Things You Can Do in the Yard and Garden

Backyard Conservation

- Select native plants and trees appropriate to the conditions of your yard (i.e. wet, shaded, sloping, etc.). Consider planting a rain garden to capture and filter runoff.
- Compost your yard trimmings and use compost to add nutrients to your lawn and garden while increases the soil's water holding capacity.
- Always test your soil before applying fertilizers. If you must fertilize, be sure it is phosphorus-free.
- Trees and shrubs to add biodiversity and help prevent erosion. Spreading mulch on bare ground also prevents erosion and runoff.
- Mow high and let the grass clippings lie! Keeping your lawn between 3 - 4 inches will produce healthier grass with fewer pest problems.
- Use integrated, natural pest management to keep the good guys and eliminate the bad.
- Water plants deeply yet infrequently in a way that imitates a slow, soaking rain.
- Wherever possible, decrease the amount of impervious surfaces in your yard. Impervious surfaces speed up the flowing water in drainage ditches, causing severe bank erosion in the receiving waters.

You are the solution to nonpoint source pollution!

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Geauga SWCD Mission:
"To conserve, protect, and enhance the resources of Geauga County by providing leadership, education, and assistance to all."

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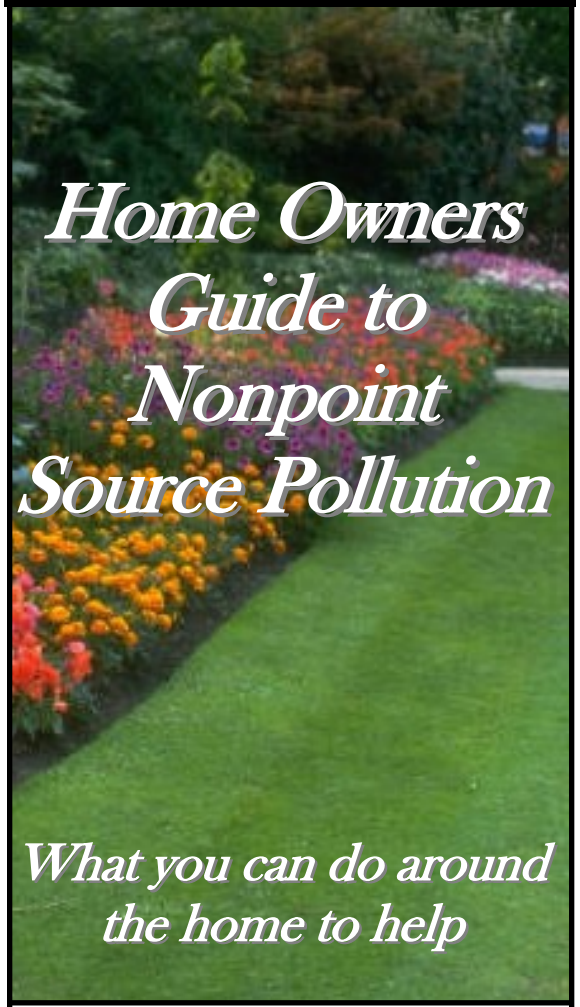
Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District



Home Owners Guide to Nonpoint Source Pollution

What you can do around the home to help

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There's No Place Like Home

With each turn of the faucet, abundant and clean water is instantly delivered into our homes, available to us for so many uses. We trust this water is clean and safe, each and every time. But what about the water that *leaves* our property? What is the quality of water like for our neighbors who live downstream?

No matter what town we live in and street we live on, we also have a watershed address. A watershed is an area of land that drains rain and snow to a body of water. We can also describe watersheds as "communities connected by water." Because we all live in a watershed, everything we do affects the water and natural systems down slope and downstream.

When we think of water pollution, we often think of ***point source*** pollution, which enters the water through an easily identifiable source - like a factory or sewage treatment plant. However, ***nonpoint source*** pollution is not as easily identifiable. It occurs when rainfall or snowmelt runs over land or through the ground, picks up pollutants, and deposits them into rivers, lakes, and wetlands.

One quart of motor oil can pollute 2 million gallons of water

NPS pollution comes from many different sources over a large area and is difficult to trace and control. As the leading cause of water quality problems in the U.S. today, these pollutants have harmful and costly effects on drinking water supplies, wildlife, public health, and recreation.

Nonpoint Source Pollution

Consider our daily household activities. Storm water runoff picks up excess fertilizers from our lawns, oil and antifreeze from our driveways, and pet, livestock, and yard waste before draining into the nearest streams and ditches. Even many common household products contain toxic chemicals that can get into our waterways.

There are **four main types of nonpoint source pollution**. Once they enter into our waterways, they inhibit the quality of our streams and rivers and are very expensive to try to remove.

1. ***Sediment:*** Sediment is the most prevalent type of water pollution. Over one billion tons of sediment pollutes the nation's water each year! Sediment is very detrimental. Once in water it can clog fish gills and suffocate eggs, increase water temperature and cloudiness, and change the shape and flow rate of a stream or river.

2. ***Bacterial Pollution:*** Bacteria are responsible for decomposing organic material in water. Oxygen is required for this process to occur, and bacteria will compete with other aquatic life for limited dissolved oxygen. Along with this depletion of dissolved oxygen comes bacterial pollution. Primary sources of this pollution are animal feedlots, livestock waste, and improperly installed sewage systems. This pollution can contaminate both ground and surface water and spreads diseases including hepatitis, cholera, and salmonella.

Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms in lakes and ponds

3. ***Nutrient Pollution:*** Nutrients are a necessity to life yet too many can be extremely harmful. Nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen are the main components of fertilizers and stimulate plant growth. A large amount of these nutrients enter streams through sewage and septic runoff, fertilizers, detergents, livestock waste, and industrial waste.

4. ***Toxin Pollution:*** Toxic water pollution is a major health concern. Chemicals are used constantly in industry, agriculture, and our homes. Even safe chemicals can become toxic if disposed of improperly. Many times household chemicals are poured down drains and toilets. This is especially harmful in areas such as Geauga County, where most homes obtain their water from wells.

Things You Can Do In and Around the Home

So what can we do around the home to help protect our surface and ground water resources? Keeping our water clean is easier than you think! Here are some tips to help you become part of the pollution solution.

Household Chemicals

- Since many household products contain potentially hazardous chemicals, read labels and consider products before purchasing. Choose environmentally friendly products or make your own alternative cleaners to save money and make your home safer.
- If you cannot use up or give away unwanted household chemicals, take them to hazardous waste collection centers. Never pour them down the drain or on the ground. This can disrupt your septic system and contaminate surface and ground water.

Watch your Waste

- Inspect and pump your septic system every 2-3 years.
- Pick up pet waste and dispose of it properly.

Keep Your Garage Green

- Use a commercial car wash or wash your car on the lawn to keep soapy water out of storm drains, ditches, and waterways.
- Recycle used oil, be sure your vehicles and equipment are from leaks, and clean up spills with absorbent materials.

Alternative Cleaning Supplies

Instead of:	*Use:*
Bleach	*Borax*
Glass Cleaner	*Two tablespoons of vinegar to 1 quart of water*
Grease Remover	*Baking soda paste*
Floor Cleaner	*Mix 1 vinegar to 2 gallons of water.*
Drain Cleaner	*Plunger, followed by a hand full of baking soda and a half cup of vinegar. Cover and allow to sit for 15 minutes. Pour in 2 quarts of boiling water, and clog should disappear.*