



## Stormwater and Stream Health Action Steps Fairfax County Stormwater Management

### \*\*\*\*\*What You Can Do\*\*\*\*\*

- ✦ **Absorb or use stormwater on-site:** The number one contributor to stream degradation in Fairfax County is uncontrolled stormwater runoff. Stormwater falls on such areas of impervious surfaces as roads, rooftops, driveways, parking lots and sidewalks. It then becomes surface runoff, picking up pollutants along the way, and then flows to the nearest stream. Stream channels are overwhelmed by the volume and velocity of runoff, causing erosion, habitat loss and unstable stream banks. **Action Steps:**
  - Create a rain garden or install rain barrels to use the stormwater that falls on your property. Information is available at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/rainbarrels.htm>.
  - Reduce lawn areas and add more plants and trees that absorb more water than a lawn. Information is available at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/newsletter/bayjournal.htm>.
  - Contact the county about workshops and information on rain gardens and rain barrels at 703-324-5500, TTY 711.
  
- ✦ **Fertilize in the fall, if at all:** Excess fertilizers are washed off the land into streams by stormwater, polluting county streams and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. The extra load of nutrients from fertilizer causes large algae population booms which then lead to 'dead zones' in the bay. Fertilizing your lawn in the spring only contributes to increased blade growth, which then means more mowing, causing more air pollution from gasoline powered lawn mowers. **Action Steps:** Fertilizing properly in the fall will improve the health of your lawn because this is the time of year that the roots grow stronger and denser. Pick up a soil test kit at your local home improvement store or from the Virginia Cooperative Extension to find out what fertilizers, if any, your lawn may need. Protect the health of your local stream and the bay, and save money at the same time. For more information visit <http://offices.ext.vt.edu/view.cfm?webname=fairfax>.
  
- ✦ **Clean up after pets and don't feed the geese:** Pet waste should be placed in the trash or flushed down the toilet. Waste left on the ground washes into streams and contributes to the high levels of fecal coliform bacteria found in county streams. Droppings from non-migratory Canada geese are another contributory factor to high levels of bacteria. **Action Steps:** Don't encourage geese by feeding them. The large amounts of mowed lawn in the county support large populations of geese; reduce lawn and substitute plants and trees to discourage geese. For more information visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/newsletter/scoopthepoop.htm>.
  
- ✦ **Properly dispose of chemicals, used motor oil and trash:** Storm drains are not the place to dispose of waste. Anything that enters a storm drain goes directly to the nearest stream, not to a treatment plant. **Action Steps:** Dispose of used motor oil properly. One quart of oil can contaminate two million gallons of water. Pool water should be treated to remove chemicals and add oxygen before it is drained into the stormwater system. Trash can clog storm drains and form obstructions in streams, causing flooding. For more information visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/waterqualitybk.htm#drains>.
  
- ✦ **Wash your car at a car wash and keep it properly maintained:** Washing your car in your driveway allows the soapy water to run off the impervious surface and into the storm drain, then into a stream, and then ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. This can cause fish to die and create nutrient overloads, affecting their natural habitat. Commercial car washes are required to collect and treat water or send it to the wastewater treatment plant. A car that leaks oil, anti-freeze and other chemicals will contribute to stream pollution because these liquids wash off pavements into storm drains. **Action Steps:** Wash your car on your lawn or use a commercial car wash. Keep your car maintained to decrease oil, anti-freeze or other leaks. For more information about these and other types of nonpoint source pollution, visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/newsletter/nps.htm>

- ✦ **Maintain or plant a stream buffer:** Stream buffers, also called riparian buffers, are areas of dense, natural vegetation along the sides of a stream. The vegetation filters pollutants from overland stormwater runoff, prevents erosion and loss of stream banks, maintains cooler water temperatures and provides habitat. **Action Steps:** The county organizes many buffer planting projects that require volunteers. Get involved in your neighborhood. For more information visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/stormwater/riparianbuffer/>.
- ✦ **Join a stream clean up project, adopt-a-stream, or participate in storm drain labeling. Action Steps:** get involved in your community and help spread the word about stream health. For more information visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/stormwater/volunteer.htm> or [http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil\\_&\\_water/adopt.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil_&_water/adopt.shtml).
- ✦ **Become a volunteer stream monitor:** Find out how healthy your neighborhood stream is by observing the aquatic insects that live underwater. **Action Steps:** The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District will train volunteers and provide all necessary equipment. Start your own monitoring site or work with others at already established sites. For more information visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/monitoring.htm>.
- ✦ **Participate in watershed planning:** Fairfax County has 30 watersheds. A watershed is the area of land that drains to a particular stream or other water body. **Action Steps:** Learn in which watershed you live and find the status of planning efforts in your watershed. You are encouraged to get involved because your input is valuable to the process. For more information visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/involved.htm>

For questions, more information or to volunteer, call the Stormwater Management Division at 703-324-5500, TTY 711. **The county values public involvement in the health of its streams.**



To request this information in an alternate format call 703-324-5500, TTY 711.



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