The Resource

A Publication of the City of North Augusta
Stormwater Management Department

Clean Your Car Without Muddying The Waters

In recent years, sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced. Now, more than 60 percent of water pollution comes from things like leaking oil from cars, fertilizers from yards, farms and gardens, and failing septic tanks. All of these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do our part to help protect our water.

Washington State Department of Ecology

What's the problem with car washing?

There's no problem with washing your car. It's just how and where you do it. Most soap contains phosphates and other chemicals that harm aquatic organisms and water quality. The soap, together with the dirt and oil washed from your car, flows into nearby storm drains which run directly into wetlands, streams or the Savannah River. The phosphates from the soap can cause excess algae to grow. Algae looks bad, smells bad and harms water quality. As algae decays, the process uses up oxygen in the water that fish and other aquatic organisms need.

How can you wash your car and help keep our waters clean?

Use soap sparingly. Use a hose nozzle with a trigger to save water. Pour your bucket of soapy water down the sink when you're done, not in the street. Wash your car on a grassy area so the ground can filter the water naturally. Best of all, take your car to a commercial car wash, especially if you plan to clean the engine or the bottom of your car.

Reduce Pet Waste Impacts To Water Quality

Pets and their waste

In most cases, outdoor pets are fenced in large areas on grassy yards where their waste is not a problem. It is when pets are fenced near sensitive areas such as streams or deposit waste along streets and sidewalks and in parks that the waste becomes a problem.

What's the problem with pet waste?

It's a health risk to pets and people, especially children. It's a nuisance in our neighborhoods. Pet waste is full of bacteria that can make people sick. If it's washed into the storm drain and ends up in a stream or the Savannah River, the resulting bacteria levels can reduce the recreational uses of these waters.

How can you get rid of pet waste and help keep our waters clean?

Remove pet waste for proper disposal when it is near streams, ditches, sidewalks, roadways or children's play areas. Bury small quantities in your yard where it can decompose slowly. Be sure to cover the waste with at least several inches of soil. Bury the waste in several different locations in your yard and keep it away from vegetable gardens. Pet waste may also be bagged and placed with the household trash for pickup. Pet waste should not be added to compost, as disease-causing organisms are often present in the waste.

To find out more about what you can do to prevent water pollution, call the North Augusta Stormwater Management Department at (803) 441-4246.

Species Profile

What is It?

When fishing or exploring the wetland areas, streams and shallow ponds of the coastal plain or lower piedmont of South Carolina and Georgia, it wouldn't be unusual to see a snake. After all, these long, scaly reptiles are quite common both in the water and on the ground.

On the other hand, if your snake has no scales, you might think you've found an American freshwater eel, a member of the fish family. Of course, fish, including eels, have fins - which this creature lacks.

Just what have you found?

This creature just may be a giant salamander. But no, you think, this creature is almost three feet long. Salamanders are tiny things, aren't they?

Actually, Giant Salamanders are quite common in the southeast, and yes, they may slightly exceed three feet in length. Fishermen sometimes catch large salamanders and mistake them for the American eel.

The two largest salamanders in the coastal plain and lower piedmont are the two-toed amphiuma (Amphiuma means) and the greater siren (Siren lacertian).

The gray or black two-toed amphiuma has very small front and rear legs with two toes on each, hence the name. It has been known to give a painful bite when handled. The two-toed amphiuma commonly exceeds three feet in length.

The greater siren has been known to exceed three feet in length. Considered the most primitive of salamanders, sirens have extremely small forelimbs with four toes and no rear limbs. They are usually olive to black in color with conspicuous external gills.

Amphiumas and sirens require clean water, preferably with a mucky bottom. They can be found in ditches, lakes, ponds, Carolina bays and other unpolluted bodies of water. They are primarily nocturnal and feed on insects, crayfish, mollusks, fish and other salamanders.

In addition to the physical similarities between the snake, the eel and the aquatic salamander, these creatures often share the same habitat. Our wetlands serve as the primary source of food and shelter for hundreds of species of reptiles, fish and amphibians. Habitat loss, chemical pollution, and the build-up of silt in streams and rivers from agricultural practices and construction adversely affect the wetlands and the creatures that depend on them for survival.

Many opportunities exist for private citizens, corporations, government agencies and other groups to work together to slow the rate of wetland loss and to improve the quality of our remaining wetlands.

You can help by:

- Seeding grass or planting shrubs to prevent soil erosion.
- Maintaining vegetative buffer strips between developed land and water.
- Properly disposing of chemicals and toxins.

Two-toed Amphiuma

- Releasing accidental catches and practicing 'leave no trace' principles.
- Avoiding the release of non-native plant or animal species into the environment.
- Supporting wetlands conservation initiatives. Call the Wetlands Hotline at 1-800-832-7828.

Links to more information about wetlands conservation, salamanders, eels and snakes are available online at www.northaugusta.net. Click on the Stormwater Icon.

Sources: US Environmental Protection Agency, www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands.

UGA Savannah River Ecology Laboratory, www.uga.edu/srelherp.

City of North Augusta Website

Information concerning upcoming seminars sponsored by the Stormwater Management Department as well as ordinances, publications, contact information and past editions of *The Resource* may be found at www.northaugusta.net. Follow the Stormwater link.

NO DUMPING DRAINS TO RIVER
City of North Augusta
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North Augusta
South Carolina's Riverfront