

What is a Watershed?

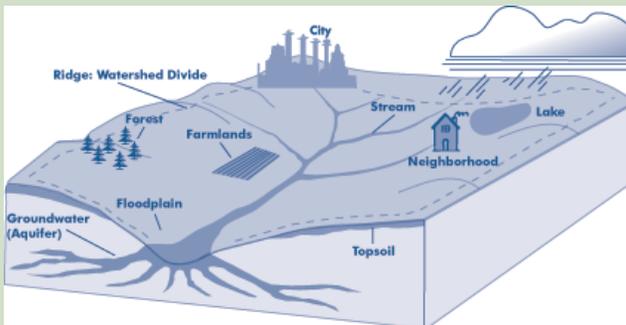
A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common point, such as a nearby creek, stream, river or lake. Every small watershed drains to a larger watershed that eventually flows to the ocean.

Watersheds support a wide variety of plants and wildlife and provide many outdoor recreation opportunities. By protecting the health of our watersheds we can preserve and enhance the quality of life for Kansas City area residents.

What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow. It flows from rooftops, over paved streets, sidewalks and parking lots, across bare soil, and through lawns and storm drains. As it flows, runoff collects and transports soil, pet waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizer, oil and grease, litter and other pollutants. This water drains directly into nearby creeks, streams and rivers, without receiving treatment at sewage plants.

Polluted stormwater contaminates streams, rivers and lakes. It can kill or damage plants, fish and wildlife, while degrading the quality of our water.



A typical watershed system



Summer Watershed Tip



Pick Up After Your Pet

If not disposed of properly, pet waste flows directly into waterways, untreated



Clean Water. Healthy Life.

**Clean Water.
Healthy Life.**

**For more information,
visit www.marc.org/Environment/Water
or call 816/474-4240.**

Facts About Pet Waste

Every time it rains the potential exists for thousands of pounds of pet waste to wash down storm drains and into streams, rivers and lakes. If not disposed of properly, pet waste flows directly into nearby streams and creeks without being treated at wastewater treatment facilities.



Pet waste can contain bacteria that threaten the health of animals and people, especially children. Pet waste also contains

nutrients that encourage excess weed and algae growth. This water then becomes cloudy and green — unattractive for swimming, boating and fishing. Excess nutrients are a major cause of water quality decline.

When pet waste is washed into lakes and streams, the waste decays, using up oxygen and sometimes releasing ammonia. Low oxygen levels and ammonia combined with warm temperatures can kill fish and other aquatic life.

**Clean Water.
Healthy Life.**

What's the Problem?

A recent USGS study of streams and creeks showed that bacteria associated with pet waste was the source of approximately one-quarter of the bacteria in samples collected from local waterways.

When pet waste is disposed of improperly, water quality isn't the only thing that suffers — your health may be at risk, too.

Pets, children playing outside, and adults gardening are most at risk for infection from some of the bacteria and parasites found in pet waste. Diseases that can be transmitted from pet waste include the following:

Salmonellosis: the most common bacterial infection transmitted to humans by other animals. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, headache, vomiting and diarrhea.

Toxocariasis: roundworms usually transmitted from dogs to humans, often without noticeable symptoms, but may cause vision loss, a rash, fever or cough.

Toxoplasmosis: a parasite carried by cats that can cause birth defects if a woman becomes infected during pregnancy, and can also be a problem for people with depressed immune systems.

Many of our local waterways do not meet state water quality bacteria standards for recreational use. Pet waste is one of the components of non-point source pollution that contributes to our water quality problems, and is one that each of us can help correct. Pet waste should never enter storm drains and sur-

What Can You Do?

face water. Many local communities require pet owners to pick up after pets when away from their property, and to pick up waste from their property if it attracts flies and can pose a health risk.

Fortunately, there are actions pet owners can take to help keep our water clean:

- ❶ Pick up pet waste from your yard. It is not a fertilizer.
- ❷ Carry disposable bags while walking your dog to pick up and dispose of waste properly. If you dispose of pet waste in the trash, wrap it carefully to avoid spillage during collection.
- ❸ Flush your pet's waste down the toilet, so it can be treated at a sewage treatment plant.
- ❹ Bury pet waste in your yard, at least 12 inches deep and cover with at least eight inches of soil to let it decompose slowly. Bury the waste in several different locations and keep it away from vegetable gardens.
- ❺ Communities are encouraged to provide pet waste disposal bags at local parks, along trails and in public places where people frequently walk their dogs.

