7

Capture rain water

Capture and clean rain water and recharge groundwater. Plant a rain garden, which collects rain water runoff, lets it soak into the ground, and filters out excess nutrients and other pollutants. Pollinators can benefit, too. You could also install a rain barrel, which captures rainwater from the roof of your house or garage to use in your garden. Or you can redirect downspouts to flow into your yard instead of running off into the street.

8

Replace turf with native plants

Pledge to plant for pollinators and clean water. Trade some of your turf for native plants or choose a turfgrass alternative, which require less mowing and watering. Native plants provide pollinator habitat, are drought resistant, and their deep roots bring rain down into our ground water. Less mowing also improves air quality. Check local ordinances for maintenance requirements.

9

Un-pave the way

Choose pervious paving for walks, patios, and driveways. Paving stones and porous pavement let water soak into the ground, recharging groundwater and keeping runoff out of the street. Next time you have a pavement project, visit our website to explore options.

10

Conserve water

Reduce water use. Water your lawn only when it's needed during dry periods. Water about one inch a week (including rain fall). Water early in the morning to reduce evaporation. Conserve water by sweeping, rather than hosing off, driveways and sidewalks. Install WaterSense fixtures inside and outside and maintain them regularly.

Hennepin County
Environment and Energy

environment@hennepin.us
612-348-3777

34-406-05-19

WMWA
West Metro Water Alliance
www.westmetrowateralliance.org

Hennepin

10 things you can do to protect Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and streams

Your streets connect to our lakes and rivers

Hennepin

Photo: Dawn Pape

We all play a role in improving water quality in Minnesota

No matter where you live, our choices are powerful because water moves. The raindrops that fall on our streets flow through storm drains that empty directly into our lakes, creeks, rivers, and wetlands. Raindrops pick up chemicals, pollutants, and debris that they touch along the way. Every point in a raindrop's path is an opportunity to improve our water quality.

The 10 actions in this brochure can help our waters immensely. Take on a few of these actions at your home and share them with others. You can also look for volunteer opportunities through your city, watershed organization, or county to have a greater impact on water quality in your community.

Every positive choice and voice helps improve our waterways, wildlife habitats and the beautiful, fun waters where we Minnesotans relax and play.

1

Salt sparingly

Shovel first, minimize salt use, sweep up excess. Just one teaspoon of salt permanently contaminates five gallons of fresh water. Shovel snow first, apply salt only to ice patches, use as little salt as possible, and sweep up leftover salt when ice is gone. Remember: More isn't better, and sodium chloride, the most common deicer, stops working below 15°F.

2

Keep streets clear of leaves and grass clippings

Sweep, rake, mulch or compost. Stormwater runoff carries leaves and grass clippings from streets into lakes and streams, where their nutrients cause destructive algae blooms. Use these nutrients to your benefit. Use them as mulch for weed suppression, or make them into compost to use as fertilizer. This protects water quality — and saves money!

3

Kick the chemicals

Lawn and garden chemicals can harm pollinators and wash into the street's storm drains that connect directly into nearby lakes and streams. Encourage the growth of healthy lawns and gardens. Pull weeds by hand or use spot treatment for weeds. If you have a weed or pest problem, consult the University of Minnesota Extension website for advice. Get a soil test before applying fertilizers. If you apply fertilizer, sweep up excess from pavement. Remember, a need for chemical treatments is an option of last resort.

4

Mow high

Mow your grass to a height of 3 inches. Keeping your grass a little longer helps roots grow deeper into the soil, suppresses weeds, and requires less watering. If you do water, do so in the morning and ensure sprinklers only aim at the grass and the plants.

5

Scoop the poop

Pick up after pets. When pet waste is left behind, rain water washes it into lakes and streams. Pet waste contains bacteria, such as *E. Coli*, that can cause illness in people, pets, and wildlife. Pet waste also contains nutrients that cause destructive algae blooms in lakes and streams.

6

Adopt a storm drain

Keep drains free of leaves, grass clippings, and litter. Water entering a storm drain is carried directly to the nearest water body carrying leaves, grass, soil, litter and anything else it picks up along the way. This clogs stormwater infrastructure, contributes to street flooding, harms wildlife, and pollutes our waters. Remember, nothing but rain down the drain! Learn more and get resources at **www.adopt-a-drain.org**.