

Clean Water is Important To All of Us

In recent years, sources of pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced — that's great! Now, the greatest source of water pollution (60 percent) comes from everyday things like residential car washing; cars leaking oil; fertilizers from farms, lawns, and gardens; pet waste; and failing septic systems. All these seemingly harmless sources add up to a BIG pollution problem. BUT each of us can do small things to help clean up our water too —and that adds up to a pollution solution!

Why Do We Need Clean Water?

Having a clean environment is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean waterways provide recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, and add beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water — and all of us play a role in keeping our lakes, rivers, wetlands, and ground waters clean.

Your actions can help
keep our water clean.
Find out how and
spread the word!



**GREATER LANSING
REGIONAL COMMITTEE**
FOR STORMWATER MANAGEMENT
www.mywatersheds.org

*For more information or to learn more about
protecting our water, visit the links below or contact
the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission.*

www.MyWatersheds.org
www.PollutionIsntPretty.org

(517) 393-0342



TRI-COUNTY
regional planning commission



**POLLUTION
ISN'T PRETTY.**

Responsible Car Washing

What's the Problem with Washing My Car?

There's no problem with washing your car – it's just how and where you do it.

When you wash your car in the driveway or road, the soap — together with the dirt, wax, oil, grease, grime, and grit — washes from your car, flows along the curb, and then deposits into nearby storm drains.

From there, the mess flows through the storm sewer system and directly into our rivers, streams, wetlands, and lakes. This impacts water quality for both humans and aquatic life.



Where Do Storm Drains Lead?

Did you know that most storm drains are NOT connected to treatment plants?

The purpose of a storm drain is to prevent flooding by diverting stormwater runoff away from developed areas and into bodies of water. Unfortunately, this means any pollutants on the ground can be swept up with the run-off and discharged – untreated – into our lakes, rivers, and streams.



When water from car washing enters a waterway, it harms fish and impairs water quality. The phosphates from the soap cause excess algae to grow, which reduces oxygen levels as it decays. The soap's surfactants damage fish gills and kill their eggs. Even if soap isn't used, the oils, heavy metals, brake linings, and rust washed from vehicles enter storm drains and impact our shared surface water resources.

Help Keep Our Water Clean

The best way to minimize your environmental impact is to use a commercial car wash, especially if you plan to clean the engine or the bottom of your car. The average homeowner uses 116 gallons of water to wash a car, but commercial operations use 60 percent less water for the entire process than a homeowner uses just to rinse! Most car washes also reuse wash water several times before sending it to the sanitary sewer system for treatment, ensuring pollution stays out of our waterways.

However, if you choose to wash your car at home, follow these tips:

- If allowed by your local community, wash your car on the lawn so the ground can filter the water naturally.*
- Use soap sparingly.
- Use a hose nozzle with a trigger to save water when you don't need it.
- Pour your bucket of soapy water down the sink when you're done, NOT in the street.
- Avoid using engine and wheel cleaners or degreasers.

*Please check local ordinances before washing or parking your vehicle on the lawn!