

Spring Lake Storm Water Newsletter

Pet waste

July 2009

As Stormwater flows over driveways and sidewalks it picks up debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants. Then this stormwater flows directly into our creeks, streams, rivers and lakes.

Everything entering our stormwater system flows untreated into the bodies of water that we use for swimming, fishing and most importantly for drinking. This polluted runoff is a big contributor to the quality of our water in North Carolina...so what can you do to help?

Here's a start:

Responsible Pet Ownership

Non-point source (NPS) pollution is contamination that reaches our creeks from everyday activities such as fertilizing the lawn, walking pets, littering, and changing motor oil. With each rainfall, the pollutants generated by these activities are washed from streets and lawns into the storm drains that flow to our creeks. You can help prevent this pollution.

Pet Waste

As a pet owner you should establish habits that will help keep our creeks free of pollutants. Animal wastes contain bacteria, viruses and nutrients, which will lower water quality in our creeks. Pet waste is bad for streams for two reasons. First, the bacteria in pet waste can cause illness in humans, if contaminated water comes in contact with an open wound or is ingested. Second, bacteria require oxygen in order to live and, as a result, reduce the amount of oxygen in the water that is available for fish. Pet waste is a neighborhood nuisance and a carrier of potential illness into our streams and rivers. Pollutants from improper disposal of pet waste may wash into the creeks and rivers through the storm drainage system. That is why it is important to take a plastic bag or pooper scooper along on your walk and pick up your pet's waste. Once you pick up the waste, you can flush it down the toilet, or bag it and put it in the trash.

Pet Waste FAQs

Q. I don't walk my dog near a creek or river. How does my dog's waste get there?

A. When it rains, pet waste and other pollutants (litter, oil, etc.) are carried into the storm drains, through pipes, and into the river system.

Q. Why doesn't the sewage treatment plant clean this water before it reaches the river?

A. Sewage treatment plants only process waste water from indoor plumbing. Sewage treatment plants do not treat storm water.

Q. Other animals such as squirrels, rabbits and birds already "use the facilities" outdoors as their bathroom. Why should I worry about my pet?

A. The number of wild animals in any area is controlled through the ecosystem; however there is no "natural control" for our pets. The waste from the large number of pets in our part of the country cannot be adequately or naturally absorbed into the environment.

Q. Should I pick up the pet waste in my own yard?

A. Yes, definitely. During a rain storm, this waste can get washed out of your yard, down a street or gully and find its way into the storm water system. In addition, when waste is not removed, it leaves a large quantity of nutrients that can burn out grasses by overfeeding them, creating a spotty looking yard.

So this summer as you enjoy our beautiful mornings and evening walking your dog remember to carry a bag to clean up after them. Not only will you be contributing to cleaner water, but the appearance of your neighborhood and the Town.

REMEMBER: IT'S NOT JUST STORMWATER...IT'S YOUR DRINKING WATER!

To report problems call 436-0241 and ask for Byron Blumenfeld in the Stormwater office
or visit www.spring-lake.org then water resources then stormwater