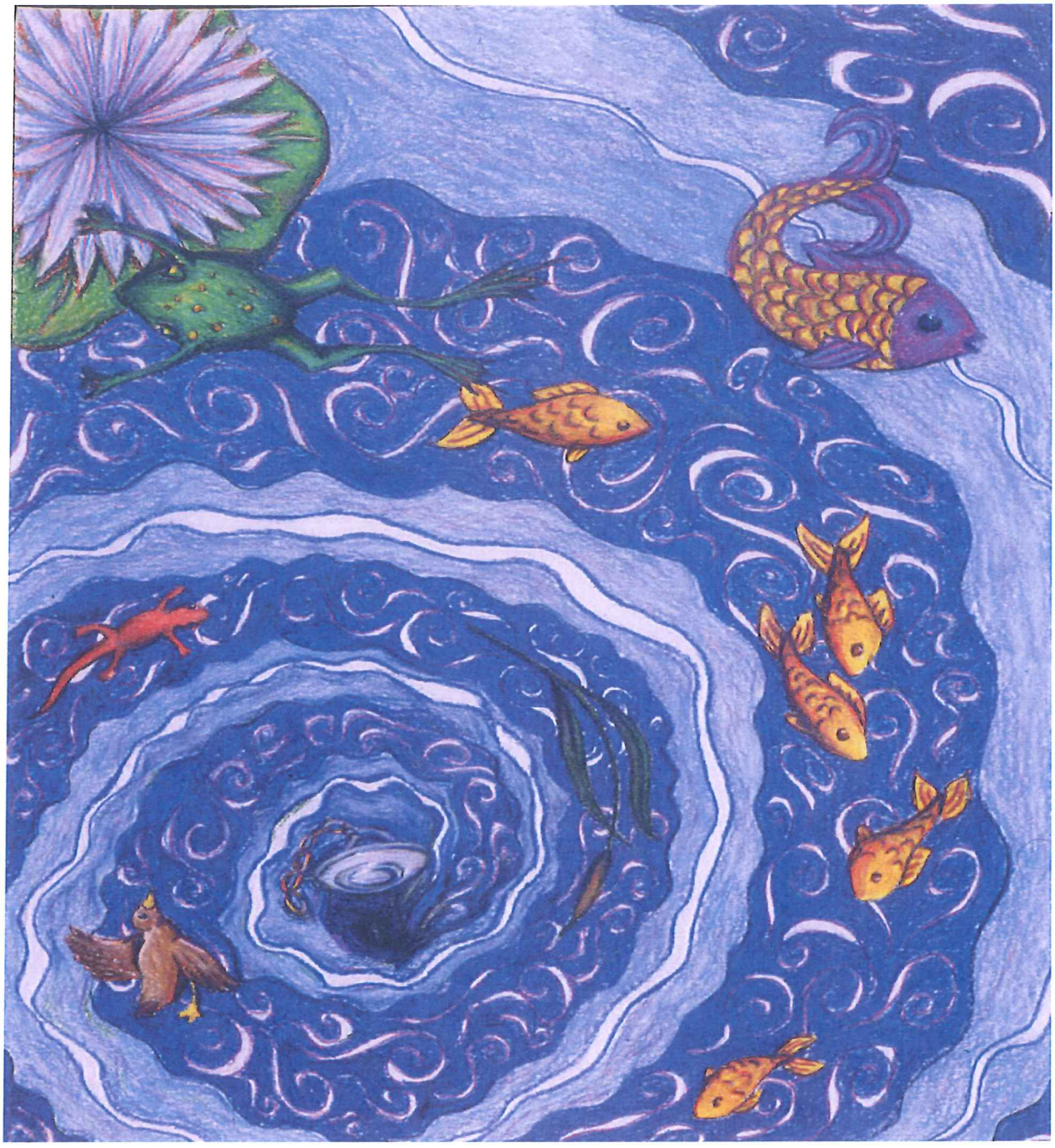
Watershed Patch Project 2004



Projects and Activities

Home and Lawn Care Checklist: "Personal Pollution"

When rain falls or snow melts, the seemingly small amounts of chemicals and other pollutants in your driveway, on your lawn, and on your street are washed into storm drains. In many older cities, the storm water runoff is not treated and runoff flows directly into rivers, streams, bays, and lakes. Pollutants in this runoff can poison fish and other aquatic animals and make water unsafe for drinking and swimming.

What can you do to help protect surface waters and groundwaters? Start at home. Take a close look at practices around your house that might contribute to polluted runoff. The following is a checklist to help you and your family become part of the solution instead of part of the problem!

Do-It-Yourself Home Cleaning Products

General, multipurpose cleaner (for ceramic tiles, linoleum, porcelain, etc.): Measure 1/4 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup white vinegar, and 1 cup ammonia into a container. Add to a gallon of warm water and stir until baking soda dissolves.

Window Cleaner: 3 tablespoons of ammonia, 1 tablespoon of white vinegar and 3/4 cup of water. Put into a spray bottle.

