



Positive Urban Practices

Right now, your local watershed may not be your first thought, but the health and cleanliness of the watershed really does affect you in many ways. There are numerous ways you can positively enhance the watersheds you live in and enjoy, just by being mindful of how your daily activities can impact the watershed. The things for you to keep in mind will eventually seem very simple once you realize what a great help you can be!

How Do Urban Activities Affect the Health of My Watershed?

Every action results in a reaction. Your daily activities like walking your dog along a creek, washing your car or how you brush your teeth will all ultimately affect the watershed. As you become aware of how you can impact the watershed, why not ensure your impact is a positive one? A good rule of thumb is to remember that litter, pet waste, green waste, and chemicals discarded carelessly make for a dirty neighborhood. In addition, when washed into the gutter these things will inevitably wind up in storm drains that lead to our rivers, creeks, lakes, and oceans, with no water quality treatment along the way, which can pollute the watershed.

The porous and varied terrain of natural landscapes in our upper watersheds trap rainwater and snowmelt and allow it to slowly filter into the ground. In contrast, non-porous urban landscapes do not let runoff slowly percolate into the ground. Water remains above the surface, accumulates, and can enter into storm drains carrying large amounts of pollution. Storm water runoff has a major impact on the watershed, and preventing pollution from storm water runoff is simpler than it sounds. There are three main types of storm water pollution: litter (especially plastics), chemical pollution (fertilizer and detergents) and natural pollution (green waste, animal waste).

Simple things you can do to improve the health of your watershed include:

- Never fertilize your yard before it rains, and avoid over-watering just after application to reduce chemical runoff.
- Compost or dispose of your green waste properly.
- Recycle used motor oil at any number of the Butte County Certified Oil Recycling Centers.
- Visit the Butte Regional Household Hazardous Waste Facility to drop off used batteries, e-waste, CFL bulbs, glass thermometers, unwanted old paint, etc.
- Clean water-based paint from brushes in any sink, never outside with a hose.
- Clean oil-based paint from brushes with paint thinner, which can be filtered and reused.
- Whenever possible, consider using non-toxic household cleaning products or easy-to-use natural alternatives, rather than chemical based products.
- If you cannot get to a car wash, wash your car on your lawn because it will act as a filter, and try to confine all cleaning materials to a bucket. Afterward, dump this wash or rinse water down inside drains such as your kitchen sink or toilet.
- NEVER flush expired or unused prescription medication down the toilet! Consult with your pharmacist about proper disposal.

By implementing even a few of these tips, you will help reduce the amount of pollution that is discharged through the storm drain system into local waterways – and have a positive impact on the watershed.





▲ **Butte Creek Waterfall**

Water Conservation

Did you know it is possible to survive three weeks without food but only three days without water? Water is a valuable resource and one we must all work to protect. Butte County currently has a Groundwater Conservation ordinance in place to protect the County's valuable groundwater resource. Chapter 33 of the Butte County Code seeks to foster prudent water management practices and ensures that the water resource must be reasonably and beneficially used and conserved for the benefit of the overlying land.

Learning to use less water today is the best and least expensive way to avoid possible problems in the future. Water conservation can be as simple as developing the habit of using a little less every time you use water. Some easy things you can do to conserve water any time of the year are:

- Never pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it. Use it to water your indoor plants or garden.
- Clean vegetables in a pan filled with water rather than running water from the tap.
- Avoid using running water to thaw frozen food; defrost food overnight in the refrigerator or use a microwave oven.
- Replace your showerhead with an ultra-low-flow version.
- Consider purchasing a low-volume toilet.
- Avoid letting the water run while brushing your teeth, washing your face or shaving.
- Operate automatic clothes washers only when they are fully loaded, or set the water level for the size of your load.
- Plant native and/or drought-tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs and trees.
- Use mulch to retain moisture in the soil.
- Use a shut-off nozzle on your hose.
- Avoid over-watering your lawn – water in several short sessions rather than one long one to allow the lawn to better absorb moisture.

Resources

Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation

<http://www.buttecounty.net/WaterandResource/>

Keep Chico Clean

<http://www.keepchicoclean.org/>

Butte County Public Works Department

<http://www.buttecounty.net/PublicWorks/>

RecycleButte

<http://www.buttecounty.net/RecycleButte.aspx>

CA State Water Resources Control Board

Education and Outreach materials

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/outreach/

Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu>



The Butte County Department of Water and Resource Conservation's Watershed Education and Outreach Project is designed to share information on a variety of water-related topics that are important to residents of Butte County. There are multiple interrelated watersheds in Butte and Tehama Counties that are affected by our actions. Watershed protection is important not only for the health of the natural environment, but for all of us, too. Funds for this project have been provided by a grant from the CALFED Watershed Program and administered by the Department of Water Resources. For more information about the Watershed Education and Outreach Project, please visit <http://www.buttecounty.net/waterandresource/>.