



## Fact Sheet

# Nonpoint Source Pollution

August 2016

Nonpoint Source Pollution (also called Stormwater or Runoff Pollution) is contamination of our ground water and waterways that results from everyday activities such as fertilizing the lawn, walking pets, changing motor oil, and littering. With each rainfall, pollutants are washed into storm drains that flow into our waterways. They also can soak into the ground, contaminating the aquifers below.

Each one of us contributes to nonpoint source pollution through our daily activities. As a result, nonpoint source pollution is the **greatest** threat to our water resources.

The collective impact of nonpoint source pollution threatens aquatic and marine life, recreational water activities, the fishing industry, tourism, and our precious drinking water resources. Ultimately, the cost becomes the burden of every Kentucky resident.

### What can you do?

Simple changes in your daily lifestyle can make a tremendous difference in the quality of Kentucky's water resources.

**Litter:** Place litter, including cigarette butts and fast food containers, in trash receptacles. Never throw litter in streets or down storm drains. Recycle as much as possible.

**Fertilizers:** Fertilizers contain nitrates and phosphates that, in abundance, cause blooms of algae that can lead to fish kills. Avoid the overuse of fertilizers and do not apply them before a heavy rainfall.

**Pesticides:** Many household products made to exterminate pests also are toxic to humans, animals, aquatic organisms and plants, and can be washed into the creek when improperly used or disposed of.

**Household hazardous products:** Many common household products (paint thinners, moth balls, and drain and oven cleaners) contain toxic ingredients. When improperly used or discarded, these products are a threat to public health and the environment. Do not discard with the regular household trash. Contact your county solid waste management office for information about household hazardous waste collection in your area.

**Motor oil:** Used motor oil contains toxic chemicals that are harmful to animals, humans, and fish. Do not dump used motor oil down storm drains or on the ground. Recycle all used motor oil by taking it to a local public or private recycling center.

**Car washing:** Consider using a commercial car wash that recycles its wash water. Like fertilizers, many car detergents contain phosphate, which can be harmful to stream health at high levels. If you wash your car at home, use a non-phosphate detergent. Also try to wash your car while it is parked on grass, which will keep soapy water from flowing to the storm drains.

**Pet waste:** Animal wastes contain bacteria and viruses that can contaminate creeks, making it unhealthy to swim. Pet owners should use newspaper, bags, or scoopers to pick up after pets and dispose of wastes in the garbage or toilet.

**Septic systems:** An improperly working septic system can contaminate ground and surface water creating public health problems. Avoid adding unnecessary grease, household hazardous products, and solids to your septic system which can lead to failures. Inspect your tank annually and pump it out every three to five years.

**Boat discharges:** Dumping boat sewage overboard introduces bacteria, viruses, and nutrients into the water. Boat owners should always use marine sanitation devices and pump-out facilities at marinas.