

# WATERFRONT WISDOM — HEALTHY HABIT #5: PROPERLY MANAGE HOME, YARD AND ANIMAL WASTE

As a waterfront homeowner, you have a unique opportunity to contribute to the health of your local waterway. Many activities we conduct near the waterfront, in our lawns and gardens and around our home, impact water quality. This is even more critical to riparian homeowners because runoff doesn't have far to travel before reaching the water. We can prevent water pollution by being aware that our actions DO impact water quality. We can all make a difference by practicing Healthy Habits for Clean Water.

**CHALLENGE:** Excess nutrients, chemicals and pathogens degrade water quality and harm wildlife, aquatic and human life!

**CAUSE:** Organic matter, such as leaves and grass, animal waste and harmful chemicals in runoff or seepage into groundwater from spills or improper disposal.

**SOLUTION:** CAREFULLY STORE AND DISPOSE OF HARMFUL CHEMICALS. CLEAN UP PROMPTLY AFTER PETS, AND MAKE SURE YARD AND GARDEN WASTE IS PROPERLY COMPOSTED OR BAGGED FOR PICKUP BY YOUR MUNICIPALITY.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**MULCH PLEASE:** Collect or mulch leaves soon after they fall to ensure that they don't get carried into lakes and streams through storm drains or by getting blown directly into the water. Leaves add excess nutrients and use up valuable oxygen in the water as they decompose. Rather than spend the extra time and energy raking leaves into compost bags or to the street for curbside pickup, mulch the leaves into your lawn—it's free fertilizer and adds organic matter to the soil!

**NO SMOKING!** Don't burn yard waste adjacent to waterways—the ash contains phosphorus which can degrade water quality.

**BAG IT!** Pick up pet waste promptly and dispose of it in the trash.

**CLEAN GREEN!** Utilize non-toxic cleaning alternatives whenever possible. Common household items such as white vinegar, baking soda and hydrogen peroxide can serve a multitude of cleaning functions.

**RECYCLE!** Take unused items to your local household hazardous waste (HHW) drop-off site. Information on HHW or recycling programs can be found at: [www.oakgov.com/waste](http://www.oakgov.com/waste) or call the Oakland County Waste Resource Management Division at 248-858-5656.



## PROPERLY SITE COMPOST PILES:

Keep compost piles away from the water's edge to eliminate the chance of runoff from these piles contributing excess nutrients to the water.



## DON'T FEED WATERFOWL:

They become dependent on the food from humans and tend to congregate in one place expecting more food. This can lead to the concentration of droppings which adds excess nutrients and harmful bacteria to waterways. Deter nuisance species, such as Canada Geese, from your property by maintaining a vegetative buffer planting of adequate height (at least 12 to 24 inches) between the water and your lawn.

## NO DUMPING ALLOWED!

Never dump items such as used motor oil, cleaners, paint or other hazardous materials down a storm drain, on the ground, or into your septic system. Storm drains lead directly to our waterways. Materials dumped on the ground or washed into septic systems could seep into soils and contaminate the groundwater supply.



Properly store unused hazardous items in a cool, dry area away from children, pets and the water. Keep products in their original container, or ensure they are properly labeled if placed in another container.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO [WWW.OAKGOV.COM/RIPARIAN](http://WWW.OAKGOV.COM/RIPARIAN)