

Urban Water Pollution *A Draining Topic*

Motor Oil

Pollution: Motor oil can damage or even kill aquatic vegetation and animal life. An oil slick (contaminating two million gallons of drinking water) can develop from one quart of oil.



Solutions:

- 💧 Recycle your used motor oil.
- 💧 Never pour used motor oil down a storm drain or onto your grass or driveway.

Household Hazardous Waste

Pollution: Many household products we use daily contain toxic materials that can threaten public health and the environment. Drain and oven cleaners, paint thinners, and bathroom cleaners are just a few of the items we use that can cause serious health and environmental problems.

Solutions:

- 💧 Dispose of all unused household hazardous wastes at your local disposal site.
- 💧 Use natural alternatives.



Contact us about urban water pollution and what you can do to help reduce the problem.

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**Storm water is not treated.
It flows from street to river.**



Not snow or ice.

When rain water flows across surfaces like manicured lawns, streets, parking lots, and roofs where it can't soak in, it accumulates and rushes into storm drains and waterways. Natural vegetation such as forests and pastures slow the rainwater, allowing it to soak into the ground.

Storm water that travels into storm drains flows directly into streams and rivers. It **Does Not** go through a wastewater treatment plant. Because some people wrongly assume storm water is treated, many citizens use storm drains and ditches as places to dispose of all kinds of pollutants. So storm drains wind up carrying large amounts of pollution away from urban areas straight into our streams, lakes, ponds, and finally into the Kansas River.

Street litter, fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, yard and pet waste, motor oil, anti-freeze, household hazardous wastes, are just a few of the pollutants that find their way into our waterways through storm drains.

Here we review nine problems and nineteen suggestions for ways to improve our storm water.

Street Litter and Plastics

Pollution: Large quantities of street litter end up floating in streams, rivers and lakes. Street litter is often made up of plastics. Plastics take hundreds of years to biodegrade and can be harmful to birds and animals who may mistake them for food.

Solutions:

- ◆ Put all litter into garbage cans, never throw it into storm drains or the street.
- ◆ Recycle as much plastic and other materials as possible.

Pet Waste

Pollution: If left on yards, pet waste can release untreated bacteria and other harmful materials into streams.



Solution:

- ◆ Bury, send to landfill, or flush pet wastes down the toilet.

Yard Waste

Pollution: Yard waste can clog storm drains making it difficult to carry away excessive amounts of water during storms.



Solutions:

- ◆ Remove soil, leaves, and grass clippings from your driveway, street, or sidewalk.
- ◆ Compost grass clippings and other plant waste.

Pesticides and Herbicides

Pollution: Pesticides and herbicides contain toxic materials that pose both environmental and human health risks. Humans, animals, aquatic organisms, and plants can be severely threatened by these chemicals. The toxins found in pesticides and herbicides can runoff lawns and gardens into storm drains and streams whenever it rains.



Solutions:

- ◆ Minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides and use alternatives instead.
- ◆ Make sure that all directions and warnings are read before use and follow those directions.
- ◆ Reduce the amount of plastics you use.

Anti-freeze

Pollution: Anti-freeze can seriously deplete oxygen from water, and can be fatal to all plant and animal life, including humans.



Solutions:

- ◆ Recycle your used anti-freeze.
- ◆ **Do not** mix used anti-freeze with any other material.

Paint

Pollution: When improperly used, paint can poison people and animals. Lead is an especially harmful content of some paints.



Solutions:

- ◆ Donate your old paint to community groups.
- ◆ Dispose of oil-based and lead paints at your local household hazardous waste collection site.



Fertilizers

Pollution: Fertilizers contain large amounts of chemicals that are good for lawns and plants when used properly. The main chemicals contained in fertilizers are nitrogen and phosphorus. These two chemicals can cause accelerated growth of aquatic plants leading to oxygen depletion and large fish kills.

Solutions:

- ◆ If you spill fertilizer, sweep it up, do not wash it into the streets and storm drains.
- ◆ Never apply fertilizers before it rains.
- ◆ Do not over apply fertilizers. More application **does not** mean a greener lawn.