



Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education Consortium

Coastal Water Ways

Volume I, Issue I

Want to Know How to Protect Your Water Quality?

We're going to help! This article is the first in a series of informational and educational tools for property owners concerned about water quality in coastal Georgetown and Horry Counties. The information is designed to help citizens understand ways to protect and preserve the quality of life and the water resources that we enjoy on the coast.

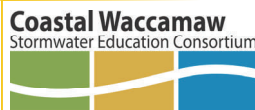
Many activities we undertake around our homes and apartments have an impact on water quality. In the coming weeks and months, we'll be bringing you information and tips on such important topics as landscaping and gardening, household hazardous waste, caring for your boat and dock, managing your septic system, and even keeping your well water clean. You may be surprised at many of the things you'll learn!

The informational series is being brought to you by several organizations who understand the importance of good water quality. The primary sponsor is the Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education Consortium. This organization was formed to maximize the efficiency of stormwater education efforts in the northeastern coastal region of South Carolina by using a regional or watershed approach. The CWSEC is made up of several organizations:

City of Conway
City of Myrtle Beach
City of North Myrtle Beach
Town of Surfside Beach
Georgetown County
Horry County

Clemson Cooperative Extension Service
Coastal Carolina University
NI-WB National Estuarine Research Reserve
SC Sea Grant Extension Program
Murrells Inlet 2007
Waccamaw River Keeper

So we'd like to challenge you over the next few months to read the upcoming series of articles and make the necessary changes in your everyday activities that may impact water quality. Remember, there are many ways we can help protect our valuable coastal resources.



This information is provided on behalf of the Coastal Waccamaw Stormwater Education Consortium and the Clemson Cooperative Extension Service



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Volume 1, Issue 2

What is A Watershed?

The water from your tap and in nearby lakes, reservoirs or streams is part of a much larger water system. Not everyone lives next to a pond or stream, but we each live in a **watershed**— the land area that contributes water to a specific surface water body, such as a pond, lake, tidal creek, wetland, river or estuary. The landscape's slope and contours define the watershed, or "catchment area."

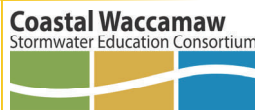
A watershed is like a bathtub. The watershed outlet — the mouth of a pond, lake, river or reservoir — is the tub's drain. The watershed boundary is the tub's rim. The watershed's drainage system consists of a network of rivers, streams, constructed channels and storm drains, wetlands, and the underlying groundwater.

Common activities — like disposing of household cleaning products or fertilizing your lawn and garden — can affect water quality, even when you do these things far from any shore. By paying careful attention to how you manage activities in and around your home, you can protect your watershed and the water you drink.

Do you know where your drinking water comes from?



Activities in a watershed affect water quality



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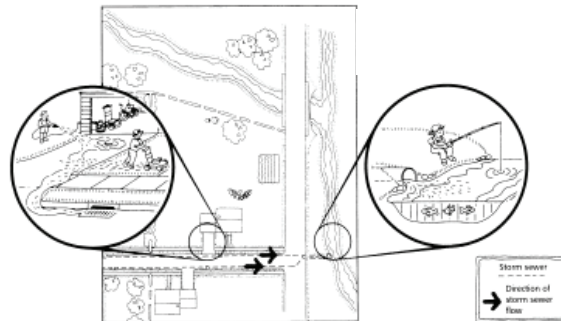
What Is Storm Water?

Storm water is water from rain — or melting snow — that does not quickly soak into the ground. Storm water flows from rooftops, over paved areas and bare soil, and through sloped lawns and fields. As it flows, this runoff collects and transports soil, pet waste, pesticides, fertilizer, oil and grease, leaves, litter, and other potential pollutants. You don't need a heavy rainstorm to send pollutants rushing toward streams, wetlands, lakes and oceans. A single garden hose can supply enough water.

Even houses that are not beside a creek or lake can contribute to problems. Storm drains and sewers are designed to move runoff from your neighborhood to the nearest body of water. Contrary to popular belief, storm sewers do not carry storm water to wastewater treatment plants.

