



CNY Stormwater Coalition

Gardens and Gutters

A Central New Yorker's Guide to Managing Stormwater Runoff

Volume 2, Number 2

Summer 2014

CLEAN WATERS: Starting in Your Home and Yard

Courtesy of Connecticut Sea Grant

Heather M. Crawford

Inside this issue:

Up for a Swim?	2
It's the Law! Fertilize with Care!	2
Swimming Pool Maintenance for Water Quality	3
Stormwater Coalition	4
Upcoming Events	4

It's the first thing in the morning and the dog wants to go out right NOW, the cats are standing by their litter box waiting for some fresh kitty litter, and your toddler is demanding a trip to the park to feed the ducks. While none of these activities may sound like a major threat to the environment, animal waste is one of the many little sources of pollution that can add up to big problems for water quality and may cause human health problems as well. While most people connect animal waste problems to agriculture, studies have shown that pets, waterfowl and other urban wildlife can cause significant water pollution problems.

Animal waste contains several types of pollutants that contribute to water quality problems: nutrients, pathogens, and a naturally toxic material- ammonia. When animal waste ends up in a lake or stream, it decomposes, using up oxygen and releasing its pollutant load. During summer months when the water is warm, the combination of low oxygen levels and ammonia can kill fish and other aquatic organisms. The nutrients cause excessive growth of aquatic weeds and algae. When these conditions make the water murky green and smelly, or when the surface of the water is covered in a thick mat of vegetation, the area becomes unattractive or unusable for swimming, boating, or fishing.

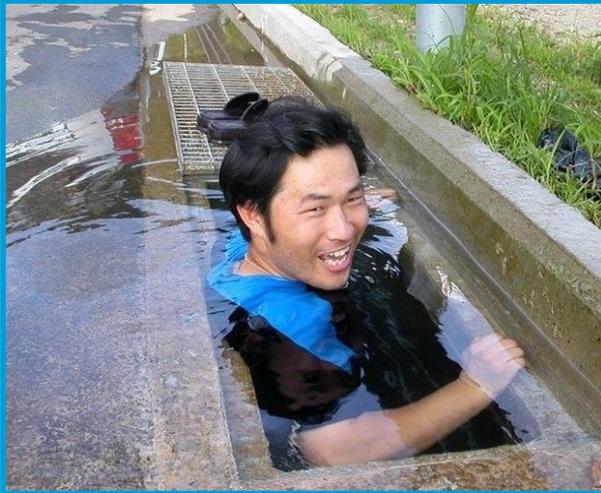
Pathogens, the disease-causing bacteria and viruses associated with animal waste, can also make water unsafe for human use. If pathogens or the indicator bacteria associated with animal waste are found

during testing, beaches may be closed for swimming and drinking water supplies may require expensive filtration or disinfection.

Fortunately, there are some simple practices everyone can do to help prevent pollution by keeping animal waste out of the water. While it may seem easier to ignore the problem of animal waste, remember that you are protecting not only the environment but also your own health.

1. **Pick up after your pet.** Preventing water pollution can be as simple as remembering to take along a plastic bag or pooper scooper when you walk your dog. Once you have picked up the waste, dispose of it in a waste receptacle or flush the waste (not the bag) down the toilet.
2. **Don't feed waterfowl.** Feeding ducks and geese cause the birds to concentrate in numbers higher than can be supported by the natural food supplies. Large numbers of birds create large quantities of waste which contributes to water quality problems.





UP FOR A SWIM?

Grab a beach towel and head for the closest... storm drain?

That's right! Your favorite swimming hole begins right on your street. Look along the curb and find a storm drain. It's a direct connection to your local lake or stream.

Storm drains are designed to prevent flooding. Large volumes of water from heavy rains and snowmelt wash over streets and into the drains. Underground pipes transport the water rapidly into area streams, rivers and lakes.

There's a downside to storm drain efficiency. When water washes into the drains, pollutants are carried along for the ride. Litter, pet waste, dirt, fertilizers, antifreeze and motor oil are just a few examples of contaminants that enter our waterways through storm drains. No filters, no treatment.

**Be a water quality champion.
Keep storm drains for rainwater**

It's the Law! Fertilize with Care!

The New York State Dishwasher Detergent and Nutrient Runoff Law restricts the use of phosphorus containing detergents and lawn fertilizers. While phosphorus is a nutrient that is essential for plant growth, in high levels it can degrade water quality. In many areas of NYS the soils naturally contain a sufficient amount of phosphorus to support the growth of turf grass without the need for additional fertilizer.

The law does not ban the use of phosphorus fertilizer, but for an established lawn it does require that a soil test be conducted to indicate that the soil is lacking in phosphorus. To ensure accurate test results, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation recommends using a reliable laboratory over a home soil test kit.

If the soil is lacking phosphorus, an organic fertilizer can be applied. If the soil is not lacking, only fertilizer that contains .67% or less phosphorus, which the law defines as phosphorous-free, can be applied.

