

Clean Water

Water is life says a Lakota proverb. What was true for the first residents of South Dakota is true for us today. South Dakotans depend on a ready supply of drinkable, swimmable, fishable water for our health, economy and recreation.

All of us have a part in keeping our water clean. The major cause of water pollution today is not industry pumping its waste into the water, but rather, nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution comes from pollutants being carried into a river, lake, or stream through rain, snow melt or other runoff. Dirt, fertilizers, pet waste, and soapy water from car washing are all common runoff pollutants and have a cumulative effect that impacts South Dakota's lakes, rivers, and streams.

Runoff pollution is a good news/bad news thing. The bad news is that this type of pollution comes from everywhere and almost everyone contributes to it. The good news is that by taking a few simple preventative steps, we can reduce or eliminate our personal contribution to nonpoint source pollution. We can also multiply our efforts by making our communities aware of nonpoint source pollution's causes and effects.



MAJOR WATERSHEDS OF SOUTH DAKOTA

A watershed is like a funnel that collects run-off from surrounding areas and drains into a lake or river.

Nearly everything that runs off in the watershed - leaves, grass clippings, fertilizers and soil - travels through the streets and storm sewers and into a lake or river.

In other words, you don't have to live right next to a lake or river to have an effect on it!

FROM YOUR YARD TO THE STREET

While normal lawn watering or rainfall is beneficial, intense rain or excessive irrigation creates run-off which carries fertilizer, pesticide, soil, leaves, grass clippings, and other debris into streets and storm drains

and into the lakes and rivers. That's why a healthy yard is the first step toward a healthy watershed.

Maintaining a healthy landscape will help prevent run-off. Seed bare spots on your yard. Point drain spouts away from foundations and paved surfaces and onto your yard. Before you apply fertilizers and pesticides to your lawn, always read the label directions. Never pour leftover fertilizer or pesticides down storm drains, and clean up spills immediately. Also keep leaves and grass clippings off paved surfaces. Nutrients from these organic materials damage lakes and streams. Bag your leaves for collection. Or better yet, compost or mulch them. Grass clippings can be safely left on your lawn. In fact, the nutrients that can harm a lake or stream can be beneficial to a lawn.

What Is A Watershed?



FROM THE STREET TO THE LAKE AND RIVER.

Because our neighborhoods have many paved areas, nature's ability to filter harmful items before they reach the lake or river is greatly reduced. Streets, driveways, and sidewalks provide a direct route to the lake or river. When leaves or grass clippings are left in the street, they are easily washed into storm drains and then into the lake or river. Further, these organic materials begin to decay immediately. So even if the leaves or clippings don't make it to the lake or river, the nutrients they release as they

decay will make it.

These nutrients will harm most lakes by promoting the growth of excess algae. The algae forms a scum on the water's surface that creates an unpleasant odor. But more importantly, the scum suffocates the lake. Aquatic plants don't get the sunlight they need, and the fish don't get the oxygen they need.

Remember that even if you don't live next to a lake or river, you may live in a watershed. That means what you do can harm the water. It also means what you do can help. And a few simple measures in maintaining a healthy yard will ensure a healthy watershed!