# Stormwater Pollution

Keeping Our Creeks Clean Starts With You



## The Price of Clean Water

We can't put a price tag on clean water. It's an essential ingredient of life that sustains our well-being, nourishes a healthy environment, and enhances our economic vitality. Our quality of life depends on having an abundant supply for our homes and businesses. However, many of us do not realize the impacts that our daily routines can have on water quality. Our goal in Carrollton is to keep the clean water flowing in our homes and neighborhood waterways. It's extremely important because all of our creeks drain into the Trinity River—the main source of our drinking water.

## **Sources of Pollution**

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that about 40% of the nation's waterways are considered unsuitable for swimming and fishing. Stringent controls and advances in technology have reduced industrial pollution. So most of today's urban water quality problems are collectively caused by us!



More than half of the nation's water pollution comes from stormwater runoff-the water that flows over our streets, lawns and parking lots after a rain. The runoff picks up harmful substances —like oil, detergents, paint, pesticides, bacteria, dirt and trash-and washes them into storm drains. Unlike sanitary sewers, storm drains empty into the nearest river, creek or pond without treatment to remove contaminants.

To make matters worse, some of us illegally dump hazardous materials, trash, and yard waste directly into curb inlets. In fact, even "biodegradable" and "non-toxic" products are not safe to dispose of in the street or storm drains. Despite environmentally friendly labels, many of these chemicals will harm aquatic wildlife and habitat, and poison our drinking water supplies.

## **Around the House**

Household items such as paints, cleaners, automotive fluids, pesticides and fertilizers contain toxic chemicals. By pouring excess or leftover chemicals down the drain, into a storm sewer, on the ground, or even in the trash, we pollute the environment and endanger our health. Without meaning to, we might be choking our community creeks and their inhabitants.

#### **Home Chemical Hazards**

- Americans generate about 1.6 million tons of hazardous household chemical waste per year.
- The average household can accumulate as much as 100 pounds of toxic chemicals.
- Do-it-yourselfers improperly dispose of an estimated 120 million gallons of recyclable motor oil every year.
- ♦ Just one quart of oil can pollute up to 250,000 gallons of water.

Source: EPA



The choices we make today will impact future generations. As a community we are responsible for maintaining the quality of our waterways. You are the key to the success of Carrollton's effort to keep our waters clean and safe. Please do your part to help minimize water pollution.

## Tips For Using Chemicals at Home and Reducing Water Pollution





## **Household Products**

- Read the label and follow directions for proper use and disposal.
- Purchase effective non-toxic, biodegradable, and recyclable products.
- Buy only the amount you need.
- Select multi-purpose products (e.g. a detergent that cleans and bleaches).
- Use hazardous chemicals in the least amount possible.
- Clean up spills immediately and dispose of the waste safely.
- Clean paint brushes (latex, or waterbased paints) in a sink, not the street.
- Filter and reuse paint thinners and solvents. Leftover paint sludge can be dried, wrapped in plastic, and discarded in the trash.
- Try donating unused portions to local groups and organizations.

## **Car Care**

- Wash cars on a lawn or unpaved surface, or use a commercial car wash. Avoid using the driveway or street to wash your car. Even "biodegradable" soaps are toxic
- ◆ Recycle by taking used oil and antifreeze to a service station, or to a home chemical collection event.
- Repair car leaks as soon as possible.

to fish and wildlife.

 For leaks and spills, use absorbent materials (e.g. kitty litter or sand) that can be thrown away instead of "hosing down."



## Top Pollutants Found in Urban Waterways and Their Sources

- Sediment-Construction and development
- Bacteria-Sanitary sewer overflows, pet waste
- 3. Oil & Grease Poorly maintained vehicles, improper disposal
- 4. Detergents—Residential car washing, commercial parking lot cleaning
- Heavy Metals-Industry, brake linings, tires
- 6. Fertilizers & Pesticides—Residential areas, golf courses, sports fields



## Landscape & Lawn Care

- Select native, pest-resistant plants and grasses. They require less water and fertilizers.
- Let our interactive Smartscape CD help you add diversity to your landscape. Using layers of vegetation will attract "garden heroes" like birds and predatory insects.



Call us for your copy.

- Use a mulching mower or install a mulching blade and leave grass clippings on the lawn.
- Try composting leaves and grass clippings to produce a rich soil mulch—an excellent alternative or supplement to chemical fertilizers.
- Clean up yard waste that reaches the street to keep it out of storm drains and our creeks.
- Pick up after your pets. Bacteria from pet waste is a serious threat to water quality.

## **Disposing Household Hazardous Waste**

Our landfills are not designed to handle the disposal of household chemicals. Instead of throwing them away, Carrollton offers two safe options for disposal.

- Home Chemical Collection Center
   Call 214.630.9160 for directions, hours of operation, and information on materials accepted.
- 2. Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events
  Call 214.904.3017 for the next collection event near you. For disposal or recycling questions call the city's Solid Waste Division at 972.466.4950.

## **Pesticides & Fertilizers**

- Use chemical pesticides as a last resort.
   Pesticides can kill species that benefit the environment as well.
- Apply only recommended amounts.
   Twice as much will not do twice the job.
- Avoid application before a rain. The chemicals may be washed down a storm drain—a serious threat to creeks and wildlife.
- Pesticides may poison children and pets.
   Try non-toxic alternatives or use a lawn care service that offers such treatments.
- Use slow-release fertilizers.
- Store or dispose of leftover chemicals properly, not in the trash.
- Never dump anything down a storm drain.





Keeping our creeks clean and safe will be a tough challenge as our community grows. In Carrollton, we're up to the task, but we can't do it without everyone's help. Since many of our daily activities take their toll on water quality, the change has to start with us. Our quality of life—at home and on the job—revolves around the availability of clean water. As stewards of the environment, let's take steps now to minimize our contributions to water pollution and make a difference for generations to come.

## Clean water is a bargain at any price.

Visit us at www.cityofcarrollton.com for more information on protecting our waterways, pollution prevention, pesticides, composting, smart landscaping and more.



### **Division of Environmental Quality**

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