



MINNESOTA WATER  
**LET'S KEEP IT CLEAN**

**Summer Lawn Care Tip Sheet**  
**Metro Watershed Partners**  
*Minnesota Water: Let's Keep It Clean*

Here are tips for protecting water quality in our lakes, streams and rivers during the season when we use them most.

Summer is prime time for maintaining cars and boats, but some activities can harm our lakes, streams and rivers. Here's how to prevent that:

- Avoid washing your car on paved surfaces such as streets and driveways, where the dirty soapy water flows into storm drains. Wash cars on your lawn or take them to commercial car washes, which are an environmentally friendly alternative because the water drains into sanitary sewers and is treated before discharge.
- Recycle used motor oil. Never spill gasoline, motor oil, washer fluid, antifreeze or other products on hard surfaces. They will flow through storm sewers to our lakes, creeks and rivers and are harmful to fish, plants and other aquatic life.
- Don't litter. Recycle bottles and cans. Put trash from your car in the garage. Shake and wash floor mats over your lawn, not hard surfaces.
- Dispose of cigarette butts properly. Do not throw them out car windows or onto sidewalks. Nicotine is a poison that can harm aquatic life.

When soil washes down ditches it flows directly into our lakes, streams and rivers. Soil particles contain phosphorus. In the water, phosphorus feeds algae and lowers water quality. Here's what you can do to keep soil out of the water:

- Keep your lawn healthy and reseed any bare spots. Plant flowers or other ground covers in open soil.
- If you have a Blooming Boulevard, maintain a turf border or edging around it to keep the soil in place.
- When you're done with yard work clean your lawn and garden equipment on the grass, not on hard surfaces. Sweep up soil and grass clippings. Never wash or blow them into the street.

There's phosphorus in organic debris too, so it lowers water quality as well. Here's how to keep organic debris out of our lakes, streams and rivers.

- Near hard surfaces, use wood shavings or other organic mulches that knit together when wet and stay put during heavy rains.
- Leaves, twigs, tree flowers and other organic debris accumulates on roofs and in gutters. Keep it from washing into the street by directing your downspouts away from buildings and onto grass or ground cover, where the nutrients will be absorbed and recycled. If you live near a storm sewer grate, remove debris after every rain. Bag it and place in garbage. Be sure to wear gloves.
- Debris can clog storm drains and cause street flooding.
- Pet waste can contain harmful bacteria as well as nutrients. Pick up pet waste promptly. Double bag and put in the garbage. Never drop pet waste in the street or ditches.

One more tip for protecting our lakes, streams and rivers:

- Don't apply fertilizer or treat dandelions during the hot days of the summer. Fall is the best time to fertilize your lawn and treat broadleaf weeds.

*For additional tips about how to protect Minnesota's waterways at home visit the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Web site at [www.mda.state.mn.us](http://www.mda.state.mn.us) and click on the Water and Land section's Lawn Care and Water Quality pages.*

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