

Graton Community Services District

Pollution Prevention Guide

Spring Edition 2015



As the saying goes, “We all live downstream.” What we put down our drains has an effect on our watershed, possibly degrading water quality and damaging wildlife habitats. Septic systems and wastewater treatment plants are designed primarily to biodegrade bodily wastes. Almost everything else we put down the drain will not biodegrade, and can interfere with the treatment plant, or pass through to the environment. This guide will show you some easy steps you can take to control pollution *before* it gets into our natural waterways.

Use the trash not the toilet

Putting non-biodegradable solids down your toilet or drains is bad news for the plumbing, septic systems and wastewater treatment plants. Throw items like dental floss, tampons and their applicators, condoms, baby wipes, diapers, facial tissue, swabs (Q-tips), cotton balls, paper towels, and cigarettes, etc. in the trash not the toilet. Even items labeled “flushable” should never be flushed into the sewer collection system. These items are notorious for clogging pipes, filters and interfering with treatment system pumps.

Fats and oils clog the system

Fats, oils, and grease can clog both septic tanks and municipal wastewater treatment systems. The landfill is a better place for these to end up. You can collect grease in old cans or cartons for disposal. Another good practice is to re-use a napkin or paper towel to wipe oil and grease off dishes before washing.

If it’s toxic, the drain is off limits; take these items instead to a household toxics round-up!

Just what is *toxic*? Understanding labels is an important step for a healthier household and watershed. If the label contains words like toxic, corrosive, flammable, put it back and investigate a nontoxic, or less toxic choice. For information about household toxics: contact the Sonoma County Eco-Desk at (707) 565-DESK.

Pollutants which should never go down the drain:

In the house

- Ammonia-based cleaners
- Bleach-based cleaners
- Oven cleaners
- Aerosol sprays
- Metal cleaners
- Nail polish & remover
- Medications & syringes
- Batteries
- Pharmaceuticals
- Contents of a litter box

In the yard

- Pesticides
- Fungicides
- Weed killers
- Pool chemicals
- Fertilizers



In the garage

- Antifreeze
- Motor oil
- Oil filters
- Gasoline
- Waxes & polishes
- Engine cleaners
- Brake fluid

In the workshop

- Paint
- Paint thinner
- Wood preservatives
- Wood finishes
- Glues & adhesives
- Solvents
- Photo chemicals



Mercury, diazinon and copper, nickel, silver, and perchloroethylene are particularly troublesome contaminants for wastewater treatment systems and the ecosystem. Please avoid these at all costs.

To find out about free toxic waste disposal services for things like old paint products, automotive fluids, garden chemicals, expired medications, and spent fluorescent lamps, and to learn more about how to create a less toxic yard and garden contact: **Eco-Desk Hotline 707-565-3375** <http://www.recyclenow.org/>

Medical wastes and Personal Care Products can be a problem for water quality

The medical industry has adopted the use of “the Patch” as a delivery system for medication because the skin is the largest organ in the body. Think about the products your family applies to their skin and hair that are either washed off or soaked in when you shower or bathe. You may want to take a precautionary approach to using products with labels that warn, *for external use only*, as these may contain hazardous ingredients, especially when treating lice. The same advice would also apply to selecting pet care products. Even if ingredients in these products are not absorbed, think about the watershed wildlife which may carry the burden of what is rinsed off. We can't assume that everything just magically dissipates once it goes down the drain.

There are many safe alternatives for all our personal and pet care needs at your local health food store. In our next guide, we'll focus on inexpensive, non-toxic alternative household cleaners you can make with simple, safe ingredients like, vinegar and baking soda, borax, peroxide (OxyClean, etc.).

For more information please see:

Safe Medicine Disposal Program www.safemedicinedisposal.org/drop-off-locations/

Sonoma County Eco-Desk www.recyclenow.org

National Pollution Prevention Roundtable www.p2.org

Green Consumer www.greenconsumer.cc

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry www.atsdr.cdc.gov

EPA Region 9 Pollution Prevention <http://www.epa.gov/region09/p2/>

Find out your body's burden at: www.insidebayarea.com/bodyburden

This guide was prepared by Graton Community Services District through a grant from The City of Santa Rosa, in cooperation with Northern California River Watch, and the Forestville Planning Association. Graton Community Projects is a grassroots non-profit organization dedicated to sustainable living and a healthy environment. We'd love to hear your questions or comments, e mail gcsd@sonic.net , or write us:

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Thank you for doing you part in becoming a solution to pollution!

