
Help Protect Our Environment

The Flint Creek



What is a watershed?

A watershed is the land area that drains into a water system such as a river, stream or lake. This land area may contain many smaller rivers, streams and creeks.

In the Flint Creek Watershed in northern Alabama, Flint Creek, West Flint Creek and Crowabout Creek all eventually flow into Wheeler Lake and the Tennessee River. This watershed is in Morgan, Lawrence and Cullman counties and covers about 291,000 acres.

Pollution and Watersheds

Any land activity within a watershed can affect the water quality of its rivers and streams. Some of these activities can cause water to become polluted. To find a source of pollution, we often must examine the entire watershed. This is because some types of pollution come from widespread areas (this is called nonpoint source pollution). Nonpoint source pollution that cannot be traced to a specific point. It comes from many individual places.

The water runoff from numerous mountains and farms can enter the same river or stream, making it very difficult to trace the source of the pollution.

Therefore, the understanding of a watershed is very important.

The Flint Creek Watershed Project

The Flint Creek Watershed Project was started in 1992. Its goal is to improve and protect the water quality of the Flint Creek Watershed.

Did you know?

Just 1 gallon of gasoline or oil can contaminate 750,000 gallons of water. Bacteria from sewage and animal waste can contaminate water and make it unhealthy to use for swimming and recreation.

Runoff of fertilizer and soil from farmlands into waterways can cause algae and undesirable weeds to grow. This creates an unsuitable environment for fish and other wildlife.

Pesticides from farm runoff can poison fish and make them unsafe to eat.

What are the problems in Flint Creek Watershed?

Waste products from live stock and poultry are washing into streams. Widespread littering and



dumping of trash are contaminating streams and destroying the natural beauty of Flint Creek.

Sewage from improperly maintained septic systems drains into waterways and increases bacteria in the water. This causes an overgrowth of algae and undesirable weeds. Sediment, fertilizers and pesticides from eroding croplands are polluting the river.



Be careful of wastes you put through a septic system. This will keep it in good working order.

Use pesticides and fertilizers wisely around your home or farm. Remember, anything on the ground can wash into our water supply the next time it rains.

If you see any pollution of the water in your area, contact your county Extension office or Health Department. How about writing a letter to the editorial page of your local newspaper?

What can YOU do?

Properly dispose of litter and trash. You should never dump anything into streams and creeks.



Compost your food and yard wastes. Recycle everything you can. Recycling helps to keep litter and garbage out of our lakes and streams.

Remind your parents to recycle used oil and pesticide containers.

If you live on a farm, help keep farm animals out of streams.

Conserve water in your home. This reduces the need for unnecessary wastewater treatment.

Remind your parents and other adults of ways you've learned to protect our water supply. (Remember, they didn't learn everything you're learning today!) Maybe you and your friends at school can start a club to help clean up a portion of the Flint Creek Watershed. You could join an "Adopt A Stream" program or start a recycling center for school to reduce garbage and trash.

Just remember, everyone helps create garbage, and it's everyone's responsibility to clean it up. Help to take care of Alabama's wonderful water resources!

For More Information:

The Flint Creek Watershed Project

400 Chestnut Street
Hartselle, AL 35640
(256) 773-6543

Project Leader: Brad Bole

Alabama Dept. of Environmental Management

1751 Congressman W.L. Dickinson Drive
Montgomery, AL 36130
(334) 271-7787

Alabama Cooperative Extension Service

Morgan County: (256) 773-2549
Cullman County: (256) 739-3530
Lawrence County: (256) 974-2464

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YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION -POLLUTION-

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DEFINITION OF POLLUTION - Anything that causes harm to living things.

An Example: Used motor oil. When used motor oil is dumped outside it will kill plants it contacts. It may get into drinking water and make people sick.

POINT SOURCE POLLUTION - Can be identified as to where it is coming from. An Example: A pipe from a factory.

NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION - Comes from a lot of things people do.

MINING - Digging and removing plants from the soil subjects the soil to erosion. Soil particles can move with rain into creeks and streams.

CITY WASTE - Antifreeze, transmission fluid, or oil leaks from cars and trucks are pollution sources in cities. Pesticides and fertilizer applied to lawns can wash away when it rains. Can you think of some additional pollution sources in cities?

FARMING - Livestock wastes exposed to rain can wash into creeks. Pesticides and fertilizer can be washed off of crops and out of soils to contaminate streams. Erosion of crop lands allows soil, fertilizer, and pesticides to get into our streams.

HOMES ON SEPTIC SYSTEMS - Sewage from septic systems that are not working properly can surface in our yard and drain into waterways polluting our streams.

TRASH AND LITTER - What about trash and litter in our streams? Is this a pollutant? Trash in our landscape and creeks destroys their natural beauty. As this trash decomposes or rusts, the chemicals are released into our water and can hurt our plants or animals that come in contact with them.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MINIMIZE POLLUTION?

Always put litter and trash in a trash can. Take a bag for trash in cars and trucks. Do not throw trash out along highways.

Compost yard wastes (leaves, grass clippings, limbs, and twigs). You may also compost vegetable food wastes, but do not put meats or bones in the compost bin.

Do not over fertilize lawns. Take a soil sample to determine how much fertilizer the lawn needs and apply only that much. Excess fertilizer will wash into our streams.

Recycle everything that you can! Some things that recycle: Used motor oil, aluminum cans, cardboard, newspaper, glass, plastic, metal cans, auto batteries, antifreeze.

Fence farm livestock (cows and pigs) out of streams and creeks.

Keep chicken manure out of the rain (under a shed) until it can be spread on a pasture. Remember to apply only what the pasture grass can use for growth. Too much fertilizer will wash into a creek the next time it rains.

Follow pesticide labels EXACTLY. Over application or applying a pesticide that is not approved can cause the fish in our creeks to die or be unhealthy.

Keep septic tanks working properly. Ask your parents to have them checked for sludge accumulation at least every 5 years.

ASK YOUR PARENTS TO CALL YOUR COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT TO LEARN HOW TO:

1. Apply fertilizer correctly.
2. Apply pesticides correctly.
3. Farm environmentally.
4. Participate in recycling.
5. Dispose of trash.
6. Compost yard wastes.
7. Take soil samples.
8. Get the Self*Environmental* Assistance Program.
9. Become a member of a local "stream watch" program.
10. Join an "adopt a stream" program.
11. Maintain septic systems.
12. Reduce soil erosion.

Write a one-page essay about things YOU can do to be a better environmental steward. You will be asked to read your essay at our next meeting.