



Search

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Pointless Personal Pollution

prepared by Florida Department of Environmental Protection
Nonpoint Source Management Section

Wherever you live, your daily activities could end up polluting Florida waters.

Pollutants from our homes, businesses, and farms are major contributors to the pollution of Florida's surface and ground waters. This pollution is washed into the state's waters by rain or irrigation water and is known as Pointless Personal Pollution.

Unlike many other types of pollution, we cause this pollution, and we can stop it!

What is pointless personal pollution?

The blame for water pollution often is aimed at "point sources," such as industrial or sewage treatment facilities. Discharges from these sources flow through pipes and readily can be identified and their treatment improved.

But Pointless Personal Pollution, also known as nonpoint source pollution, is difficult to identify and treat. This is because many of our daily activities can cause this pollution, and it can travel by many different routes into the ground and surface waters.

Take a look around your home and property. You can find many sources of Pointless Personal Pollution that could end up in the state's waters.

Personal

Some examples of these pollutants are:

- Sediments from soil erosion caused by unvegetated soils and by uncontrolled construction activities.
- Automotive and lawn equipment gas, oil and grease leaking onto paved areas or improper disposal into storm drains of used oil and other products.
- Runoff of pesticides and fertilizers from residential lawns, commercial and recreational turf, gardens, and farms.
- Organic contaminants from litter, yard trash, sludge, garbage from dumpsters and garbage cans, and pet and livestock wastes.
- Pathogens and excessive nutrients from sewer leaks and septic tank systems overflowing or located in areas with high water tables.

How does pointless personal pollution impact our waters?

Pointless Personal Pollution contains many kinds of pollutants that contaminate our waters in many ways. A few of these ways are:

- Nutrients from fertilizers, septic tanks, and animal wastes enter our waters, causing excessive growth of algae and aquatic weeds.
- Heavy metals and pesticides from road runoff or from yards and farms can kill aquatic organisms and contaminate sediments.
- Sewage, garbage, and litter reduce oxygen in the water to levels that can kill aquatic life.
- Sediments from soil erosion clog fish gills and shellfish filter systems, cutting off their oxygen supplies.
- Pathogens from septic tank systems and animal wastes contaminate shellfish and lead to the closing of swimming areas.

What you can do to reduce pointless personal pollution?

Home & Household Maintenance

- **Shop Wisely.** Buy products labeled as biodegradable, non-toxic, non-phosphorus, or water soluble.
 - Why? They readily decompose and will not pollute surface or ground waters.
- **Store Products Safely.** Keep toxic products in original containers, closed and clearly marked in safe storage places.
 - Why? To prevent spillage, which could reach ground or surface waters, and to prevent accidents with children or pets.
- **Properly Maintain Septic Systems.** Inspect systems regularly and have pumped out as needed. Avoid caustic cleaners, chemicals, or solvents and fats, oils, and greases.

- Why? They might destroy waste-reducing bacteria or clog absorption fields, which could cause runoff of inadequately treated wastes during rainstorms to reach our ground or surface waters.

Lawn And Garden

- **Use Garden And Lawn Chemicals Wisely.** Follow package directions carefully, and only use pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers when other methods fail. Do not apply if rain is in the forecast.
 - Why? Excessive fertilizers and chemicals wash off the property and into surface and ground waters.
- **Keep Irrigation Water On The Lawn And Garden (Not On Paved Surfaces).** Divert rain spouts to unpaved areas or swales, and wash vehicles where water will drain to vegetated areas.
 - Why? This allows runoff to soak into the soil and not wash off the property into nearby waterbodies after picking up pollutants.
- **Compost Leaves, Grass And Shrub Clippings.** Use these materials as mulch to supplement fertilizers. Do not rake these materials into roadways or swales.
 - Why? These materials will decompose, returning nutrients to the soil so that you can use fewer fertilizers. If placed in roads or swales, yard debris will block drainage flows and end up in your nearest water bodies.

Automotive

- **Don't Drain Used Motor Oil Into Storm Drains.** Take used motor oil and antifreeze to service stations to recycle them.
 - Why? These products are toxic and add pollutants to surface waters if placed or washed into storm drains.
- **Service Your Car Regularly.** Have your car inspected and maintained regularly.
 - Why? To prevent leakage of motor oil, antifreeze and other fluids that can end up in the nearest waterbody. Well maintained vehicles reduce air emissions that also can contaminate surface waters.

If you want to be part of the solution and want more information, contact the following :

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Nonpoint Source Management Section

2600 Blair Stone Road, Tallahassee, FL 32399

Phone: 850/245-7508

SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Phone: 561/686-8800

1-800-432-2045 (toll free-Florida Only)

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Phone: 352/796-7211

1-800-423-1476 (toll free-Florida only)

ST JOHNS RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Phone: 386/329-4500

SUWANNEE RIVER WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Phone: 386/362-1001

1-800-226-1066 (toll free-Florida only)

NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Phone: 850/539-5999

CITY OR COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

Contact Information

Phone: 239-389-5000

Hours: Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

[**View Full Contact Details**](#)