

Sauk River Watershed District

Focus On Your Waters

City of Melrose Newsletter Insert

Spring 2003

Our Mission Statement

“to apply our unique abilities and authorities in ways that protect and enhance our watershed’s resources for today and tomorrow”

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2003: The Year of Stormwater

Effective March 10, 2003, the EPA has new rules addressing pollution contributions from industrial and construction activities and municipal storm water systems. These are often referred to as “Phase Two” rules and are more stringent than the previous or “Phase One” rules.

The new restrictions are important because urban runoff and storm sewers have been listed among the top three sources of water quality impairment (USEPA, 2000).

In order to address these concerns, the Sauk River Watershed District will be focusing our educational efforts this year on stormwater.

There are many concerns with stormwater runoff. One concern is that there

are concentrated amounts of nutrients, sediments, heavy metals and toxic chemicals in stormwater runoff. These pollutants collect on impervious surfaces such as roads, sidewalks, and buildings. Another concern is the increased volume of water in urbanized areas because there is little opportunity for the water to soak into the soil. As undeveloped land is converted to buildings, streets and sidewalks the amount of stormwater increases. Furthermore, the sources of contaminants found in storm water can be difficult to trace. Failing septic systems, overfertilized lawns, poor construction site practices, leaking underground tanks as well as others can all contribute to storm water pollution.



Every curb is a shoreland. Prevent runoff from your 'shoreline', no matter where you live.

Area cities are working on addressing storm water concerns. The Cities of Osakis and Melrose have built storm water ponds to better treat stormwater. Sauk Centre received a grant to investigate stormwater contribution from the City to the Lake.

We are working on putting together educational efforts addressing these topics. Look for these opportunities in the future!

10 things you can do to prevent runoff

1. Use fertilizers sparingly and sweep up driveways, sidewalks, and roads
2. Never dump anything down storm drains
3. Vegetate bare spots in your yard using native plants that require less maintenance and have deep roots that help hold soil in place.
4. Compost your yard waste. Use compost in your garden.
5. Avoid using pesticides; read labels, learn about integrated pest management
6. Direct rain gutter downspouts away from hard surfaces
7. Take your car to the carwash instead of washing in the driveway
8. Check your car for leaks and recycle motor oil
9. Pick up after your pet, flush or dispose of waste in garbage
10. Have your septic system checked and pumped regularly

Is spring time lawn care time?

Many of us can't wait to get out in the lawn after a long winter. We will do anything outside just to be outside. But in all your excitement to be out in spring weather you may be applying too much fertilizer at the wrong time resulting in overapplication. Overuse of chemicals should also be avoided. Both of these can have a negative impact on lake water quality.

Fall is the best time to apply fertilizer. Try to apply fertilizer twice in the fall, once during the first 15 days of September and October.



Our lawn grass mixtures are 'cool season' grasses. This is why it is typical to see the grasses turning brown in dry summer heat. The cool temperatures in

the fall promote vigorous root and crown growth. This allows grass to store energy so that in spring it can out-compete weeds. Additionally, most weeds do not fair well in cool weather and will not benefit from the fertilizer.

If you choose to fertilize, remember to use zero phosphorous fertilizer. Phosphorous is the middle number on a bag of fertilizer. Make sure it reads '0' since excess phosphorus creates algae problems and excessive weed growth in our lakes and rivers.

Timing of weed control is also an important factor. Crabgrass is an annual grass meaning that each year every plant emerges from a newly germinated seed. To control crabgrass you should apply a *Preemergence* herbicides to affect germinating seeds. To control summer annuals such as crabgrass, apply preemergence herbicides between May



1 and May 15 in a typical year or once soil temperatures are **consistently** in the 55-60° F range.

Dandelions are a perennial broadleaf weed that can be controlled manually and are typically very easy to pull after a rain in the early spring. If you choose to apply chemicals, apply in late April to early June when temperatures are between 60-80 degrees.

For more information call the University of Minnesota Extension Service Yard and Garden line at 1-888-624-4771 or check the University of Minnesota Sustainable Landscapes Website at <http://www.sustland.umn.edu/>
Source: listed above

Saved by Zero!

Believe it or not, sometimes it's what is left out that is most important. Take fertilizer for an example. Leaving phosphorus out of lawn fertilizer will go a long way in protecting our lakes and rivers.

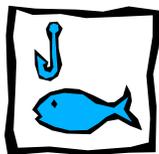
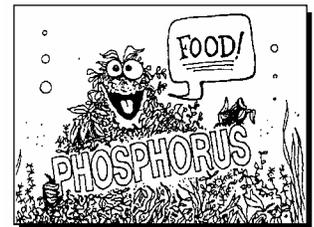
What's wrong with phosphorus? Phosphorus is food for algae—the green yucky muck you don't want on your lake or river. One pound of it can generate between 300 and 500 pounds of algae growth. And most of the time our lawns don't need the phosphorus because it is already abundant in soils throughout Minnesota.

Lakeshore residents have been encouraged to use fertilizers that have low or zero phosphorus for a number of years. But it isn't only lake residents that impact surface water. Stormwater runoff from residential areas can contribute large amounts of phosphorus to our waters.

New legislation was passed by the Minnesota legislature this year that restricts the phosphorus content in fertilizer to no more than 3% after January 1, 2004, unless soil tests determine that there is too low in phosphorus for a new lawn to establish. Also, fertilizer cannot be applied to any impervious surface.

This law is expected to be one of the methods of lake and stream improvement that has the most impact for the least amount of investment. It builds on the legislation that has existed for nearly 30 years removing phosphorus from soaps and detergents because of its detrimental effects.

Don't wait until 2004—make sure that when you purchase fertilizer this year the middle number on the bag is a zero!



Getting a line wet this summer?

Fishing is a favorite pastime for many of us. But there's important information to remember next time you go out.

Don't forget that if you are transporting your boat or personal watercraft to various lakes or rivers you run the

risk of spreading exotic aquatic plants. Make sure you carefully check your boat and trailer and remove any vegetation. Empty your livewell and baitbuckets to help stop the spread of zebra mussels.

Also remember that while eating fish can be healthy, fish from Minnesota waters can also contain harmful mercury and PCB's. Generally you can eat unlimited amounts of small panfish. Larger fish, especially walleyes,

northern pike or bass, that feed on other fish have the highest levels of contamination and should only be eaten once a week. Pregnant or nursing mothers should only eat panfish once a week, larger fish once a month.

For specific information on fish contamination levels where you fish, contact the MN Dept of Health or visit their website at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/> and search for 'fish consumption advisory'.