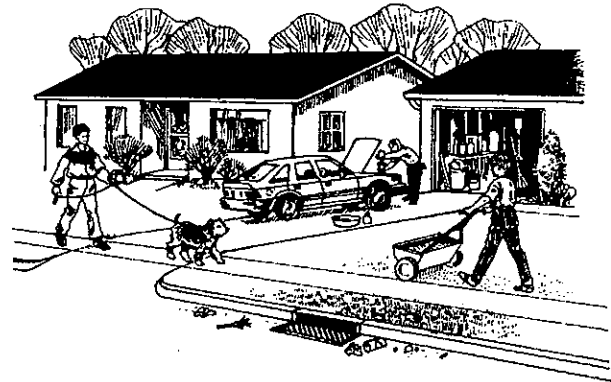
When homes are developed, land surfaces are usually reduced by buildings, driveways, sidewalks and streets. What once was covered with vegetation is replaced with impervious surfaces. Consequently, the amount of water that is able to soak into the soil can be reduced, resulting in more water running off the land and into bodies of water. As runoff heads toward a waterway, it picks up pollutants such as excess nutrients from lawn fertilizers, bacteria from pet wastes, litter, sediment particles from exposed soil... and the list goes on and on.

In urbanized areas, runoff is often routed through underground storm sewers that can empty directly into a lake or a tributary stream. So even households that are not located directly along shorelines can impact the water quality. During periods of heavy rains or floods, in particular, runoff and associated pollutants can enter lakes and streams quickly and in greater amounts having even more impact on waterways.

What you do around your home can help—or harm—water quality. For example, rain can wash improperly applied fertilizers and pesticides into

lakes, ponds and streams. On the other hand, carefully planned landscapes and prudent lawn care practices which involve following label directions can reduce pollution and, in turn, help protect water quality.

Similarly, anything that drips from a motor vehicle can wash into storm sewers. Antifreeze, gasoline and motor oil are toxic to aquatic life. Just five quarts of motor oil, for instance, can create an oil slick the size of two football fields!



Looks can be deceiving. Even homes and neighborhoods that are not located directly on lake shorelines can impact water quality.

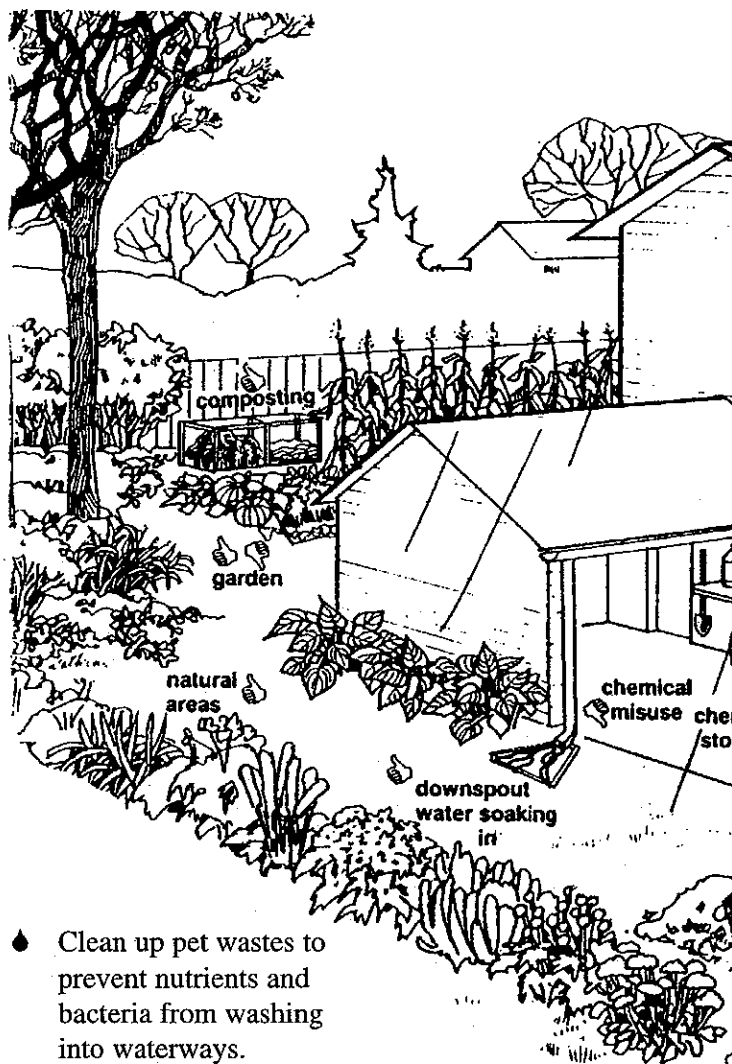
Whether you live in the city or the country... whether your home is large or small... whether you have a lot of time and money to invest in your yard or just a little—there is something you can do to help improve water quality. By following the tips in this publication, you can help minimize the impact your home and yard poses on local waterways while enhancing your home, community and watershed.

