

BEST PRACTICES



What's Really Polluting Puget Sound?

We've all heard it...Puget Sound is in trouble!

But why is it in trouble and what's really polluting Puget Sound? Sadly, the answer is us!

Puget Sound is the second largest estuary in the United States. Fed by over 10,000 rivers and streams and home to 4.4 million people, the Puget Sound region is truly a unique and wonderful place to live. Over the last 60 years, the region has grown considerably as millions of people have moved from all over the world to make their home in communities throughout our region. In 1960 a modest 1.8 million people called the region home. Growth continues today, and experts project over 5 million people will live in the region by 2040.

Because Puget Sound is such a popular place to live, about 12% of the land in the 12 counties surrounding Puget Sound is used for homes. Commercial and industrial buildings take up less than 1% of the land in our region. With so much residential land in our region, neighborhood pollution from residents is the biggest source of pollution in Puget Sound. That's right—you and me, our children, our pets, and the neighborhoods we live in are the largest source of pollution in our local rivers, lakes, streams, groundwater, and ultimately Puget Sound. Stormwater pollution from an acre of commercial or industrial land often generates higher pollutant levels than residential lands. However, since there is so much more residential land, it generates a much larger amount of pollution overall.

Every time it rains, rainwater falls on our roofs, driveways, parking lots, lawns, gardens, and cul-de-sacs, picking up everything we've left behind and leaching pollutants from the structures and surfaces we've built. Fertilizers and pesticides we used in our yard and garden, dog poop we haven't picked up yet, zinc and copper from our roofs, oil and grease from our cars, and pollutants generated from many other daily activities are the greatest source of pollution to both our waterways and Puget Sound.

The largest pollutant is oil and grease from our cars and other motorized vehicles like RVs and boats. Small (or even large) amounts of oil, gas, and grease leak from motorized equipment during normal use or when needing repair. The 1.7 million cars in our region leak a tanker truck's worth of oil every day. Read our Don't Drip & Drive article on page 6 to learn more about how you can make sure your vehicles are not contributing to that tanker truck of oil.

The fantastic news is you have the power to reduce pollutants flowing into Puget Sound! Here are seven simple and easy things you can do every day to help protect our water and Puget Sound.



Always remember, small actions add up to make a big difference!

For more information about small actions you can take to help keep pollutants out of our local waterways visit our website at streamteam.info/actions/

- 1. Choose alternate forms of transportation whenever possible.** Walk, ride your bike, carpool or take public transportation. Fewer vehicles on our roads means fewer chances for leaks.
- 2. Always was your vehicle at a commercial carwash.** Commercial car washes send dirty wash water to the sewage treatment plant for thorough treatment. Dirty wash water from driveways or parking lot car washes flow to the stormwater system where it does not receive adequate treatment before flowing to local waterways or groundwater.
- 3. If your vehicle leaks, get it fixed as soon as possible.** Learn about vehicle leak checks and discounts for fixing your leaky vehicle.
- 4. Always pick up your dog's poop and dispose of it in the garbage.** Dog and other pet poop is raw sewage. Dog poop in your backyard must be picked up at least once a week, even in the dark and wet fall and winter months. To avoid searching your back yard for piles during the dark months, consider putting a small light on your pet's collar so you can easily see where your dog does its business and pick it up without having to search. See page 11 to learn how your can receive a free pet waste dispenser for your leash or a neighborhood pet waste dispenser and sign.
- 5. Follow natural yard and lawn care practices and avoid using weed and feed products.** To learn more, visit streamteam.info
To find the least toxic options for fertilizers and pesticides go to <http://GrowSmartGrowSafe.org>
- 6. Sweep sidewalks and driveways instead of pressure washing them.** Always collect debris and dispose of it in the trash, never sweep it into the street or a storm drain.
- 7. Build a rain garden.** If your home does not connect to a neighborhood storm pond (typically houses built before 1990), build a rain garden to collect stormwater from your own property and help the water slowly soak into the ground. For more information about building a rain garden, <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/1310027.pdf>



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