

Storm Water Education

Detergent is Our #1 Pollutant

Did you know that the most common pollutant in storm drains and neighborhood creeks is detergent? Washing your car at home not only uses more gallons of water than a commercial car wash, but it also introduces soap, oil, and engine grime to the environment. The dirty water and soap washes off your car, flows down your driveway, down the street, into a curb inlet, and ends up in a nearby creek. Detergents in our creeks and ponds pose a very real threat to our fish.



You Might Be Killing Fish – and Not Know It.

Most people do not think of detergents as a serious environmental hazard. Unfortunately, detergents in our creeks and ponds pose a very real threat to our fish. The detergents by themselves can have poisonous effects to all types of aquatic life if they are present in sufficient quantities, and this includes the biodegradable detergents. All detergents destroy the external mucus layers that protect fish from bacteria and parasites; plus they can cause severe damage to the gills. Most fish will die when detergent concentrations near 15 parts per million (ppm). Detergent concentrations as low as 5 ppm, will kill fish eggs.

Detergents can also add to the problems of aquatic life by lowering the surface tension of the water. Organic chemicals such as pesticides and phenols* are then much more easily absorbed by the fish. A detergent concentration of only 2 ppm can cause a fish to absorb double the amount of chemicals they would normally absorb. As you can see, it doesn't take a lot of detergents to affect the fish. If your neighborhood creek used to have fish but now doesn't, detergents may be the reason.

Clean Up After Your Pets



Every time it rains the potential exists for thousands of pounds of pet waste to wash down storm drains and into streams, rivers, and lakes. If not disposed of properly, pet waste flows directly into nearby streams and creeks without being treated at wastewater treatment facilities.

Pet waste can contain bacteria that threaten the health of animals and people, especially children. Pet waste also contains a nutrient that encourages excess weed and algae growth. This water then becomes

cloudy and green – unattractive for swimming, boating and fishing. Excess nutrients are a major cause of water quality decline.

When pet waste is washed into lakes and streams; the waste decays, using up oxygen and sometimes releasing ammonia. Low oxygen levels and ammonia combined with warm temperatures can kill fish and other aquatic life.

What Can You Do?



Pick up pet waste from your yard and public areas. It is not a fertilizer



Carry disposable bags while walking your dog to pick up and dispose of waste properly. If you dispose of pet waste in the trash, wrap it carefully to avoid spillage during collection.



Flush your pet's waste down the toilet, so it can be treated at a sewage treatment plant.



Bury pet waste in your yard, at least 12 inches deep and cover with at least eight inches of soil to let it decompose slowly. Bury the waste in several different locations and keep it away from vegetable gardens.

Every Litter Bit Hurts!



Litter has become a significant source of nonpoint source pollution. Litter and debris impair water quality, as well as the aesthetic and recreational value of waters, and may also be hazardous to wildlife. Litter washes down the street during a rain shower, goes into the storm sewer, and ends up in your neighborhood creeks, rivers, and lakes. And it stays there a long time. Cigarette butts can take 25 years to break down because of the plastic filters; plastic six-pack rings can take 100 years to break down; and glass bottles will take 1,000 years. You don't want to swim in that mess, do you? Do yourself and your fellow Texans a favor, don't litter.