ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF PHOSPHORUS POLLUTION

Excessive phosphorus in water can cause health problems, damage our waters, and take a heavy toll on the economy in the form of lost tourism, fishing, and recreation dollars spent in our communities. Algal blooms in drinking water sources can drastically increase treatment costs. Voluntary efforts undertaken by residents to control phosphorus discharges, such as using zero phosphorus fertilizer, picking up pet waste, and washing cars on lawns or at commercial car washes are critical cost saving measures for local governments.

- Every dollar spent on protecting sources of drinking water saves on water treatment costs, which ultimately must be paid for by our tax dollars.
- Nationally, the tourism industry loses close to $1 billion each year, mostly through losses in fishing and boating activities as a result of water bodies that have been affected by nutrient pollution and harmful algal blooms.
- Clean water can raise the value of a nearby home by up to 25 percent. Waterfront property values can decline because of the unpleasant sight and odor of algal blooms.

Central New York Stormwater Coalition

Protecting Our Waters

Funding for this brochure was provided by the CNY Stormwater Coalition consisting of 26 towns and villages, the City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, and the NYS Fairgrounds. Together, the Coalition is working to protect water quality.

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Too Cute to Pollute?

Get the Scoop Inside...

THE SCOOP ON PETS, POLLUTION, AND WATER QUALITY

It might not seem like a big problem, but pet waste is one of the many seemingly small sources of pollution that can add up to big problems for water quality, and even human health. While most people connect animal waste problems to agriculture, studies have shown that pets, waterfowl and other urban wildlife waste can cause significant water pollution problems.

Pet waste contains several types of pollutants that contribute to water quality problems: nutrients, such as phosphorus; pathogens; and naturally toxic materials, such as ammonia. When rainwater washes animal waste into lakes and streams it decomposes, using up oxygen and releasing its pollutant load. During summer months when the water is warm, the combination of low oxygen levels and ammonia can kill fish and other aquatic organisms.

The nutrients released when animal waste decomposes in water can cause excessive growth of aquatic weeds and algae. This makes water murky, green, smelly, and potentially unfit for swimming, fishing and boating.

Pathogens, the disease-causing bacteria and viruses associated with animal and human waste, can also make local waters unfit for swimming and fishing, and can cause severe illness in humans.

Pick Up After Your Pet

Preventing water pollution can be as simple as remembering to take along a plastic bag or pooper scooper when you walk your dog. Flush the waste (not the bag) down the toilet, or toss the bagged waste into the garbage.

Beyond water quality, there are other good reasons to pick up pet waste. Some diseases can be transmitted from pet waste to humans through soil contact. Children who play outside and adults that garden are most at risk for infection when pet waste is left on the ground.

DO's and DON'Ts FOR PET OWNERS

DO:

*Remember to bring a bag or other means to pick up waste when walking your pet

*Always pick up after your pet and dispose of pet waste in a trash can or pet waste receptacle

*Wash your hands with soap and water after pick up

DON'T:

*Leave pet waste on the ground

*Place pet waste in your compost pile or near water supplies or vegetable gardens

*Flush cat litter down the toilet

*Forget to check your local ordinances