

Take Ten Minutes to Protect Lakes and Rivers: Clean Your Gutters and Storm Sewer Drains

story and photos by Lisa Goodman

Photos:

1. You are what you eat. This is true for lakes and streams as well as for people. (photo: clogged drain)
2. Keeping clean streets and storm ~~sewer~~ drains is one way to protect our waters. (photo: clean drain)
3. Spread the word! (photo: dump no waste)

Hot summer days make us want to cool off. For many, keeping cool means getting wet, perhaps by dashing through the sprinkler, taking a cool shower, or visiting a favorite local beach. Unfortunately, every season seems to bring new concerns about swimming and fishing in our local waters. We may care about water quality, but how can we help make a difference?

Keep storm drains and gutters clean

One of my neighbors sweeps the gutters and cleans out the two storm drains in front of her house. Ask her why, and she will tell you this keeps trash and extra nutrients out of our local waters.

"More than 30% of people surveyed in the central Dane County area do not realize that our storm drains deposit directly to our lakes, streams and wetlands. So, not only is it important to make sure nothing but rain goes down our storm drains and into ditches, but to make sure that others know that pollution in our gutters pollutes our lakes and streams," says Marcia Hartwig, Storm Water Education Coordinator for the Madison Area Municipal Storm Water Partnership (for more information visit <http://www.myfairlakes.com/>).

Adds Chris Kelley, Public Works Foreperson for east side streets, "People have got to realize these are our lakes. Our kids swim and we fish there. Let's take care of them." If you "see the buildup on (storm drain) inlets, clean them out." And, keep grass clippings, motor oil and other harmful materials out of the streets. Our efforts supplement the city's street sweeping program. According to Kelley, the east side currently gets swept every three weeks.

Tell your neighbors. Take the next step, discuss neighborhood storm ~~sewer-drain~~ patrol at your next block party. Add it to the agenda at your next neighborhood association meeting. Stencil your neighborhood storm drains with, "Dump no waste, drains to lake" (or river). Dane County UW Extension Natural Resources Educator, Mindy Habecker, loans kits to those interested in marking storm drains in their neighborhoods. Reserve kits at least two weeks in advance at 224-3718, or habecker@co.dane.wi.us.

What to do with yard waste?

- Leave grass clippings on your lawn, or use to mulch gardens.
- Compost it.
- Check with your neighbors, maybe they can use your extra clippings.
- Take it to city yard waste drop off sites. On the east side, it's 4602 Sycamore Ave.
- From April to October, the City picks up brush monthly.

- During fall, the City picks up leaves.
- **Remember**, store leaves and brush **on the terrace, not in the street.**

For information and pickup schedules, visit

<http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/streets/streets.html>, or call 246-4532

Making a difference

Last fall, Friends of Starkweather Creek, Friends of Monona Bay and Friends of Lake Wingra (FOLW) ran a publicity campaign, “Love Your Lakes Don't Leaf Them,” which included yard signs and grassroots neighborhood education efforts. They look forward to continuing the effort in 2005, says Jim Lorman of FOLW. Visit their informative web site, <http://mononabay.org/leafCampaign.htm>.

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