



These are worth protecting



By protecting the watershed, creeks and the Bay, you are protecting the environment for your children and future generations.

The Watershed Watch Campaign is dedicated to educating and informing the public about the importance and value of local watersheds, and why protection of watersheds is so important to you, your children and future generations. This brochure provides information about watersheds and how you can help prevent pollution.

What is a watershed?

A watershed is a land area that drains into a creek, river, lake, wetland, bay, or groundwater aquifer. In the Santa Clara Valley, all the water from rain and irrigation which flows over the land surface (called *runoff*) goes into storm drains, creeks and rivers that flow directly to San Francisco Bay. You live in a watershed that flows to a local creek, and all of the *runoff* from your home, yard and neighborhood flows to that creek.

SANTA CLARA BASIN WATERSHED

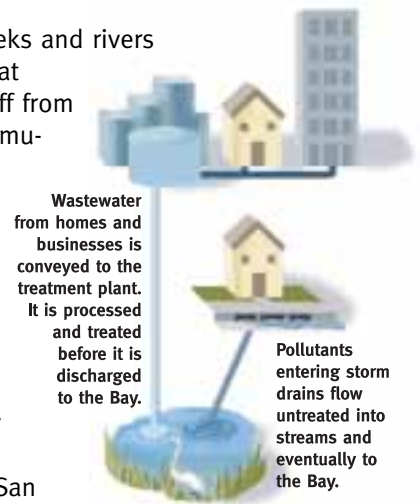


What's important about watersheds?

Watersheds are more than just drainage areas in and around our communities. They are necessary to support habitat for plants and animals, and they provide drinking water for people and wildlife. They also provide the opportunity for recreation and enjoyment of nature. Protection of the natural resources in our watershed is essential to maintain the health and well being of all living things – both now and in the future.

What's the problem?

Pollutants enter our creeks and rivers through storm drains that collect and convey runoff from most streets in our communities. The storm drains on your street may be stenciled with “No Dumping – Flows to Bay” or a similar message. Water flowing through these storm drains is untreated and carries pollutants to our creeks and streams, which eventually go to San Francisco Bay. Pollution in our watersheds degrades the environment, harms wildlife habitat, impacts the economy and jobs, causes higher taxes and fees, and ultimately affects the health of humans as well. Pollutants such as motor oil, paint products, pet waste, litter, sediment, and chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides are washed by rain and over-watered lawns into neighborhood gutters and storm drains. In day-to-day activities, people can cause some of these pollutants to enter storm drains and creeks without knowing that they are causing harm to the environment. Some pollutants, including pesticides, are found in our creeks at levels high enough to be toxic to aquatic life. Other pollutants, such as mercury, even in relatively small quantities, contaminate certain fish which can be harmful when eaten by small children, pregnant women, or anyone who eats these fish frequently.



Wastewater from homes and businesses is conveyed to the treatment plant. It is processed and treated before it is discharged to the Bay.

Pollutants entering storm drains flow untreated into streams and eventually to the Bay.



Doesn't polluted water get treated through the sewer system?

The sanitary sewer system carries wastewater from sinks, toilets and other indoor drains to local wastewater treatment plants, where processes remove most wastes before the treated water is discharged to the Bay. However, wastewater treatment plant processes cannot remove all solvents, metals, or chemicals from wastewater. The storm drain system carries rainwater and other runoff from roads, parking lots, and roof down spouts directly to local creeks and the Bay, with no treatment.



What is being done to prevent pollution?

The federal Clean Water Act and the California Water Code mandate that all cities and counties, as well as businesses and industries, take steps to prevent watershed pollution.

However, individuals also cause pollution and each of us can prevent it by making very simple changes at home, work, school and play. Preventing pollution is much easier and less expensive than cleaning it up.



Pollution prevention keeps your local creeks and wetlands healthy for birds, fish and wildlife.



EASY WAYS TO PREVENT WATERSHED POLLUTION

1. Find some alternative ways to control pests inside and outside your home, without toxic chemical pesticides. If you do use pesticides, use them sparingly and according to the directions specified on the container. Do not use outside if rain is forecast within 24 hours. Take unwanted pesticides to a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event.
2. If you change your own oil, recycle the waste oil at the curb or take it to a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event. Regularly maintain your car to avoid leaks of auto fluids. Never pour oil or other automotive fluids into a storm drain or onto the ground.
3. Clean up trash outside your home. Pick up leaves and yard clippings and recycle as green waste. If you see litter, pick it up and put it in a trash can.
4. Wash your car on an unpaved area or better yet, take it to a commercial car wash.
5. Pick up your pet droppings and dispose of them in the trash or in your toilet.
6. Use kitty litter or other absorbent materials – not your hose – to clean up spills and leaks on paved surfaces. Remember to clean up and properly dispose of the used absorbent.
7. Rinse latex paint brushes, pans and rollers in the sink. Filter and reuse oil-based paint thinner or brush cleaners. Take leftover latex and oil-based paints and solvents to a hazardous waste collection event. Never pour paint or solvents into a storm drain, sink or onto the ground.
8. Control erosion around your property to prevent dirt and debris from being carried into the storm drain.
9. Divert rainspouts and garden hoses away from paved surfaces to prevent water from carrying pollutants directly into storm drains. Provide landscaping next to sidewalks and driveways to collect runoff from paved surfaces.

CUT ALONG THIS LINE AND POST AS A REMINDER.



HOW TO ENJOY YOUR CREEKS AND BAY

1. Ride a bike or walk along a creek. Visit www.parkhere.org for trail information.
2. Take a walk along the wetlands with a naturalist. Call the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge at Alviso at (408)262-5513 for more details.
3. Find volunteer opportunities to help protect your watershed (be a watershed steward).

Call the Hotline at (866) WATERSHED or visit the website at www.WatershedWatch.net.



Protecting the watershed is essential to maintain the health and well being of all living things – both now and in the future.



WANT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WATERSHEDS AND POLLUTION PREVENTION?

Call the Watershed Watch Hotline at (866) WATERSHED for more information about less toxic methods of pest control in your home and garden, automobile care, and other pollution prevention ideas.

The Watershed Watch Campaign is a public-private partnership with participants including:

Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program

Santa Clara Basin Watershed Management Initiative

Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge at Alviso

If you would like your business, nonprofit or group to join as a Watershed Watch partner, please call the Hotline at (866) WATERSHED.

Important Numbers:

County Household Hazardous Waste collection information
(408) 299-7300

County Recycling Hotline for information on recycling
(800) 533-8414

Report illegal discharges to creeks and reservoirs to the Pollution Hotline at (888) 510-5151



**For More Information Call the Hotline at
(866) WATERSHED**

Visit the website at: www.WatershedWatch.net

This publication can be made available upon request in alternative formats.
Call the Hotline at (866) WATERSHED.