



Nonpoint Source Pollution

What is nonpoint source pollution?

Nonpoint source pollution, unlike point sources such as wastewater treatment plants and factories are difficult to track down and clean up. They are scattered and widespread and come from more basic aspects of life such as growing crops, raising livestock, building roads, homes and other buildings. The products of this type of pollution include:

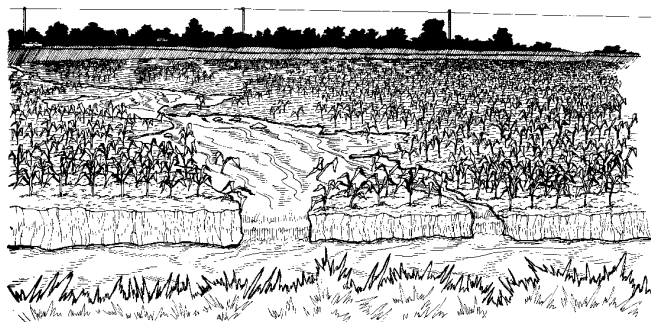
- Excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from agricultural lands and residential areas;
- Oil, grease and toxic chemicals from urban runoff and energy production;
- Sediment from improperly managed construction sites, crop and forest lands and eroding streambanks;
- Salts from roads and irrigation practices;
- Bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes and faulty septic systems.

These practices are so common that the amount of pollution they create is often not recognized.

What is the impact of nonpoint source pollution?

The impacts of this type of pollution are subtle and progressive. The changes may be *physical*— an increase in water temperature and a decrease in clarity. Or they may be *chemical*— an increase in nutrient (nitrate and phosphorus) levels and a decrease in dissolved oxygen levels. It may take a decade or more for changes to become apparent. Slowly, there may be a decline in fish populations and lakes may fill up with sediment. These waters could be lost forever.

Non point source pollution is the Nation's largest source of water quality problems.



nonpoint sources be controlled?

We can all work together to reduce and prevent nonpoint source pollution. Some activities are *federal* responsibilities, such as ensuring that federal lands are properly managed to reduce soil erosion. Some are *state* responsibilities, such as, developing legislation to govern mining and logging, and protecting groundwater. Others are best handled *locally*, by zoning or erosion control ordinances. Each *individual* can play an important role by practicing conservation and by changing certain everyday habits.

Ways You Can Help:

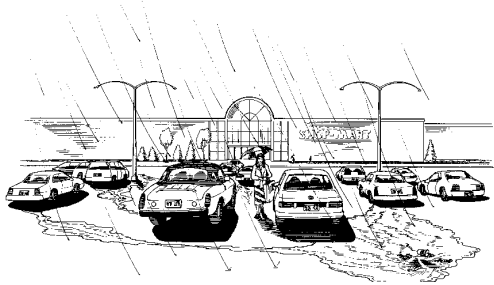
Agriculture

- Manage animal waste to minimize contamination of surface water and ground water.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers appropriately.
- Reduce soil erosion by using conservation practices and other applicable best management practices.
- Use planned grazing systems on pasture and rangeland.
- Dispose of pesticides and containers in an approved manner.

How



can



Urban Stormwater Runoff

- Keep litter, pet wastes, grass clippings, leaves, and debris out of street gutters and storm drains—these outlets drain storm water directly to lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands.
- Apply lawn and garden chemicals sparingly and according to directions. Avoid placing fertilizer or lawn chemicals on driveways, sidewalks and streets.
- Dispose of used oil, antifreeze, paint and other household chemicals properly, NOT in storm sewers or drains.
- Clean up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease and antifreeze. Do not hose them into the street where they can eventually reach local streams and lakes.
- Control soil erosion on your property by planting ground cover and stabilizing erosion-prone areas.
- Report erosion/sediment control ordinance violations in your community to local government officials.

Opportunities for Public Involvement

- Volunteer monitoring - volunteers of all skill levels are needed to gather water quality data.
- Ecological restoration which increases bank stabilization and reduces erosion.
- Education of others through pollution curricula and classroom activities.
- Management of household pollution through limiting paved surfaces, natural landscaping, proper septic tank management, and proper chemical use, storage and disposal.

This fact sheet is adapted from the EPA's web site on their Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program-www.epa.gov

For more information:

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