

Are You A Water Polluter?

Simple Changes Can Reduce Your Impact on Local Waterways



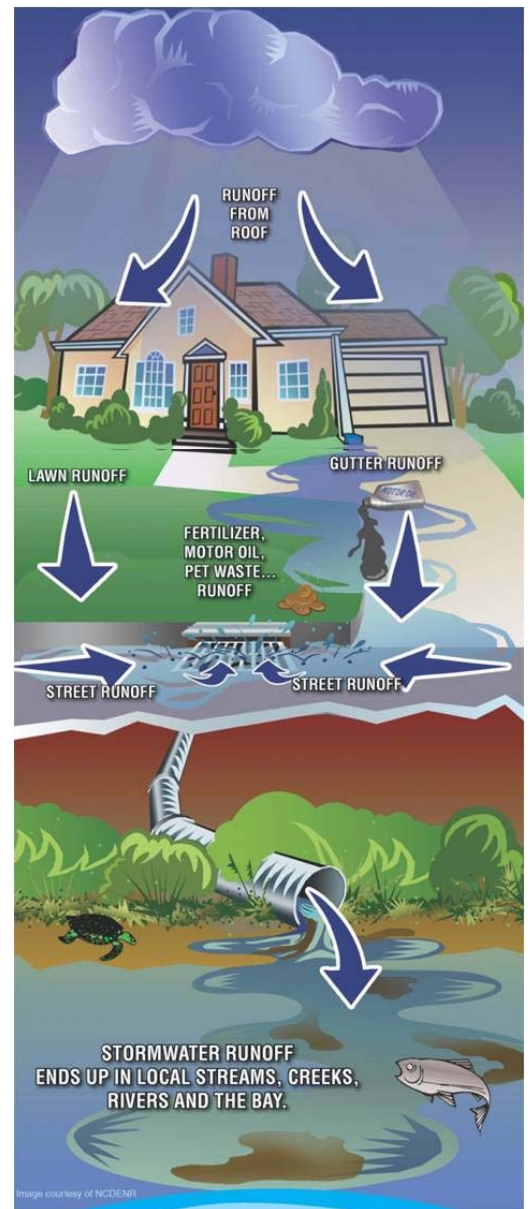
River water pollution comes from many sources. In fact some of your everyday activities, around the house and in the yard, may be contributing to water pollution in ways you never expected.

Many pollutants are carried into rivers and streams by the runoff that happens after it rains or when snow melts. Simple changes and increased awareness can go a long way toward improving river water quality and making Fort Wayne's rivers a more attractive centerpiece for riverfront development.

When it rains, water from your roof runs through downspouts or directly onto the ground. Once on the ground, the water may run across the lawn or down the driveway. As the water moves, it picks up and carries along things such as trash, cigarette butts and other litter that you can see. It also picks up bacteria from pet waste that may have been left on a lawn or sidewalk. Runoff may carry fertilizers and pesticides you have applied to your lawn or garden and automobile fluids that may have dripped onto your driveway. Stormwater runoff that goes into a storm drain does not receive any sort of treatment before it goes to a stream, lake or one of our rivers, so it carries pollutants right along with it.

What can you do at home to reduce the potential for pollution to impact our rivers? Here are a few simple ideas:

- 1. Practice Responsible Lawn Care.** If you apply chemicals to the lawn, follow the manufacturer's directions to avoid over-applying. Using more than is recommended is a waste of money, and the excess may end up in a river where it can kill fish or cause algae to grow excessively.
- 2. Use Dry Clean-Up Methods.** If some of the dry chemical you use on the lawn ends up on the driveway or sidewalk, sweep it back onto the lawn. Avoid using the garden hose to wash the chemicals down the driveway or into the street. If a liquid spills, use an absorbent material such as kitty litter or sawdust to soak it up. The sweep the material into a dust pan or collect it with a shovel and put it in the trash.
- 3. Grasscycle/Keep Clippings on the Lawn.** Use a mulching lawnmower to save time and energy when mowing the lawn. Instead of bagging the clippings, just mow and go. But... don't forget to clean-up any clippings that end up on the sidewalk or in the street. Sweep or blow them back onto the lawn or clean them up



with a broom and dustpan. Clippings may be covered with lawn chemicals or bacteria. They should not be left on the street and NEVER swept or washed into a storm drain.

- 4. Don't be a Litterbug.** Put trash in its place – a trashcan. Trash – including small items such as drinking straws and cigarette butts – can wash into a storm drain then straight to a river making the river look trashy.
- 5. Recycle!** Before throwing something into the trash, check to see if it can be recycled. If it is recyclable, place it in your recycling bin or take it to a recycling drop-off location.
- 6. Pick Up Pet Waste.** Of course you pick up the waste your pet leaves behind when you go on a walk. That's simple courtesy and is required by law. But even on your own lawn it's important to pick up the "poo" so the bacteria it contains won't be washed into the storm drain.
- 7. Fix Automotive Leaks.** Even a small gas, oil or fluid leak can leave behind residue that may be washed from your driveway into a storm drain when it rains. Getting leaks fixed can reduce the amount of pollution going to our rivers. It can also extend the life of your vehicle and keep you safe while driving. If you change the oil at home, dispose of the used oil properly or take it to an automotive service center where it can be recycled. Never pour oil or any other fluid down a storm drain.
- 8. Don't Wash Your Car in the Driveway.** Washing your car on a hard surface may cause soap and dirt to run down the driveway and into a storm drain. If you must wash your car at home, park it on the grass behind the house (temporarily of course!) and use biodegradable soap. Better yet, take it to a commercial car wash where the water is disposed of properly or cleaned and recycled.
- 9. Properly Dispose of Household Hazardous Waste.** Take leftover solvents, cleaners, pesticides, and other household chemicals to Tox-Away Tuesday, a household hazardous waste drop-off held every Tuesday by the Allen County Environmental Management Department. Learn more at www.ACWasteWatcher.org.
- 10. Respect the Storm Drain!** Water that goes into a storm drain or roadside ditch does not receive any kind of treatment before it goes into a lake, stream or one of our rivers. Any trash or pollutants that go into a storm drain will reappear in the river. Storm drains are not the place to dump trash, chemicals, oil, paint or anything else. Remember: Only Rain (or melting snow) In The Drain!
- 11. Report Pollution if You See It.** Fort Wayne City Utilities relies on you to help us find and stop water pollution. If you see trash being dumped along river banks, or someone putting trash down a storm drain, or if you see something in a river or stream that just doesn't look "right," please call 311 to Report Pollution. City Utilities will investigate and take appropriate action. The action taken depends on the severity of the issue and the source, and may range from educating a violator about water quality to court action and/or fines.

Remember: To report water pollution call City Utilities at 311 or 260-427-8311.