Water Pollution Solutions

Around your home...

- ◆ Adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM) that employs a variety of pest control options such as selecting pest resistant plants, rotating crops and using biological controls, as well as pesticides, when needed. Contact your county extension office for additional IPM information.
- ◆ When using pesticides, read and follow directions to protect people, pets and the environment. The label is the law!!
- ◆ Use lawn and garden chemicals carefully. Read and follow all label directions. Explore using manual and biological pest control methods before resorting to chemical pesticides.
- ◆ Testing your soil can save you time, money and help prevent water pollution. Your soil may already contain a proper amount of nutrients to support a healthy lawn. Contact your County Extension Service agent for information on how to conduct a soil test of your lawn.
- ◆ After taking a soil test, purchase the proper fertilizer blend. Read the numbers on the fertilizer bag. The numbers "10-3-10" mean the blend contains 10% nitrogen, 3% phosphorus, and 10% potash.
- ◆ Remember, more is not better!! Never apply more fertilizer than your lawn needs—your lawn won't grow any better, but algae and weeds in lakes and streams will!! Excess nutrients can runoff and add to water pollution.
- ◆ Choose appropriate types of turfgrass and groundcovers for your site's soil, sunlight, and water conditions to minimize maintenance and fertilizer and pesticide use.
- ◆ Keep your mowing height high. Set your mower blade at 3 inches to provide a "taller" lawn that holds water better, requires less irrigation, and helps shade out weeds.
- ◆ Mow often enough to leave grass clippings on the lawn, and use a mulching mower if possible. Grass clippings actually promote healthy lawns by recycling nitrogen nutrients back to the grass—for free! Alternatively, use clippings as a mulch or compost them with leaves.

- ◆ Along lake shores, and streambanks establish a "buffer strip" of dense, native vegetation to help filter pollutants, stabilize the shore edge and provide important wildlife habitat.
- ◆ Seed bare soil and cover it with mulch as soon as possible to minimize erosion. For major construction projects and room additions, first check to see if a permit is needed. Take steps to disturb no more ground than needed.
- ◆ Never burn yard waste along a lakeshore or streambank. The ashes are quite high in nutrients and can easily wash into the water.
- ◆ Use yard waste on-site as mulch or compost, or dispose of it properly off-site. Never dump yard wastes along or in a lake or tributary stream.
- ◆ Keep fallen leaves out of the ditch or street gutter.



- ◆ Clean up pet wastes to prevent nutrients and bacteria from washing into waterways.
- ◆ On icy pavement, use sand or chip the ice off when possible. If using salt, apply it sparingly.