Visit http://www.epa.gov/grtlakes/seahome/housewaste/src/recipes.htm for more ideas on nontoxic alternatives!

Household Products

1. **Do you properly dispose of household hazardous waste such as leftover oil-based paint, excess pesticides, nail polish remover, and varnish by taking them to your city's or county's hazardous waste disposal site or by putting them out on hazardous waste collection days?** Labels such as **WARNING, CAUTION, and DANGER** indicate the item contains ingredients that are hazardous if improperly used or disposed of.

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. **Do you use less toxic alternatives or nontoxic substitutes?** Baking soda, distilled white vinegar, and ammonia are safe alternatives to caustic chemicals. And they save you money.

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. **Do you limit the amount of chemicals, fertilizers, and pesticides you use and apply them only as directed on the label?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. **Do you recycle used oil, antifreeze, and car batteries by taking them to service stations and other recycling centers?**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

Landscaping and Gardening

5. **Do you select plants with low requirements for water, fertilizers, and pesticides? (e.g., native plants)**

   ☐ Yes ☐ No

6. **Do you preserve existing trees and plant trees and shrubs to help prevent erosion and promote infiltration of water into the soil?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

7. **Do you leave lawn clippings on your lawn so that the nutrients in the clippings are recycled, less fertilizer is needed, and less yard waste goes to landfills?** If your community does not compost lawn trimmings, they usually go to landfills.

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. **Do you prevent trash, lawn clippings, leaves, and automobile fluids from entering storm drains?** Most storm drains are directly connected to our streams, lakes, and bays.

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. **If your family uses a professional lawn care service, do you select a company that employs trained technicians and minimizes the use of fertilizers and pesticides?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. **Do you have a compost bin or pile? Do you use compost and mulch (such as grass clippings or leaves) to reduce your need for fertilizers and pesticides?** Compost is a valuable soil conditioner that gradually releases nutrients to your lawn and garden. In addition, compost retains moisture in the soil and thus helps conserve water and prevent erosion and runoff. Information about composting is available from your county extension agent (see the blue pages in your phone book).

☐ Yes ☐ No

11. **Do you test your soil before fertilizing your lawn or garden?** Overfertilization is a common problem, and the excess can leach into groundwater and contaminate rivers or lakes.

☐ Yes ☐ No

12. **Do you avoid applying pesticides or fertilizers before or during rain?** If they run off into the water, they will kill fish and other aquatic organisms.

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did You Know?

One quart of oil can contaminate up to 2 million gallons of drinking water!

Water Conservation

Homeowners can significantly reduce the volume of wastewater discharged to home septic systems and sewage treatment plants by conserving water. If you have a septic system, you can help prevent your system from overloading and polluting ground and surface waters by ensuring that it is functioning properly and decreasing your water usage. For other ideas on what you can do to conserve water, check out a new Web site, http://www.h2ouse, developed in partnership with the California Urban Water Conservation Council.

13. **Do you use low-flow faucets and shower heads, and reduced-flow toilet flushing equipment?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

14. **When washing your family's car, do you use a bucket instead of a hose to save water?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. **Do you use dishwashers and clothes washers only when fully loaded?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

16. **Do you take short showers instead**

Give Water A Hand

What is your city, town, or school doing to prevent polluted runoff? GIVE WATER A HAND ACTION GUIDE contains checklists for schools, communities, and farms. This guide can help you and your school identify potential problems in your community and take action.

You can download a free copy of *Give Water A Hand Action Guide and Leader Guidebook* at http://www.uwex.edu/erc/gwah. Or to order printed copies call:

University of Wisconsin-Extension
608-262-3346
Items 4-H450 & 4-H855
Leader Guidebook ($4.92)
Action Guide ($6.96)
Price includes shipping.

of baths and avoid letting faucets run unnecessarily (e.g., when brushing teeth)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. **Do you promptly repair leaking faucets, toilets, and pumps to conserve water?**

☐ Yes ☐ No

18. **Do you conserve the amount of water you use on your lawn and water only in the morning and evening to reduce evaporation?** Overwatering may increase leaching of fertilizers to groundwater.

☐ Yes ☐ No

19. **Do you use slow watering techniques such as trickle irrigation or soaker hoses?** These devices reduce runoff and are 20 percent more efficient than sprinklers.

☐ Yes ☐ No

In Your Community

20. **Do you always pick up after your pet (e.g., Rover's poop)? Be sure to put it in the trash, flush it down the toilet, or bury it at least 5 inches deep.** Pet waste contains viruses and bacteria that can contaminate surface and groundwater.

☐ Yes ☐ No

21. **Have you helped stencil stormdrains to alert people that they drain directly to your local waterbody?** If not, get involved with a local conservation group or organize your own stenciling project.

☐ Yes ☐ No

22. **Do you ride or drive only when necessary?** Try to walk instead. Cars and trucks emit tremendous amounts of airborne pollutants, which increase acid rain. They also deposit toxic metals and petroleum by-products.

☐ Yes ☐ No

23. **Do you participate in local planning and zoning decisions in your community?** If not, get involved! These decisions shape the course of development and the future quality of your watershed.