

Fresh Water Natural Resources

Protecting Our Water... It's as Easy as Seven Simple Steps

Did you know that over three million people depend on our lakes and streams for their drinking water? And that in Southeast Michigan there are over 300,000 registered boaters? And 3.5 million people visit a local park each year?

With this many people depending on our lakes and streams for drinking water and recreation, we need to be careful how we treat our water. You might not be able to see the stream or lake from your house, but it's there! It might be a small stream or ditch or even a storm drain in the street. All of these lead directly to our lakes and streams. So, what we do at home affects our water!

Here are seven simple steps you can take in your home and yard to protect our lakes and streams.

1. **Help keep pollution out of storm drains.** Storm drains lead directly to our lakes and streams. So, never dump oil, pet waste, leaves, dirty water, or anything down a storm drain. Remember, only rain in the drain.
2. **Fertilize caringly and sparingly.** Excess fertilizer that gets into storm drains pollutes our lakes by causing large algae blooms and using up oxygen fish need to survive. Sweep excess fertilizer back onto your lawn, use a low or no phosphorus fertilizer, and have your soil tested to see what, if any, fertilizer is needed.
3. **Carefully store and dispose of household cleaners, chemicals, and oil.** Instead of putting hazardous products like antifreeze, motor oil, and pesticides in the trash, down the storm drain, or on the ground, take them to a local hazardous waste collection site.
4. **Clean up after your pet.** Whether on a walk or in your yard, promptly clean up after your pet. Not only will you be a good neighbor, you will also protect our water from harmful bacteria.
5. **Practice good car care.** Consider taking your car to a car wash or washing your car on the grass.
6. **Choose earth friendly landscaping.** Protect your pets, kids, and the environment by using pesticides sparingly. Also, water your lawn only when it needs it and choose plants native to Michigan.
7. **Save water.** Overwatering our lawns can easily carry pollution to the storm drains and to our lakes and streams. Consider using a broom instead of a hose to clean sidewalks and driveways. Direct hoses and sprinklers onto the lawn, not the driveway. This will help save our lakes and streams and save you money.

For more easy steps on protecting our lakes and streams, visit the Southeast Michigan Partners for Clean Water link provided under "Links" on this page.

Remember, our water is our future – and it's ours to protect!