

KEEPING YOUR STREAMS AND LAKE HEALTHY...

1. GET YOUR LAWN AND GARDEN OFF DRUGS!

- Limit the use of chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers — and avoid using chemicals entirely in wet weather.
- Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers run off into creeks and streams — and eventually into Lake Erie. Fertilizers add excessive nutrients to natural waters that lead to algae bloom, bad odors from lack of oxygen, and fish kills. Pesticides and herbicides kill fish and their food sources.
- Consider using compost instead of fertilizer and natural means to control pests and plant disease.

2. FEED YOUR STREAM RIGHT

- Never pour oil, grease, detergent from car washing, gasoline, antifreeze, paint products, carpet-cleaning chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, or other toxic substances down street storm drains.

Storm drains flow directly into creeks, which flow directly into Lake Erie. All of these substances are toxic to fish and other stream-dwelling organisms. Grease and oil coat fish gills, deplete the oxygen supply, and smother bottom-dwelling organisms.

3. DON'T PLUG YOUR ARTERIES

- Dispose of garbage at your curbside pickup or landfill — not in creeks or streams. Some people think of creeks as garbage dumps. Look in our streams, and you'll find shopping carts, mattresses, car parts, plastic, cans, Styrofoam, yard debris, and paper litter. Debris creates dams that cause flooding and erosion. Litter is mistaken by wildlife for food and can be toxic or cause starvation. Backed-up water is a breeding place for rodents and mosquitoes. If you need help removing or disposing of debris, contact your Borough, Township, or Chamber of Commerce, who can direct you to local volunteer organizations.

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For more information on stream health:
• <http://pa.lwv.org/wren/>
• <http://www.epa.gov/>
• <http://dep.state.pa.us/>

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4. GIVE YOUR CREEK ENOUGH OXYGEN TO LIVE

- Many forms of pollution deplete oxygen in the streams and Lake Erie. Oxygen depletion creates “dead zones” in the lake where nothing can live.
- Compost lawn clippings, leaves, and soil instead of putting them in streams. *These materials are biodegradable, but they use oxygen in the water to break down and thus deplete the oxygen available for aquatic life.*
- Limit your use of lawn fertilizer and control its runoff. *Runoff from excessive lawn fertilizing causes algae blooms, which deplete oxygen in streams.*
- Drain pools and hot tubs into grassy areas, not into the street or stream. *This allows the chlorine to dissipate into the air before it enters the stream where it is toxic to fish.*



5. PROVIDE A STABLE ENVIRONMENT

- Maintain or improve stream-side vegetation. *Trees stabilize banks, provide habitat for birds and small mammals, and keep water temperature cool for fish. Removing natural vegetation leads to eroded stream banks and property loss. Modify steep banks to form shallow slopes or create terraces, and replant with native plants.*
- Check for erosion regularly and correct problems promptly. *Soil, sand, and fine gravel can fill in the creek bed and reduce its ability to carry flood waters. Erosion debris destroys pools, eliminates shelter and fish spawning habitat, and diminishes food supplies for fish and aquatic insects. A vegetated slope is the best defense.*



6. KEEP THE STRESS TO YOUR STREAM LOW

- Check downspouts and other pipes to see where they drain. *Direct pipes to grassy areas so that runoff water can filter and lessen in volume before entering the stream. Runoff causes stream surges during storms that cause bank erosion and wash pollution into streams.*
- Control drainage in paved areas, such as driveways, parking lots, and patios. *Consider surrounding paved areas with grassy sunken strips, shrubs, or trees, which can make the area more attractive as well as filter runoff pollutants. Don't shovel excess snow into the streams and lakes. Road salt contains chlorides, which are toxic to aquatic life.*
- Don't rake leaves or lawn clippings into the storm drain or creek. *Instead, mulch leaves when you mow and leave them on the lawn or add them to your compost pile. Leaf mulch is good for your lawn. Borough residents can rake leaves to the curb for pick-up.*



7. GO NATURAL

- Landscape with native plant species. *Native plants provide erosion protection during high flows and are adapted to recover quickly when flood waters subside. Native species require less water and fewer chemicals than other plants.*
- Consider using compost instead of chemical fertilizers.
- In winter, use sand, gravel, or other natural substances on your walkways and driveways instead of salt.
- Pave only where necessary. *Paving increases runoff during storms, adding to flooding and erosion problems. Paving contributes to lower creek flows during the dry summer months and depletes the overall water table.*

