

Colorado Water Protection Kit



While activities in and around our individual homes may contribute only small amounts of pollutants, they all add up to larger pollution problems in the watershed.

**Simple activities impact
the state's water quality:**

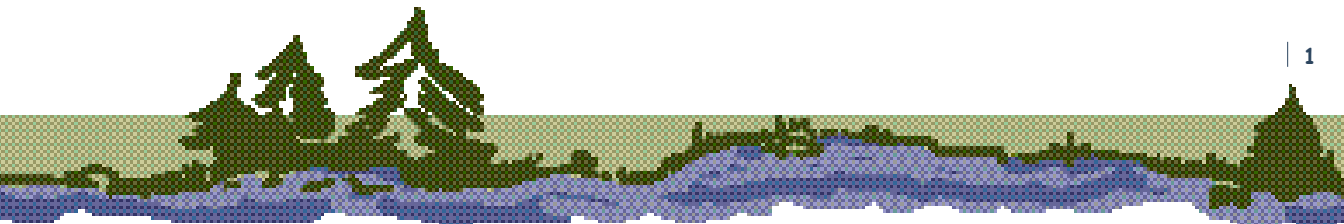
- Improperly disposing of motor oil
- Overusing lawn and garden products
- Leaving pet waste on the ground



Rain, snowmelt and overwatering move these household-generated pollutants to rivers, lakes and streams. This polluted runoff has a major impact on water quality.

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Polluted Runoff

Urban and suburban residents in Colorado can play a major role in preventing water pollution. Home chores that often start out innocently enough - like fertilizing the lawn and applying pesticides, changing the car's oil or walking the dog - can pollute the state's water resources.

When not performed with care, contaminants from these activities can be picked up from yards and streets by rainwater, snowmelt and overwatering, then carried off to be deposited in lakes, rivers and streams. Sometimes they flow directly to these bodies of water; sometimes they first travel through storm drains. Either way, there is no treatment process along the way.



Setting The Record Straight

MYTH: Most water pollution comes from large industrial polluters.

FACT: Smaller sources - especially around the home - cause a significant amount of pollution.

MYTH: The impact of one household doesn't really matter.

FACT: Even though the contribution of one home to water pollution may be small, the combined effect of an entire neighborhood or city can be substantial.

MYTH: Runoff from streets and storm drains is treated at wastewater treatment facilities.

FACT: Stormwater that runs off yards and streets is not treated before it enters local lakes, rivers and streams. That is why it is important to make sure that pollutants, such as pet waste, automotive fluids or yard and garden chemicals don't end up in storm drains.

Landscaping

When landscaping your yard, consider planning to prevent polluted runoff.

Replace high-maintenance lawn with drought resistant grass strains.

Select native plants that require less water, fertilizer and pesticide.

Plant pest-resistant species or species that attract beneficial insects.

Incorporate a wide variety of plants to disperse potential pest problems.

Use mulches in flower beds to reduce weeds and conserve water.



Contact Colorado State University Cooperative Extension at (970) 491-6281 or www.ext.colostate.edu for more information.

Follow earth-friendly yard and garden maintenance practices.

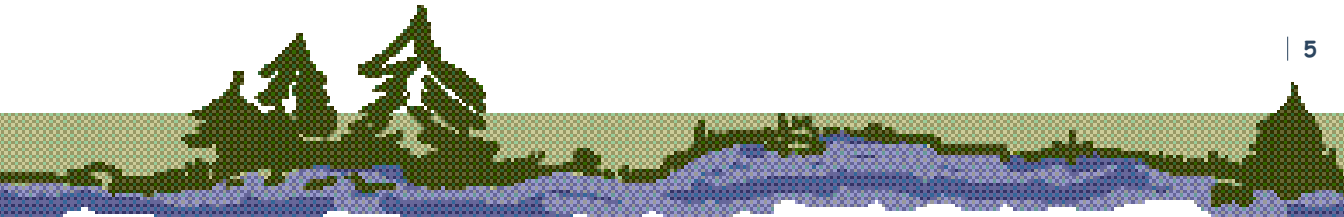
Hand pull weeds, especially before seeds are produced.

Remove insects by hand or use insecticidal soap.

Never wash lawn clippings or leaves down the storm drain. Yard waste can clog storm sewers as well as add excess organic matter to local water resources.

Consider composting lawn waste.

Consider biological pest control, such as beneficial insects.



Yard & Garden Products

It is important to carefully follow all label directions on yard and garden products. Excess amounts can flow off the land and into local water resources at the first rainfall.

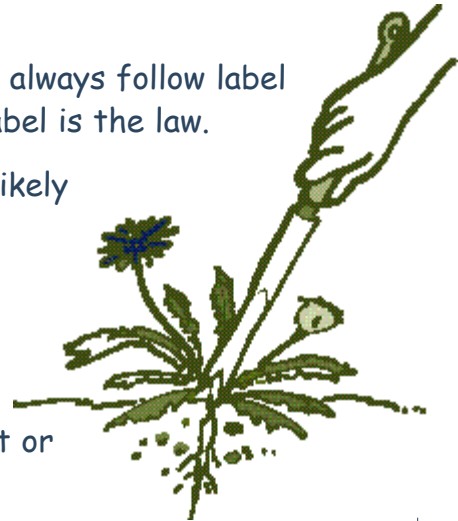
When using pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers always follow label directions for use and disposal. Remember, the label is the law.