Phosphorus fertilizer can also be applied if you are establishing a new lawn with seed or sod. The law does not impact the use of agricultural fertilizer or fertilizer for gardens.

Retailers are required to display phosphorus containing fertilizer separately from non-phosphorus fertilizers, and to post an educational sign where the phosphorus fertilizers are displayed.

Other things to keep in mind with the new law:

- Fertilizers containing phosphorus, nitrogen or potassium are prohibited between December 1st and April 1st

It's the Law! Fertilize With Care!

(continued)

- Phosphorus containing fertilizer may not be applied within 20 feet of any surface water unless there is a vegetative buffer of at least 10 feet
- Fertilizer application on any impervious surface is prohibited; any fertilizer accidentally spilled or spread on an impervious surface must be picked up

Organic V. Synthetic Fertilizer: Organic fertilizers are derived from plant and animal nitrogen sources and always contain some phosphorus. In contrast, non-organic, or “synthetic” fertilizers can be manufactured without phosphorus.

The synthetic fertilizer industry now produces phosphorus free fertilizers. All organic products will naturally contain phosphorus, as it is found in all living creatures. This includes compost derived from the breakdown of leaves in our yards or at town compost facilities. Leaf compost typically has low amounts of phosphorus in it and can be used to top dress established lawns.

By reducing phosphorus use in lawn fertilizer and dish detergents, we are helping to create a healthier aquatic environment for people, fish and wildlife.



Swimming Pool Maintenance for Water Quality Protection

An average swimming pool contains 19,000 gallons of water that may contain chlorine, biocides, algaecides, and other chemicals. When swimming pool water is drained for cleaning or maintenance, these chemicals can be toxic to plants and animals in nearby lakes, streams, and wetlands. The following swimming pool recommendations are designed to protect local water resources throughout the swim season through closing.

- Before draining the pool, use a test kit to check the water quality. Wait until chlorine levels are below 0.1mg/l. The pH must be between 6.5 and 8.5 before it is discharged.
- Don't discharge if algaecides have been recently used.
- Pool water should not appear murky. Allow time for suspended particles to settle before discharging water.
- Never discharge pool water onto paved surfaces, directly into the storm sewer system, or in areas where it can flow directly to rivers, lakes, streams or wetlands. Direct pool discharge over a vegetated area to promote soil infiltration and control the flow rate to minimize erosion. Avoid draining the pool after a rainstorm when the ground is saturated.
- When the pool filtering system is cleaned, dispose of the sludge as solid waste and prevent leaching of the material into the environment.

CNY Stormwater Coalition

The CNY Stormwater Coalition was formalized in 2011 in order to establish a regional approach to stormwater management and water resources protection. The Coalition is made up of 27 cities, towns, villages and counties that operate Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s). Through the Coalition, municipalities are working together to meet regulatory requirements while improving water quality in Central New York.

CNY STORMWATER COALITION MEMBERS

Camillus Town	Baldwinsville Village
Cicero Town	Central Square Village
Clay Town	East Syracuse Village
DeWitt Town	Fayetteville Village
Geddes Town	Liverpool Village
Hastings Town	Manlius Village
LaFayette Town	Marcellus Village
Lysander Town	Minoa Village
Manlius Town	North Syracuse Village
Marcellus Town	Phoenix Village
Onondaga Town	Solvay Village
Pompey Town	
Salina Town	Syracuse City
Van Buren Town	Onondaga County

The CNY Stormwater Coalition meets quarterly throughout the year. The next meeting will be held at the Geddes Town Hall on Tuesday October 28, 2014 from 1:00 to 2:30 PM.

All meetings are open to the public. Please verify the date and location one day in advance by visiting the [CNY Stormwater Coalition Website](#) or by calling 315-422-8276 Ext. 211.



The CNY Stormwater Coalition is staffed and coordinated by the Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board. For more information, visit the [CNY Stormwater Coalition Website](#) or call 315-422-8276 Ext. 211.



Looking for something to do in September? Why not come out and visit the CNY Stormwater Coalition's information and resource booth at one of the following family friendly events?



The Westcott Street Cultural Fair is an annual, one-day celebration of the diversity and uniqueness of the Westcott neighborhood through its culture, visual and performing arts, food, service organizations, and activities geared to families and university students returning to the neighborhood. The fair attracts more than 8,000 people annually to the Westcott Business District in mid-September for a day filled with great sounds, sights, tastes and more. The fair takes place on Westcott Street, in between Concord Street and Dell Street

Sunday, September 21, 2014, 12:00 - 6:30 PM

Visit the [website](#) for more information.

DO YOU LIVE IN THE CITY OF SYRACUSE AND WANT TO SAVE THE RAIN?
GET STARTED WITH A FREE RAIN BARREL!

UPCOMING RAIN BARREL WORKSHOPS
Aug. 21, 2014 - White Branch Library Community Room
5:30PM - 7PM | 763 Butternut St., Syracuse

For more information, please contact Amy Samuels at asamuels@oei2.org or 443-1757