

# Scavenger Hunt

With the help of your parents find what items are in or around your home that, if used incorrectly, can contribute to water pollution. After completing the scavenger hunt, read the tips on the following pages to find out how to correctly use and dispose of these items.

- Chemical fertilizers
- Pesticides
- Pet waste in the front yard
- Loose yard waste
- A car leaking fluids
- Used motor oil
- Used oil filters
- Anti-freeze
- Transmission fluids
- Car washing soap
- Pressure washing chemicals
- Oil-based paint
- Water-based paint
- Frying/Cooking grease
- Construction waste
- Cigarette butts
- Other litter

## Parents, Did You Know?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has determined that the greatest threat to clean water in the country comes from polluted stormwater runoff. Studies show that more than 60% of stormwater pollutants come from everyday activities and household items.

Unlike water that leaves our houses in the sanitary sewer, water that enters the storm sewer doesn't go to a water treatment facility. Every time it rains, stormwater drains away from our homes, yards, buildings, and roads where it has collected pollutants such as oil, lawn fertilizer, litter, and other waste. This water enters our storm drains, which then carry the water, untreated, to our waterways. In many cases, Auburn included, these water ways are used for recreation, fish habitats, and even drinking water.

In Auburn, there are seven watersheds which drain to local creeks: Saugahatchee Creek, Town Creek, Moore's Mill Creek, and Parkerson Mill Creek, Lake Ogletree, Uphapee Creek, and Chewacla Creek. Since all land is part of a watershed, you live in one of these zones. Your daily activities could be leaving behind contaminants that contribute to pollutants in our creeks. This pamphlet will provide you with information on how you might, unknowingly, be contributing to this problem and how we can all minimize the effect that we are having on our water systems.

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## Auburn Clean Streams



## Safe Water Tips:

### Fertilizers:

*Fertilizers cause algae to grow in waterways, and if there is too much algae in an area, it uses up the oxygen in the water that other aquatic life needs to live.*

Always follow proportion directions, do not over-water and apply when there is no heavy rain in the forecast. Store fertilizer in an area that will protect it from rain, spills, and leakage. Consider using organic fertilizers that release nutrients more slowly or mixing compost with your soil to reduce the need for fertilizer.

### Pesticides:

*Pesticides are not only hazardous to creatures you are trying to get rid of; excess amounts in waterways are lethal to other creatures as well.*

Use an alternative to toxic pesticides which work just as well but don't accidentally pollute storm water. Be sure to dispose of pesticides at a household hazardous waste collection facility.

### Pet Waste:

*Pet waste has many bacteria and organisms that enter the waterway and can make people sick. If the bacteria makes it far enough through the waterway, it can end up in shellfish. It also contributes nutrients that cause too much algae to grow in creeks.*

Pick up the waste and dispose of it in a sealed plastic bag in the garbage, in the toilet, or by burying it in the garden. Keep pet waste away from gutters and streets, and never hose it into storm drains.

### Yard Clippings:

*Yard clippings (and litter) can clog storm drains; it can also build up further along a water way and have the same effect of producing excess algae as fertilizer.*

Grass clippings quickly decompose when left in the yard, which will act as a natural fertilizer and reduce your clean up time. Yard clippings can also be used in a compost pile, which is another easy way to get rid of waste and it produces nutrient rich mulch for your yard and garden.

### Litter and Construction Debris:

Like yard clippings, litter and construction debris can clog storm drains. Sweep up debris such as concrete and mortar and dispose of properly in a bin or recycle them.

### Car Washing:

Wash your car over gravel or grass with minimal detergent. The gravel or grass will filter the dirt and soap out of the water before it enters the storm drain. You can also take your car to a car wash where they recycle the wash water.

### Paints and Solvents:

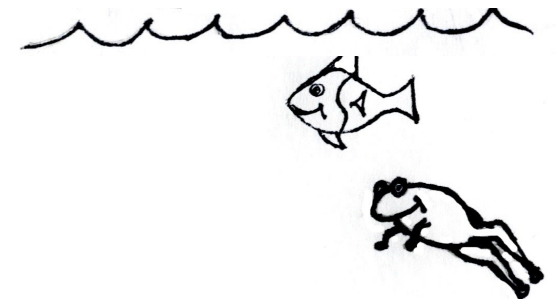
Latex-water-based paints can be washed in a household sink or over the yard or gravel. Never rinse brushes into the street or driveway because they will flow to the storm drains. Avoid using oil-based paints; however, if using them, clean up in a separate container and dispose of at a household hazardous waste collection center.

### Motor Oil and Automotive Liquids:

Motor oil is recyclable at auto service shops. Never dump motor oil in storm drains, garbage cans, or in your yard. This same situation also applies to oil filters, anti-freeze, and transmission fluid.

### Other Tips:

- Choose low-maintenance, native plants that require few chemicals and less watering.
- Keep your septic system maintained to prevent leaks.
- Sweep driveways and sidewalks instead of hosing them off.
- Reduce the amount of impervious surfaces around your home with alternatives such as paving blocks, gravel, cobbles, brick, or natural stone instead of asphalt or concrete.
- If you have any of the chemicals above that you want to dispose of, bring them to a free Hazardous Waste Collection Day offered in Auburn every spring.



**For more information visit:**

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