Do not apply yard and garden products if rain is likely since most will be washed away. Also avoid overwatering after application.

Sweep any product from sidewalks and driveways back onto the yard where it can do its work.

Consider using natural fertilizers such as compost or bone meal.

Consider using slow-release nitrogen fertilizer.



Pet Waste

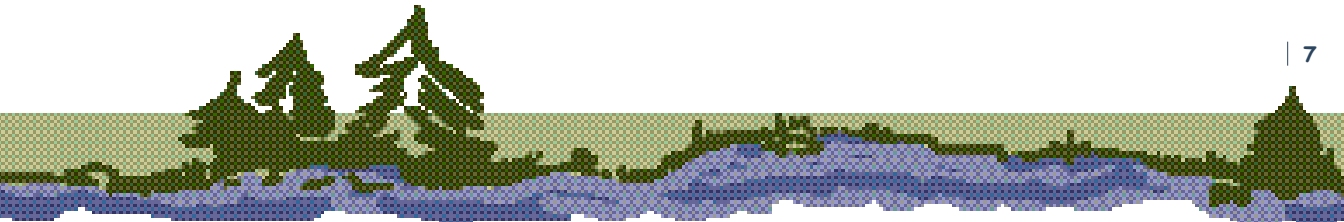
Let's face it. More than annoying, pet waste left in the great outdoors is a problem. Besides the obvious unpleasantness, piles left where they lie become part of the polluted runoff process. Disease-bearing organisms in the waste are swept along in rainwater and snowmelt. They eventually turn up, untreated, in Colorado's lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands.

The next time you take your dog for a walk:

Carry a plastic bag or pooper-scooper.

Flush it down the toilet **OR**

Wrap the pet waste securely and put it in the trash.



Household Hazardous Waste

Everyday household items, such as cleaners, solvents, thinners and paints, can contaminate surface and groundwater if not used, stored and disposed of carefully. This can harm fish and wildlife as well as endanger human health. Even small amounts poured down storm drains or onto the ground can pollute local lakes, rivers and streams.

The good news is that more than 60 percent of household hazardous waste can be recycled.



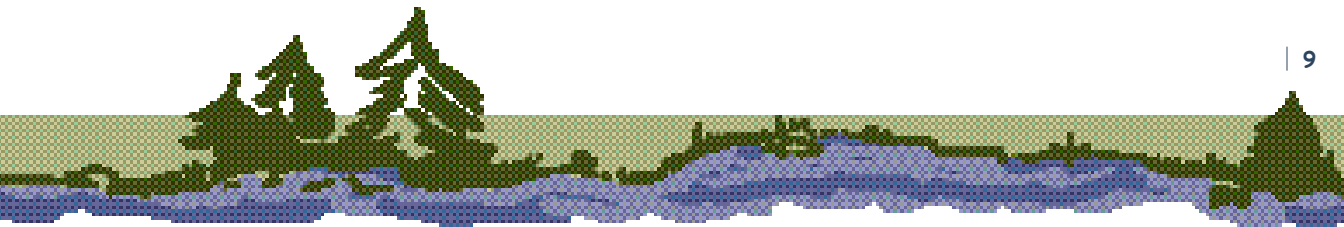
Follow these guidelines when you purchase or use household chemical products:

Always read product labels, choose the one that is least hazardous or dangerous to use, and buy the smallest amount to do the job.

Read and follow directions for use, storage and disposal carefully.

When possible, use up household chemicals completely; give unused portions to friends; or take products to a hazardous waste collection site if one is available in your community.

Contact the Pollution Prevention Program at the
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment
for more information (303) 692-2977.



Motor Oil & Automotive Products

Any automotive maintenance products dumped on the ground or down storm drains become part of the polluted runoff problem. Motor oil, petroleum products, antifreeze, transmission fluid, engine cleaner and battery acid should always be disposed of properly at a recycling or hazardous waste center.



Keep your vehicle well maintained. Repair engine, coolant, transmission and brake systems immediately.

If a spill occurs, use kitty litter, sawdust or wood chips to soak up the fluid and put it in the trash.

Read labels carefully and follow disposal directions.

Call your city or county for information about recycling and hazardous waste centers. Or inquire if a local service station or automobile supply store accepts used automotive products.

Boating & Marinas

Many residents aren't aware that recreational boating is a source of water pollution. Individual boats and marinas usually release small amounts of pollutants. However, when multiplied by the number of recreational boaters, these pollutants can cause water quality problems.

