

NATURALLY SPEAKING

LAKE METROPARKS

After the Storm

The flood of July 2006 was featured in the last issue of *Naturally Speaking*, which addressed the topic of stormwater management. All Lake County residents can help reduce stormwater pollution. Here are some basic stormwater runoff facts and helpful hints:

What is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks and streets prevent stormwater from naturally soaking into the ground.

Why is stormwater runoff a problem?

Stormwater can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants and flow into a storm sewer system or directly to a lake, stream, river, wetland or coastal water. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing and providing drinking water.



Residential Stormwater Pollution Solutions

Recycle or properly dispose of household products that contain chemicals, such as insecticides, paint, solvents and used motor oil and other auto fluids. Don't pour them onto the ground or into storm drains! The Lake County Solid Waste District sponsors special collections for Lake County residents throughout the year; turn to page 21 or call (440) 350-2645 for more information.

Lawn care: Excess fertilizers and pesticides applied to lawns and gardens wash off and pollute streams. In addition, yard clippings and leaves can wash into storm drains and contribute nutrients and organic matter to streams.

- Don't overwater your lawn. Consider using a soaker hose instead of a sprinkler.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly. When necessary, use these chemicals in the recommended amounts. Use organic mulch or safer pest control methods whenever possible.
- Compost or mulch yard waste. Don't leave it in the street or sweep it into storm drains or streams.
- Cover piles of dirt or mulch being used in landscaping projects.

Septic systems: Leaking and poorly maintained septic systems release nutrients and pathogens (bacteria and viruses) that can be picked up by stormwater and discharged into nearby waterbodies. Pathogens can cause public health problems and environmental concerns.

- Inspect your system every three years and pump your tank as necessary (every three to five years).

- Don't dispose of household hazardous waste in sinks or toilets.

Auto care: Washing your car and degreasing auto parts at home can send detergents and other contaminants through the storm sewer system. Dumping automotive fluids into storm drains has the same result as dumping the materials directly into a waterbody.

- Use a commercial car wash that treats or recycles its wastewater, or wash your car on your yard so the water infiltrates into the ground.
- Repair leaks and dispose of used auto fluids and batteries at designated drop-off or recycling locations.

Pet waste: Pet waste can be a major source of bacteria and excess nutrient in local waters.

- When walking your pet, remember to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method.
- Leaving pet waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local waterbodies.