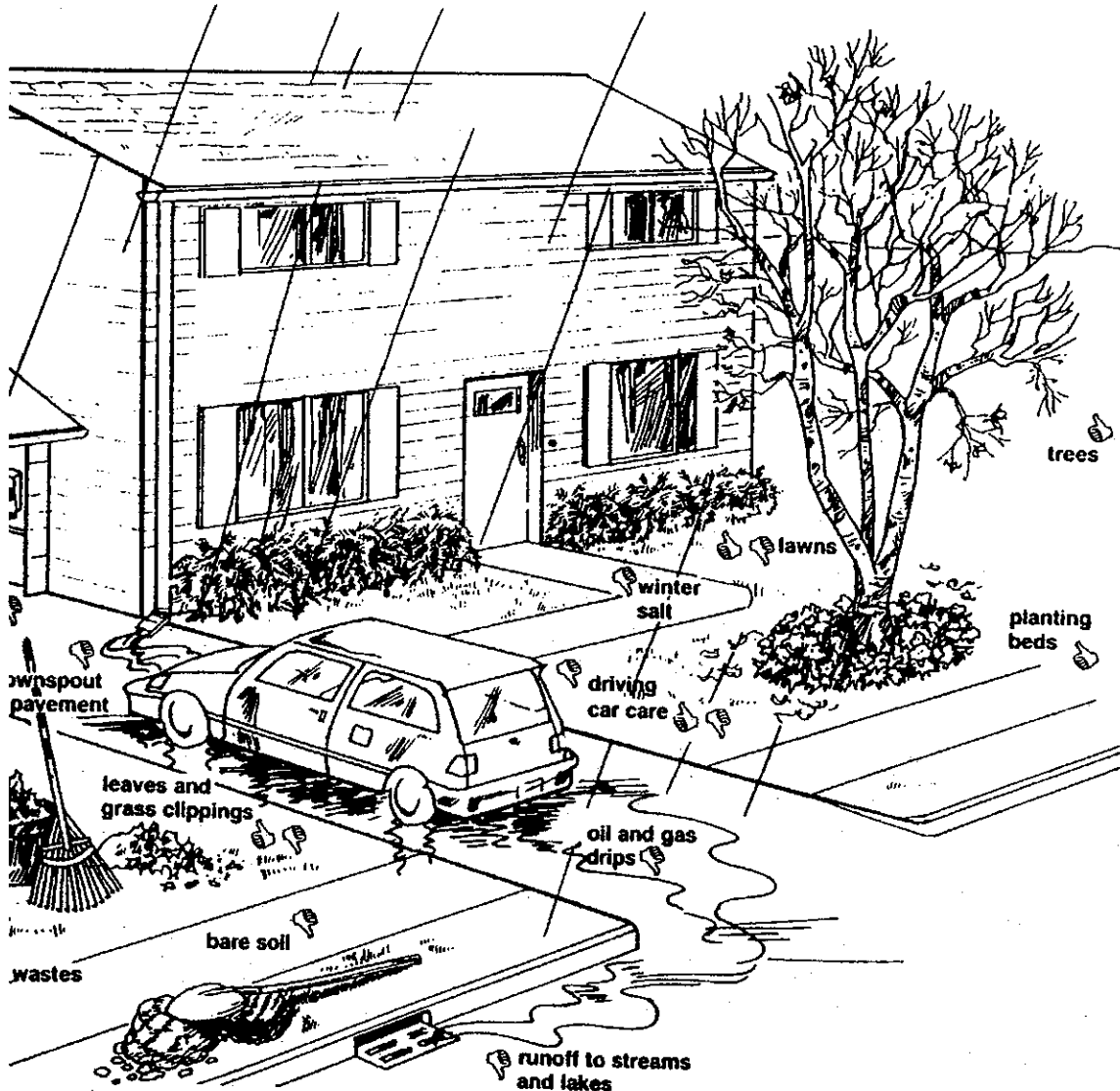
- ◆ Direct roof downspouts away from driveways and foundations and toward your lawn or planting beds where the water can soak into the soil. Use a splash block directly below your downspouts to help prevent soil erosion. If erosion still occurs, attach some flexible, perforated plastic tubing to the downspout to diffuse the water flow.
- ◆ When it's time to drain your pool, let the water sit a few days without chlorine before draining. This can prevent localized chlorine contamination of lakes and other surface waters.

- ◆ Properly maintain your septic system. Have it inspected and pumped out regularly—at least every three years. Conserve water, and use water saving plumbing fixtures to maximize the septic system's efficiency.
- ◆ Limit your overall use of toxic or hazardous products. Keep them away from drainage ditches, storm sewers, streams and lakes. Always properly dispose of toxic products—never dump them down the drain!