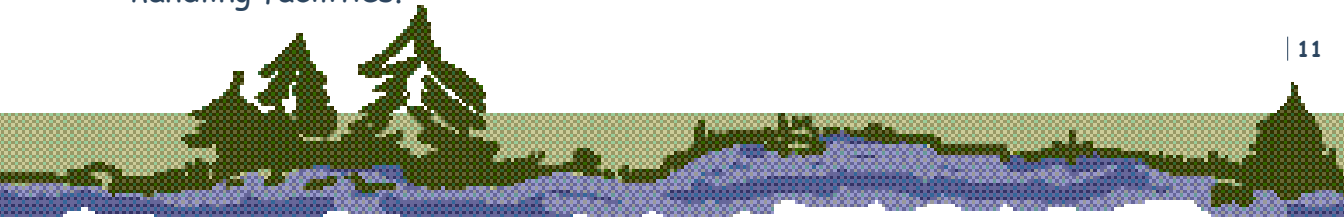
To reduce pollution from boats and marinas, boaters should:

- Use nontoxic cleaning products.

- Be careful when fueling boat engines and recycle used motor oil to prevent contamination of water by petroleum products.

- Keep boat motors well tuned to prevent fuel and lubricant leaks.

- Empty portable toilets and marine sanitation devices into appropriate waste handling facilities.



Conservation

Indoors:

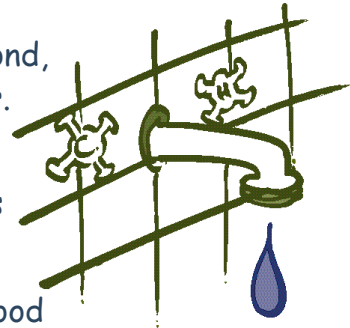
Repair dripping faucets. At a rate of one drop per second, you can expect to waste 2700 gallons of water per year.

Check for water leaks by monitoring your water meter before and after a two-hour period in which no water is used. If the readings aren't identical, a leak is evident.

Detect a leak in your toilet by adding 4 or 5 drops of food coloring to the tank. If color appears in the bowl without flushing, the tank is leaking.

Operate automatic dishwashers and washing machines only when they are fully loaded. When doing laundry, set the water level for the size of load.

Don't let water run while shaving or washing your face. Brush your teeth while waiting for the water to get hot.



OUTDOORS:

Adjust your sprinklers to water only the lawn and garden - not your house, sidewalk, driveway or street.

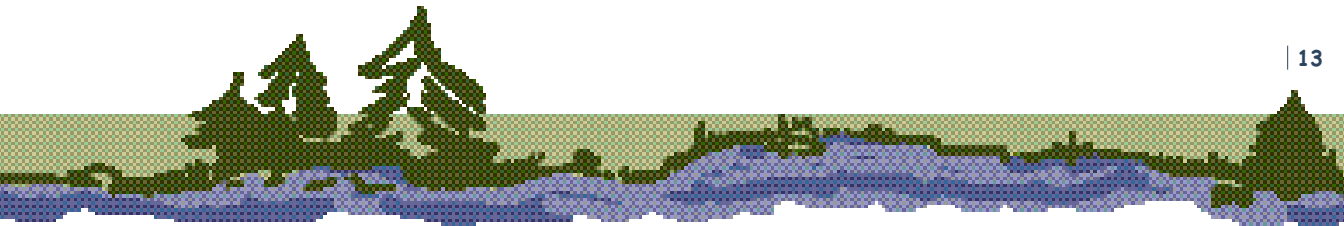
Don't hose off your sidewalks and driveway. Use a broom instead.

Use a rain gauge to determine how much rain or watering your lawn has received. Only water when needed.

Consider taking your car to a commercial car wash where wastewater will be treated.

If washing a car at home, use soap and water from a bucket. Use a hose only for the final rinse. Wash your car over lawn or gravel to prevent polluted runoff from entering storm drains.

Raise your lawn mower to its highest level. Longer grass shades roots and requires less water.



Septic Systems

Correctly maintained septic systems mean wastes are filtered properly and cannot enter nearby bodies of water.

To prevent your septic system from polluting:

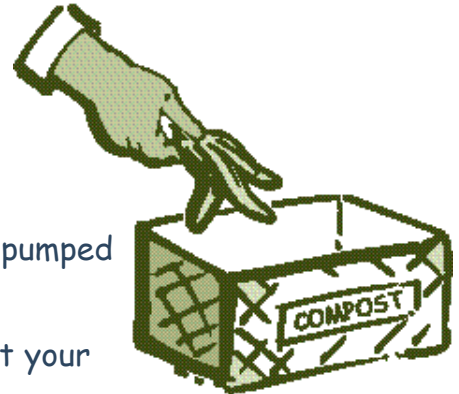
Conserve water to reduce the amount of wastewater.

Have your septic tank inspected regularly and pumped when necessary to maintain proper function.

Don't use a garbage disposal. Instead, compost your kitchen garbage.

Use only recommended amounts and types of household cleaners.

Don't pour household chemicals, such as solvents, paints or disinfectants down the drain. They can disrupt the septic system's treatment process and contaminate groundwater.



Where Has All The Oxygen Gone?

Polluted runoff often contains nitrogen and phosphorus that can adversely affect water quality. These nutrients promote algae growth, which, as it decomposes, depletes lakes, streams and rivers of the oxygen needed for fish and wildlife to thrive.

This process, known as eutrophication, can be prevented by carefully following directions when using lawn and garden fertilizers, maintaining septic systems, and picking up pet waste.

