

Ann Arbor News “Your World” Submission for 11/27/06:

We are all aware that eating too much fat can clog our arteries and lead to potentially serious health problems further down the road. The same is true of municipal water treatment processes. Disposing of **Fats, Oils, and Greases (FOG)** improperly can lead to chronic obstructions and flooding all the way from your household drain to the wastewater treatment plant.

The Ann Arbor Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) receives and treats approximately 19 million gallons of wastewater per day from the City of Ann Arbor, Pittsfield, Scio, and Ann Arbor Townships. One of the steps in the treatment process involves removing solid materials like FOG from the wastewater, drying it out, and sending it to the landfill.

Most of us know FOG as a byproduct of cooking. Too often, cooking grease is washed down the kitchen sink, where it can congeal – hardening to the consistency of concrete. By pouring cooking grease into an old can, refrigerating it until it solidifies, and throwing it away in your household trash, you are eliminating this step for the WWTP – one of the most substantial costs of treating municipal wastewater.

The cost to taxpayers also increases when harmful chemicals that many residents pour down the drain to clear blockages must be treated. Unfortunately, not all of these chemicals can be treated. Many of them pass through the WWTP undetected, upsetting the treatment process and polluting our local rivers and streams.

If your drain is blocked, please consider finding an alternative option to commercial drain cleaners. A relatively simple way to unclog your drain is to use a plunger or flexible metal snake. If this does not work, then try pouring ½ cup of baking soda down the drain, followed by 1 cup of white vinegar. Cover the drain and let set for 5 minutes. Then pour a kettle of boiling water down the drain. The vinegar and baking soda work to break the FOG into smaller pieces, effectively clearing the obstruction.

For more information, call the Washtenaw County Solid Waste Program at 734.222.6874.

Submitted by:

Joanna Smither, Program Assistant
Washtenaw County Planning and Environment

Phone: 734-222-6874

Email: smitherj@ewashtenaw.org

Website: <http://recycle.ewashtenaw.org>