The bottom line is that polluted storm water degrades South Carolina's coastal environment. Sediment clouds water and smothers habitats for fish and plants. Nutrients like phosphates and nitrates can promote excessive algae growth. Toxic substances such as antifreeze and oil from leaking cars, carelessly applied pesticides, and zinc from galvanized metal gutters and downspouts may threaten the health of fish and other aquatic life. Bacteria, viruses and parasites from animal waste may make nearby lakes, rivers and beaches unsuitable for wading, swimming, or shellfish harvesting after storms.

Remember, only rain should go in the storm drain!



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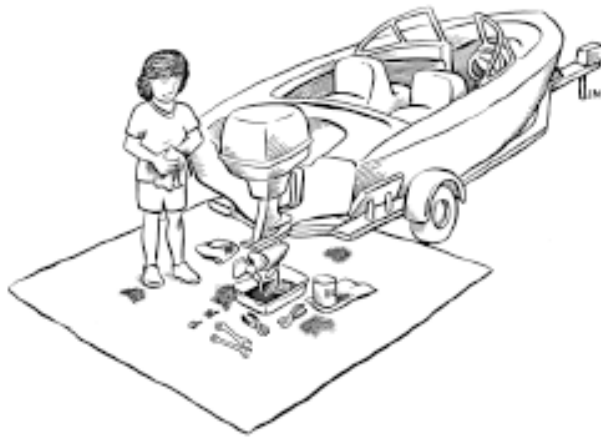
Volume 1, Issue 4

Does Your Car, Truck or Boat Leak?


Oil stains on your driveway and spills of antifreeze, brake fluid or other automotive fluids are easily carried away by a rainstorm. If the runoff from your driveway has an oily sheen, that's a sure sign that you need to be more careful.

Pans, carpet scraps, and matting can catch drips. Routine maintenance can prevent your car from leaking and help identify potential leaks. If you change your own oil, be careful to avoid spills and collect waste oil for recycling. Store oily car parts and fluid containers where rain and runoff cannot reach them. Never dump used oil, antifreeze or gasoline down a storm drain, in a ditch or on the ground. These wastes will end up in a nearby lake or stream, or they may pollute your drinking water.

Washing your car or boat on the driveway creates runoff without the help of a rainstorm — your hose provides the water. The dirty, soapy runoff drains directly into storm sewers, picking up oil and other pollutants as it goes. Try washing your car on the lawn or, better yet, take it to a commercial car wash or spray booth that sends its dirty water to a wastewater treatment plant.



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Volume I, Issue I

Does Your Dog Cause Pollution?

Droppings from dogs and cats and other commonly kept animals such as horses, exotic birds, rabbits, goats and chickens can be troublesome in two ways. First, animal wastes contain nutrients that can promote the growth of algae and aquatic plants if they enter streams and lakes. More important, animal droppings are also a source of disease organisms (dog waste, for example, can contain *Salmonella* and *Giardia*, pathogens that can affect human health).

The risk of storm water contamination increases if animal wastes are allowed to accumulate in pen areas or left on sidewalks, streets or driveways where runoff can carry them to storm sewers. The job of cleaning up after your pet can be as simple as taking a plastic bag or pooper scooper along on your next walk. Don't just stand there and pretend you don't see what your dog is doing when he squats over — carry a bag and PICK IT UP!

No solution is perfect, but here are three ways to handle pet waste:

1. Flush it down the toilet: The water from your toilet goes to either a sewage treatment plant or a septic system that removes the pollutants before the water reaches a lake or river.
2. Bury it in the yard: Dig a hole or trench that is about 5 inches deep, at least 100 feet away from gardens, wells or surface water bodies. Microorganisms in the top layer of soil will break down the waste and release the nutrients to nearby plants. Do not add any pet waste to gardens or compost piles.
3. Put it in the trash: Check local ordinances first. Putting pet waste in the trash is against the law in some communities. Even if it's legal and easy, it's not the best solution. Waste taken to a landfill or incinerator can still cause pollution problems.



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