



# County of Passaic

Administration Building Annex

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## Residents Can Help Keep Local Waters Clean

PATERSON -- There are many common myths about how pollution is created and spread. Some may feel that pollution primarily comes from the factory down the road or from the horrible smelling industrial facility along the highway. However, most factories and industrial sites are tightly controlled and monitored by governmental agencies.

Harder to monitor, and the largest remaining cause of water quality problems are the small amounts of pollution that each person unknowingly creates. Collected together, this pollution can be as great as that of any factory. This type of pollution is called Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution.

NPS is caused by rainfall or snowmelt runoff picking up natural and man-made pollutants that include excess fertilizers, litter thrown to the side of the road, and discharges from washing cars or changing oil in the street.

One way to reduce NPS pollution is to make sure everyone keeps debris out of street gutters.

In most communities, the drains on the side of the road lead directly to a storm drain. These drains empty into the closest body of water, which is often a stream that runs through the local park or duck pond. Water in these drains is not treated, but instead flows directly into these water bodies. A separate line, the sanitary sewer, carries wastewater from the drains in our houses and businesses to a treatment plant.

This means that anything left on the street, such as candy wrappers, pet wastes, cigarette butts, and automotive fluid dripping from our vehicles gets washed into the local water body when it rains. Additionally, any time wash water, such as the runoff in washing a car or truck, is allowed to empty to these drains, it flows into the local water body.

Each small amount of pollution that one person contributes combines with the waste created by thousands of other people in your community, resulting in significant amounts of pollution.

### Some tips to reduce NPS pollution:

- Apply lawn and garden chemicals sparingly and according to directions.
- Dispose of used oil, antifreeze, paints, and other household chemicals properly.



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- If working on your vehicle, make sure to use buckets to capture automotive fluids. Clean up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease, and antifreeze. Do not hose them into the street.
  - Purchase household detergents and cleaners that are low in phosphorous.
  - Try to limit the amount of personal pollution by carrying your trash to the nearest trash can or recycling bin.
  - Be a good citizen and pick up trash in your community. Remember, you can help make a difference!

Each one of us, whether we know it or not, contributes to nonpoint source pollution through our daily activities. As a result, nonpoint source pollution is the **BIGGEST** threat to many of our ponds, creeks, lakes, wells, streams, rivers and bays, our ground water and the ocean.

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 New Jersey and Passaic County resident.

But there's good news – in our everyday activities we can stop nonpoint source pollution and keep our environment clean. Simple changes in **YOUR** daily lifestyle can make a tremendous difference in the quality of Passaic County's water resources. Here are just a few ways you can reduce nonpoint source pollution.

**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. Use alternatives whenever possible. If you do use a pesticide, follow the label directions carefully.

**HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS:** Many common household products (paint thinners, moth balls, drain and oven cleaners, to name a few) 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. Use natural and less toxic alternatives whenever possible. Contact your County Solid Waste Management Office for information regarding 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.

**PET WASTE:** Animal wastes contain bacteria and viruses that can contaminate shellfish and cause the closing of bathing beaches. Pet owners should use newspaper, bags or scoopers to pick up after pets and dispose of wastes in the garbage or toilet.



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**SEPTIC SYSTEMS:** An improperly working septic system can contaminate ground water and create public health problems. Avoid adding unnecessary grease, household hazardous products and solids to your septic system. Inspect your tank annually and pump it out every three to five years depending on its use.

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

As you can see, these suggestions are simple and easy to apply to your daily lifestyle. This list is by no means a complete list. If you have any questions about a potential pollutant, please call the Passaic County Department of Health, Environmental Division, at 973-881-4396. Making your commitment to change at least one habit can result in benefits that will be shared by all of us and add to the health and beauty of New Jersey's water resources.