

8 Steps to a Clean, Safe, and Beautiful Menasha Waterfront

The water resources of Lake Winnebago, the Fox River, and Little Lake Butte des Morts are among Menasha's greatest assets. Some of our largest and most popular parks are located on the water. Surface water from Lake Winnebago provides us with our drinking water. Many people live, fish, swim and boat on Menasha's waters, and soon there will be a trail crossing Little Lake Butte des Morts that will provide a further regional draw.

However, given Menasha's proximity to these waters, and because Menasha is a developed urban area, the assets we have in our waterways are threatened by the plague of urban runoff pollution. In the next few weeks, as the snow begins to melt and get washed away by spring rains, pollutants from our yards, parking lots, streets, vehicles, and construction sites will travel with the rain (and all subsequent rainfalls) through the ditches, gutters and storm sewers that eventually make their way to our nearby waterways.

Tougher legislation has been recently enacted to ensure that cities, developers, and commercial/industrial property owners do their part to reduce pollutants in urban runoff. The good news is that there are everyday things **you** can do to help keep pollutants out of urban runoff, thereby keeping our drinking, fishing, and recreational water clean and safe for our use and enjoyment. Below are simple, common sense pollution prevention steps that will help protect this vital resource. For more detailed information, please contact the Department of Community Development at 967-5103.

- 1. Recycle Oil.** If you put motor oil in a container with a tight lid and bring it to a recycling center, it can be reprocessed and used again. This is the only safe way of disposing of used motor oil. Motor oil should never be used for anything other than its original intent. All city residents can go to the Winnebago County Solid Waste Facility on 100 West County Road Y, Oshkosh to recycle used motor oil from their residence.
- 2. Use Commercial Car Washes.** When you wash your car on a paved driveway or parking area, the dirty water eventually ends up in our waterways. Furthermore, the soap you use can cause harm to fish and create weed and algae problems. If you prefer to wash your car at home, drive it onto your lawn so the water can soak into the ground, allowing the soil to act as a filter for the pollutants.
- 3. Keep Your Car Tuned Up, Repair Leaks.** Regular tune-ups can reduce the amount of pollutants that come out of your car's exhaust pipe, which pollute both the air and our water. As a bonus, keeping your car tuned up will save you money by using less gasoline! Also, repair leaks immediately, then clean up any spots on your driveway or garage floor by using an absorbent material such as cat litter, letting it soak, then sweeping it up and disposing it in a sealed trash bag.
- 4. Sweep Paved Areas.** Sweeping your driveway or any other paved area will help keep waste out of storm sewers.
- 5. Limit Fertilizer and Pesticide Use, Leave Grass Clippings on the Lawn.** Fertilizer, pesticides, leaves, and grass as pollutants contributes to algae blooms, weed problems, and may contribute to lower fish population. For more information on fertilizer and pesticide use, please use the contact information above, or contact your county's UW-Extension office. As a rule, sweep all fertilizers, soil, and vegetation off paved surfaces, and never dispose of excess pesticides by dumping them on the ground or in the ditch, gutter, or storm sewer.
- 6. Clean Up Pet Waste.** When pet waste pollutes our water, it can lead to lower fish population, higher instances of weed and algae growth, and because it carries diseases, the water can become unsafe for swimming or drinking.
- 7. Dispose of Toxic Wastes Properly.** A great opportunity to do this is during a Clean Sweep. One is coming up soon. See the *In the Works* section of this newsletter for more information.
- 8. Downspouts.** Downspouts should be directed to your lawn or garden and away from driveways and paved areas.
- 9. Landscaping.** Residents living on shoreland property can further prevent water pollution by creating what is referred to as a shoreland buffer zone which is an area of natural vegetation along the water's edge.

Information for this article was obtained from the following University of Wisconsin-Extension publications: "Polluted Urban Runoff: A source of concern", "Lawn and Garden Fertilizers", "Lawn and Garden Pesticides", "Car Care for Cleaner Water", "Pet Waste and Water Quality"