

Protecting Water Quality: What Happens Upstream Affects Those Downstream

Coloradans enjoy some of the best water in the West, but it's a finite resource. It won't last forever. Water quantity is important, but so is water quality. We can all play a part in protecting our water sources to balance the needs of birds, people, and local economies.

Ways that you can help care for water sources and water quality include:

1. Dispose of medicine properly: Use a designated take-back program, not by flushing medicines down the toilet.
2. Don't fill storm drains: Avoid placing anything but water in a storm drain. No oil, pesticides, fertilizer, paints, etc.
3. Pick up pet poop: Pet waste can run into storm drains and spread bacteria.
4. Fix the oil leak: Car leaks can spread oil into the water supply.
5. Direct your downspout: Ensure downspouts are pointed toward the lawn or plants, not the sidewalk.
6. Plant native plants: **Native plants** are adapted to local environmental conditions, require less water saving time and money, and provide important habitat for birds & other wildlife.
7. Don't flush: Don't flush garbage down the toilet.
8. Reduce paved areas: Reduce paved areas with porous pavement materials and plantings that will allow water to soak through and not run off.
9. Sweep: Dirty sidewalks and streets run into the storm drain and pollute our water.
10. Use sand or cat litter: Use sand or cat litter to de-ice sidewalks instead of salt, and sweep up after the ice has melted.
11. Mulch: Use grass clippings, leaves, hay, straw, woodchips, shredded newspaper, cardboard, and animal manure to control weeds and reduce evaporation.

12. Follow directions: Always follow the manufacturer's label for storage, use, and dispose of all household chemicals.

13. Use pesticides sparingly: Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly and consider hiring a professional applicator when necessary. Seven million birds die each year because of pesticide use by homeowners. When you kill insect pests, you're also harming birds that eat those insects. Pesticides accumulate in lakes, rivers and streams which are essential food and water sources for people, birds, and other wildlife.

14. Use a certified car wash: A certified commercial car wash is more water efficient and does not send soapy water down the driveway and into the storm drain.

15. Compost: Compost and amend soil, that is, add organic matter to the soil itself. Healthy soil acts as a water filter.

For more information on natural pest control and how to protect water sources, birds & their habitats, contact arkvalleyaububon@gmail.com.