

Community Partners for Clean Streams Monthly eMonitor



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Up Front

The eMonitor is designed to keep our Partners and friends updated on CPCS, stormwater management issues, provide helpful information to reduce stormwater and nonpoint source pollution, recognize new Partners, highlight upcoming events, and create networking opportunities. We hope you enjoy each edition of the Monthly eMonitor and welcome any comments, concerns, or suggestions.

Manage Waste for Water Quality

The products you use and the way you dispose of them can greatly affect water quality. Choosing the least toxic option, products that have little packaging and reusable items are all small steps that everyone can take to protect the environment.

Toxic cleaning, painting and other products are detrimental to the environment. No matter how careful you are handling and disposing of them, there is a great risk they will end up in the environment; often times in our waterways. They may also pose a danger to human health, particularly when children are exposed to these substances. Choosing less toxic options whenever possible is the best way to prevent environmental degradation.

If we generate fewer toxic waste products and smaller quantities of waste, in general items that may end up in the waste stream or the local stream can be reduced. This issue of the eMonitor looks at ways you can easily prevent waste from effecting Washtenaw County Waterways.



Choose Green

There are many selection options when it comes to products used for cleaning, vehicle maintenance, pest control, painting around the office and home. When purchasing these products, look for items that are less toxic than the ones you typically purchase. Better yet, choose a non-toxic alternative and see how it works. Many products are labeled “biodegradable, fragrance free, hypoallergenic” but that does not always mean they are safe for your place of business, your family or the environment. Manufacturers are not required to list their ingredients, so look for products that do. Those labels that include warning words such as “Poison”, “Flammable”, “Corrosive”, “Danger”, “Warning” or “Caution” should be avoided.

There are several tips listed below to help you determine which products are the best choices for your business or home.

Choosing the Least Toxic Option

- Avoid disposing of left over products by only purchasing the amount you need. Long term storage of items also increases the possibility of a spill or accidental exposure.
- Look for products that say “Phosphate Free”
- Choose fragrance free products, the fragrances are another synthetic chemical that may affect your employees and families.
- Use non-chlorinated and aqueous compounds in place of chlorine and petroleum based products.
- Avoid using disposable products; instead use re-usable mops, dusters and cloths for cleaning.
- Ensure that containers are recyclable, if not made of biodegradable materials such as cardboard or paper.
- Choose concentrated products that can be used in cold water.
- Avoid products that contain EDTA and NTA. Instead try products with sodium citrate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium carbonate or sodium silicate as a safer alternative.
- For more information about understanding product labels, visit www.eco-labels.org.
- Be sure to check with your maintenance staff or contractor about the safety of products they use to maintain your site.



Some Products and Alternatives to Consider

- Use hot water/steam cleaning methods when washing oil from metal parts.
- Many household items such as vinegar, baking soda, olive oil, borax, water and lemon are safe, non-toxic alternatives. See the box on the next page for “recipes”!
- A little elbow grease and plain soap and water often cleans as well as toxic products.
- Murphy’s Oil Soap is a great non-toxic alternative for cleaning floors and furniture.
- Companies such as Seventh Generation, Ecover and Simple Green include the ingredients on the label, and are considered safer products for cleaning your office or home.

Recipes for Non-Toxic Cleaning for the Office and Home

Windows and Glass: Put 3 tablespoons of vinegar per 1 quart of water in a spray bottle. For extra strength, try ½ teaspoon of liquid soap, 3 tablespoons of vinegar, and 2 cups of water. Shake well.

Furniture: Mix olive oil and vinegar in a one to one ratio and polish with a soft cloth.

Tub and Tile: Mix 1 2/3 cup of baking soda, ½ cup of liquid soap, and ½ cup of water. As the last step, add two tablespoons of vinegar. Immediately apply, wipe and scrub.

Toilet Bowl: Pour 1 cup of borax into the toilet before going to bed. In the morning, scrub and flush. For extra strength cleaner, add ¼ cup of vinegar to the borax.

Ovens: Mix one cup of baking soda and ¼ cup of washing soda and then add enough water to make a paste; apply the paste to the oven surfaces and let soak overnight.

Hand-washing: Use plain soap and water rather than antibacterial or fragrance filled products. Sing “Happy Birthday” twice while working up a lather. Soap works just as well to kill germs.



For More Information

For more information about reducing overall waste or disposing of toxic substances, please contact the Washtenaw County Home Toxics Reduction Program at 734-222-3950. Their drop off center is located at 705 N. Zeeb Road in Scio Township, call for hours. You may also visit their website at http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/planning_environment/dpw/hhw_html for more tips. Community Partners are also eligible for a waste audit to determine how you can reduce waste and recycle more.



CPCS News

NEW! Paint Brochure is Now Available!

Ever wonder what to do with all those old paint cans gathering dust and taking up space in the garage? Check out our newest brochure, Paint Pointers. It includes valuable information about clean-up, storing and disposing of paint and paint products. You will also find great tips for exchanging and donating paint that is no longer needed to grateful recipients.

Please contact us if you would like a hard copy or electronic version of the Paint Pointers Brochure. We can send several copies for distribution to your employees or local residents; just let us know how many you need!

CPCS News

New and Renewing Partners

We would like to welcome and thank our new and renewing Community Partners for this month. Thank you for your continuing commitment to water quality!

New Partners:

Scio Township – 2 locations

Ypsilanti Township – 8 locations



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