



# RIVER CONNECTIONS

A citizens guide to river stewardship

Your actions affect area rivers.  
 Whether as a riverfront property owner or as a resident of the metropolitan area—no matter your proximity—you are connected to a river.

## *You are connected to a river*

- ⇒ Your rooftop is connected to your gutter
- ⇒ Your gutter is connected to your downspout
- ⇒ Your downspout is connected to your yard
- ⇒ Your yard is connected to your driveway
- ⇒ Your driveway is connected to your street
- ⇒ Your street is connected to your storm drain
- ⇒ Your storm drain is connected to a river

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## Help Keep Your River Clean

Rivers are fragile ecosystems that are easily affected by human activities. Items that go down the storm drains in the street go directly to a river, not to a waste water treatment facility.

The following are some common sources of stormwater pollution and ways you can help.

### Lawn Maintenance

Yard and chemical waste are common pollutants from human activities that end up in the water. Yard waste dumped on the riverbank or stacked by the river waiting for floodwater to carry it off also cause problems. Grass clippings and leaves can not only decrease the aesthetic beauty of the river, but they provide extra nutrients for algae and bacteria.

⇒ Use phosphorus-free fertilizer. Phosphorus stimulates the growth of excess algae in the river. As the algae decays, the amount of oxygen available to fish is reduced. Soils in the Red River Valley already contain more than adequate levels of phosphorus. Nitrogen is the nutrient that greens up grass.

⇒ When purchasing fertilizer, look for the zero in the middle. Bags of blended fertilizer generally include a series of three numbers to indicate the percentage of nitrogen, phosphorus (or phosphates), and potash contained in the blend.

⇒ Apply lawn chemicals sparingly and according to directions.

⇒ Keep grass clippings out of the street and gutter. When it rains, grass clippings, as well as the chemicals on them, get washed into the storm drains that empty into rivers. Their decomposition harms the river. Decomposition causes a lack of oxygen for fish and aquatic life, thus threatening their existence.

⇒ Allow grass clippings to return to the lawn. This will recycle nutrients and moisture, save on fertilization costs, and cut down on the labor required for yard work. When they are left on your lawn they serve as a natural nutrient recycler and can be beneficial to the growth of your lawn.

### Woody debris

Trees and shrubs, can also cause problems to river ecosystems. Not only can this debris change the nutrient cycling in the river, but it can plug water intake screens, which is costly to clean out, and it can cause navigational hazards for people using the river.

⇒ These materials should be either composted or brought to the curb to be picked up by the city. This will help reduce the amount of woody debris that unnaturally enters the river.

# What can YOU do?

- Compost yard waste instead of sweeping it into the street.
- Use pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers only in amount needed.
- Do not overwater your lawn.
- Select native plants and grass which require less water, fertilizer and pesticides.
- Reduce paved area and increase the vegetated area in your yard.
- Install a rain garden.
- Pick up pet waste.
- Repair car leaks and dispose of fluids and waste at designated drop-off or recycling locations.
- Wash car on a lawn or other unpaved surface.
- Clean paint brushes in a sink.

**Remember!**  
Any substance or material that enters a storm drain goes directly to a river.  
Never dump anything in a storm drain!

