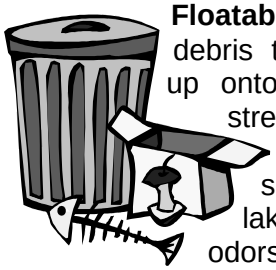
Contain Your Rain

To Reduce Pollution of Drinking Water

Passaic River Coalition's Homeowner Guide #3

What is Nonpoint Source Pollution? Nonpoint Source (NPS) pollution is the nation's main cause of water quality degradation. In the Passaic River Basin, downstream communities use the river as a drinking water source. Although individual homes might contribute only small amounts of NPS pollution, **the combined effect of entire neighborhoods can be serious!** These NPS pollutants may include:

Sediments—soil erosion that muddies streams and lakes, buries aquatic plants and animals, clogs the gills of fish, and negatively impacts both fresh and salt-water fishing.



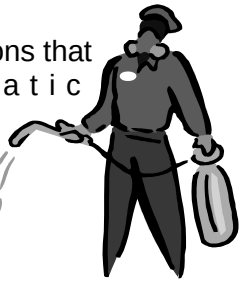
Floatables—waste and debris that may wash up onto beaches and stream banks, or decompose in streams and lakes to create odors or toxic gases.

Road salt—chloride dissolved in snow melt and stormwater runoff kills vegetation, and also contaminates surface and ground water resources.

Pathogens—viruses and bacteria that come from the droppings of warm-blooded animals may get into drinking water and cause disease.

Nonpoint Source Pollution

Pesticides—poisons that harm aquatic ecosystems, and can find their way into drinking water sources.



Nutrients—nitrogen and phosphorus, from excessive fertilizer application, lead to algal blooms that use up oxygen in the water, suffocate fish, and cause major aquatic dead zones.

Metals—such as mercury, copper and lead, which can be toxic to aquatic organisms and harmful in drinking water.

Petroleum hydrocarbons—oil and gasoline that leak from underground storage tanks or spill into drinking water sources is a serious health concern.

A Homeowner's Guide To Drinking Water Pollution Prevention

~ Take A Peek—Here's What To Seek ~

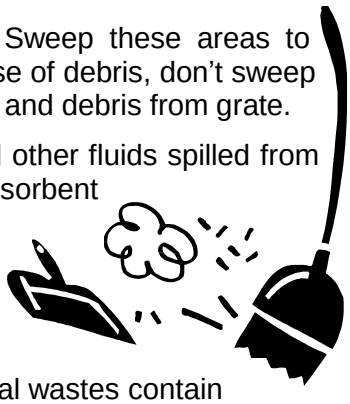
Check for pipes or floor drains that send wastewater to storm drains—close them off. All wastewater must be carried by the sanitary sewer to a treatment plant or septic system, and never sent by storm drains to local creeks and wetlands.

If you have a drinking water well, inspect and maintain it—test your water quality annually. Consider your property a well head protection area, and manage potential pollutants so rain water doesn't flush them down into the ground water that feeds your well.

Inspect and maintain your septic system and/or underground storage tank. The most common sources of ground water pollution are faulty septic systems and leaking underground storage tanks! For homeowners with septic systems or underground storage tanks for heating oil, the Passaic River Coalition can provide you with "Good Housekeeping" guidelines.

A Homeowner's Guide To Drinking Water Pollution Prevention

~ Make Your Place A Tidy Space ~



Clean up outdoor parking, recreation, and storage areas regularly. Sweep these areas to maintain a debris-free yard. Never hose off paved surfaces. Pick up and dispose of debris, don't sweep it into the gutter or storm drain. Inspect curbside storm drains and remove litter and debris from grate.

Clean up spills and leaks. Immediately mop up oil, gasoline, solvents and other fluids spilled from motor vehicles and mechanical equipment. Rags, damp mops, and dry absorbent materials are recommended for cleanup. Dispose of spilled waste properly.

Maintain landscaping properly. Pick up and properly dispose of trimmings and clippings, preferably by composting. Don't sweep or blow wastes into the gutter or storm drain inlet.

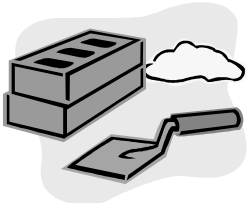
Pick up and dispose of your pet's waste in the garbage or toilet. Animal wastes contain bacteria and viruses that contaminate shellfish and cause the closing of swimming beaches.

Yard maintenance: Avoid over-watering and over-application of herbicides and pesticides. Store pollutants such as trash, grease, paints, chemicals, and metals to minimize contact with storm water. Keep these materials covered, labeled, and stored in appropriate containers.

Curbside rules: Never throw litter in streets, parking lots or down storm drains. Label storm drain inlets at curbside to alert people that no dumping is allowed.

Household management: Many common household products (paint thinners, moth balls, drain and oven cleaners, etc.) contain toxic ingredients. Do not pour hazardous products down any drain or toilet or discard with regular household trash. Find out about hazardous waste collection in your neighborhood.

~ Avoid The Drain—Contain Your Rain ~



Contain your rain: Disconnect from stormwater sewers and re-route downspouts to drain onto vegetated or gravel-filled seepage areas, or into rain barrels. Reduce impervious surfaces to allow runoff to seep into the ground by replacing driveway, walkway and patio with gravel, bricks, interlocking pavers or flat stones. Minimize lawn area to reduce chemical use by planting trees, shrubs, flowers and ground cover.

Get Involved in Your Community

Participate in community clean-up events.

Encourage your municipality to adopt the following types of ordinances:

- Well Head Protection ordinance
- Protection of Riparian Buffer Conservation Zones ordinance
- Stormwater Management ordinance

For More Information Visit

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
www.state.nj.us/dep/stormwater

and

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