



Why Protect Our Water Quality

Every animal, plant, or living thing on Earth requires water to survive. But not just any water will do; in order to thrive, the water must be clean and relatively pollutant free.

Our waterways not only carry water and the aquatic life that live there, but they also carry pollutants washed into them from our urban areas and agricultural lands. While we can't get rid of or control all of the sources of pollutants from our environment, we can educate ourselves about their impacts on our creeks, lakes and rivers, and how to minimize them.

We must keep in mind that water resources are a vital part of our lives, and when those resources are impaired by pollution, it negatively affects all of us and our environment. Good water quality benefits human health, recreation, the economy and wildlife.

What is a Pollutant?

A simple definition of pollutant is any substance that causes harm to the environment when it mixes with soil, water, or air. In the instance in which it applies to water quality, pollutants can be fertilizers and pet waste from lawns, motor vehicle fluids and particulates from paved surfaces, sediment and debris from construction sites, absorbed radiant heat from dark impervious urban surfaces, soot from industrial processes exhausted from chimneys and stacks, and bacteria and nutrients from animal wastes.

The one common link among all of the pollutants listed above is that they all can be carried by the runoff of stormwater or snowmelt into our waterways.

Construction Sites

In urban areas, one of the most significant potential sources of pollutants is silt and sediment flowing into our ponds and creeks from unvegetated disturbed land under construction. With the implementation of the US Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), Phase II permit, all construction sites greater than one acre require a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan which includes erosion and sediment control measures. Under the DuPage County Countywide Stormwater and Flood Plain Ordinance, any disturbance requires implementation of erosion and sediment control measures and the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Commercial and Industrial

Potential significant sources of pollutants from commercial areas are litter, food waste, bird droppings, and runoff from parking lots. Potential significant sources of pollutants from industrial areas are soot from chimneys and stacks and runoff from parking and storage facilities. Stormwater runoff volume and water quality from commercial and industrial areas is very significant because of the vast amounts of impervious areas associated with these sites. We already reduce the adverse effects associated with the volume of runoff with detention basins. However, an additional benefit of a basin is its ability to remove stormwater pollutants. Many industries have their own NPDES permits that require them to practice good housekeeping, and they may also be required to provide engineered treatment systems for their stormwater runoff.

Residential

Residential areas are also a source of pollutants and become a very significant source when summed up as a whole. To discourage residents from releasing chlorinated swimming pool water, motor vehicle fluids, car wash runoff, and other chemicals down the storm drains, the Village labels them indicating that they drain into the creek. Residents with green thumbs can do more to protect and improve our water quality. They can help by installing turf filter strips to cleanse the runoff, planting rain gardens to capture and infiltrate rain water into the ground, and landscaping with native plants to reduce the use of irrigation and garden chemicals. See the Q&A for more ideas.

If you notice any illicit dumping or discharges into the storm sewer system, please contact the Environmental Services Division at (630) 279-2140. For problems associated with construction sites, contact:



Q & A

Where does my street or yard drain go?

Not all of the drains in the Village are piped to the waste water treatment plant (WWTP). Most of the Village has a separate storm sewer system that eventually discharges runoff at various points into the creek without any treatment. Some older parts of the Village do have a combined sanitary and storm sewer system that pipes the combined sewerage to the WWTP and treats it before releasing it into Salt Creek, but many pollutants found in stormwater runoff or dumped into storm drains can cause problems at the WWTP.

What can I do to protect our water quality?

Less waste means that fewer pollutants will ultimately get into our water, so everyone can do their part no matter how big or small. By simply cleaning up around your property, you will make a significant contribution. At home, picking up litter and pet waste, reducing the use of herbicides and fertilizers, storing household chemicals properly, and recycling all will help.

DO NOT drain or dump unused medicines, garden chemicals, motor oil, antifreeze, or other

motor vehicle fluids into a sink drain, toilet, street or yard drain. Instead, contact your local pharmacy about taking the medicines back. All other unused household chemicals and fluids should be taken to a Household Hazardous Waste collection site for proper disposal.

What is the Village doing?

The Village regularly sweeps its streets of debris and sediment and educates residents with literature and by labeling its drains. We practice good housekeeping and pollution prevention at all Village facilities. We actively investigate illicit discharges whenever possible. We require erosion and sediment control measures for most construction sites, and settling basins are required on larger sites. We advocate the use of drywells and French drains to get stormwater filtered and back into the ground. Under NPDES Phase II, the Village is further implementing measures to meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act such as requiring post construction Best Management Practices (BMPs). See our "Best Management Practices" brochure for more information.

Where can I learn more?

- Household Hazardous Waste Collection
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/land/hazardous-waste/household-haz-waste/index.html>
- Stormwater Outreach Materials
http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwatermont_h.cfm
- Green Infrastructure
<http://greenvalues.cnt.org>
- Conservation Foundation
<http://www.theconservationfoundation.org>

Guide to PROTECTING OUR WATER QUALITY

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