

# How can we protect our waters?



## **Remember:**

- We're all in this together – we all contribute to the problems and can be part of the solutions
- What we do on the land affects the water
- When it comes to runoff, we all live on waterfront property!
- It takes money and effort to restore and sustain a healthy environment.

## **Things everyone can do at home:**

- Use non-toxic, phosphorus-free detergents, household cleaners and fabric softener made with simple ingredients
- Buy household products that are free of the potentially-toxic antibacterial compound “triclosan” (check the labels!)
- Compost food wastes, lawn clippings and leaves
- Keep leaves, grass clippings and litter from being washed into storm sewers or ditches
- Keep sidewalks, driveways and other hard surfaces swept clean ahead of rainfall
- Direct roof and driveway runoff to rain gardens or areas where rainwater can soak into the ground
- Use phosphorus-free lawn fertilizer, or...
- Convert lawns to rain gardens or prairie; plant native plants and shrubs to host native insects and birds
- On waterfront property, restore and maintain a buffer of native vegetation along the shoreline to protect water quality and aquatic habitat
- Dispose of pet waste properly
- Properly maintain septic systems
- Don't flush baby wipes, plastics and garbage down the toilet
- Take a walk after the rain to know where rainwater from your neighborhood goes and work to keep trash, sediment, and pollutants out of the local runoff.

## **Ways to be a clean water steward:**

- Understand your local watershed - how can groundwater, wetlands, streams or lakes be affected by land use and runoff in your area?
- Support local, regional and worldwide water protection groups
- Join community clean water efforts
- Help prevent the spread of invasive aquatic and terrestrial species
- Become a “Citizen Scientist” helping our water quality agencies gather information; details can be found on these websites: <http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav/> (for streams) and <https://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/clmn/> (for lakes)
- Get to know the fascinating creatures that live in the water (stoneflies, mayflies, dragonflies, fish, clams, snails) and their life cycles and habitat needs – this will help in understanding how to protect them!
- Stay informed and engaged on water issues; attune your lifestyle, purchases, and voting to promote clean water and earth-friendly practices
- Advocate for legislation, ordinances, and programs that fund, protect and restore water quality and healthy aquatic habitat
- Help share the message on water quality and habitat protection.

## **When enjoying the waters you're working to protect:**

- Use slow, no-wake speed when boating near shore; boat wakes can damage near shore habitat and erode the shoreline
- Clean boats and gear properly to prevent the spread of invasive species
- Take a litter bag along everywhere you walk and every time you visit a river, lake, or stream (litter on the roadways and paths can be washed into our waterways!)
- Consider hosting a cleanup day to pick litter from a local shoreline
- Restore your soul and pass on your example of good stewardship to the next generation – take friends and family to responsibly enjoy time on, in and by the water!

*This information and encouragement is sent to you from the Creation Care Team of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ.*

