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ALABAMA A & M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES

## The Urban Environment And NPS Pollution Best Management Practices For Individuals

In the urban environment, much of the pollution truly begins and ends with the individual. Too often we forget that what we flush down the toilet, what we pour down the storm drain, and what washes off our yards, gardens, playing fields, and parking lots often ends up in our water—a resource critical to our survival.

Since everyone is a part of the problem, everyone must be a part of the solution. Although local governing bodies are responsible for application of best management practices (BMPs) in urban areas, individuals can help at home in the following ways:

- Recycle aluminum cans, glass, and newspapers. Recycling reduces the need for landfills and garbage disposal that can pollute surface water and groundwater.

- Recycle yard and garden trimmings and other organics such as leaves by mulching or composting. If this is not possible, collect and dispose of them according to local provisions.

- If you change your own oil, brake fluid, or antifreeze, dispose of the used products at a recycling depository. Do not dump them into a storm drain.

- Be careful with household products containing toxins. Buy only what you really need and dispose of any leftovers properly and promptly. Do not pour them down any sink, drain, or storm sewer. Use phosphate-free detergents if phosphorus is a local concern.

- Participate in hazardous chemical recycling programs; use recycling collection centers.

- Use biodegradable cleaners and other alternatives to hazardous chemicals.

- Clean up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease, and antifreeze. Do not hose them into the street where they can eventually reach local streams and lakes.

- Remove or replace underground tanks if they are leaking. Consider aboveground storage instead. Remove abandoned tanks and dispose of them properly.

- Fertilize your lawn and garden according to needs as shown by soil tests. Try not to apply fertilizer when it might be washed off by heavy rains.

- Apply pesticides according to the labels on the containers. Do not purchase more pesticide than you can use in a reasonable time. Store containers where they will not be exposed to the climate. Do not pour any unused pesticide or rinsate from containers down any sink, drain, or storm sewer. Clean up spills promptly with soil, sawdust, or kitty litter and spread it over a large area where it is labeled for use to encourage rapid break down. Properly dispose of containers according to local provisions (triple rinse prior to placing in household trash or recycle bins).

- Onsite sewage disposal systems should be located, constructed, and installed according to regulations. Maintenance and prompt correction of problems is important. Septic tank additives are of little value in correcting problems.

- Minimize impervious surfaces around your house. Instead of concrete walks use bricks, pavers, or decking to increase infiltration and reduce contaminated runoff.

- Direct roof runoff onto a grassed area, but be careful that it does not flood your or your neighbor's basement. Roof drains should not be connected into a sanitary or storm sewer system.

- Watch for soil erosion around your home. Plant grass or ground cover, install sod, or use mulch to protect the site.

- Pick up litter, pet wastes, leaves, and debris before they wash into street gutters and storm drains that drain directly to lakes, streams, and rivers. The floatable items can easily be washed into storm sewers and surface waters.

- Manage animal waste to minimize runoff into surface waters.

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- Reduce your driving. Car pool, use mass transit, ride a bicycle, or walk. This not only saves you money but reduces pollution from automobiles.

- Participate in programs such as Adopt-A-Highway and Adopt-A-Stream to assist in keeping roadways and waterways free of litter and other debris.

- Practice water conservation both indoors and outdoors around the home. For example, do not let the water run while you do dishes or brush your teeth.

- Participate in voluntary monitoring programs such as Alabama Water Watch. For information, contact the Center for Environmental Research and Service (CERS) at Troy State University (800-642-2377) or the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures at Auburn University (334-844-9119).

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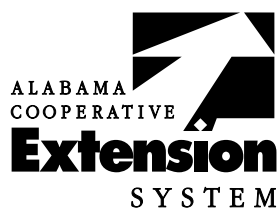
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**For more information**, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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