Home Hot Spots for Water Quality

Activities around the home can affect water quality in lakes or streams throughout your watershed. Use this illustration as a guide to monitor your home. Take necessary steps to prevent water pollution.

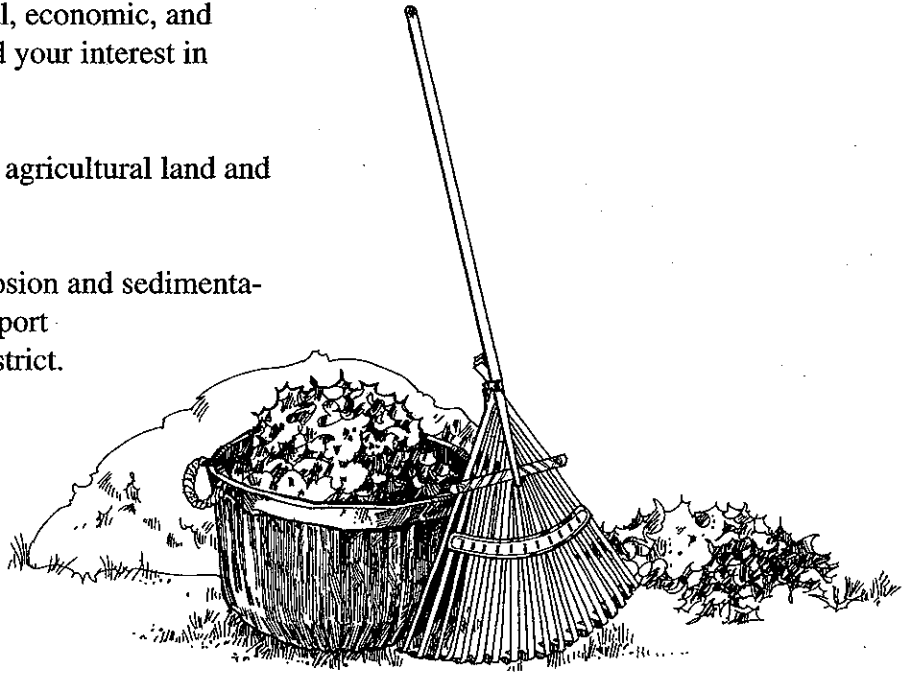
👍 Good for water quality 👎 Bad for water quality
 👍👎 Could be good or bad, depending on your actions



- ◆ Wash cars on the lawn so soapy water can be absorbed instead of running off into storm sewers.
- ◆ Keep your car well-maintained. Check for drips and repair leaks immediately.
- ◆ When you can, walk, bike, or take public transportation.
- ◆ Properly dispose of (or better yet, recycle) used motor oil and other automotive products.

In your community...

- ◆ Tell public officials about the recreational, economic, and ecological value of lakes and streams and your interest in keeping them clean, healthy, and usable.
- ◆ Support “best management practices” on agricultural land and construction sites in your watershed.
- ◆ Help ensure that construction site soil erosion and sedimentation control ordinances are enforced. Report problems to your county conservation district.
- ◆ Encourage stormwater management practices that reduce runoff pollution.
- ◆ Advocate the safe and conservative use of salt on roads and promote the use of sand where practical.
- ◆ Support wetland preservation. Wetlands help protect water quality by acting as natural filters of pollutants. They help reduce flooding, furnish fish and wildlife habitat, provide recreation opportunities and aesthetics.
- ◆ Become active with groups that support projects and events that promote conservation, watershed protection and clean-ups.



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The objective of the series is to provide residents with a greater understanding of how human actions can help protect water quality. For more information about other publications in this series visit the PACD website or contact the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. at 25 North Front Street, Harrisburg, PA 17101 (717) 238-PACD (7223) or your county conservation district.

Special Credit is given to *Lake Notes*, October 1996, (Prepared by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission with financial support provided by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency) which served as a model for this publication.

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