

A river or stream in your neighborhood or in your backyard can be a great source of pleasure.

You can observe wildlife that come to the stream, fish or just enjoy the sounds of the water. The stream is also an important natural resource; it is a source of drinking water as well as water for farming and industrial uses. We need to insure that streams stay healthy.

The health of a stream is a reflection of the surrounding land use; what you do affects it.

Water flowing over roads, lawns and yards picks up soil, lawn fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and other pollutants that we don't want in our waterways. Disturbing the area near a stream to enlarge a lawn or create a view can lead to serious problems for homeowners.

- **Erosion** - Cutting vegetation along the river destabilizes the bank leading to loss of land. River banks need to stand up to currents, changing water levels,

ice, flooding and surface runoff from higher ground.

- **Flooding** - More water reaches the stream faster during heavy rains when impervious surfaces like driveways don't allow water to soak into the soil. Water runs off of lawns much faster compared with forests.
- **Water damage** - Building in areas next to the river places them in harm's way.
- **Unsightly algae blooms** - fertilizers running off your lawn encourage green algae growth in streams.
- **Loss of fish habitat** - Clearing trees exposes waters to more sunlight. This can raise water temperature, which can stress fish and other aquatic life.
- **Loss of privacy** - Trees and shrubs along the bank screen homes from public view and help reduce noise from boats on the water.

What can you do to protect the health of your stream?

Spend some time outside during a heavy rainstorm and watch where water comes from and where it goes! It is best if the water spreads out and does not flow in a straight channel. If your land receives stormwater runoff from a road or you have an unstable bank, consult an engineer!

Streamside areas are high risk areas. Avoid building sheds or walkways nearby. The river moves in its channel and may not stay where you wish! Be certain to get a permit before starting any work on a river bank or in a wetland.

Avoid planting a lawn to the water's edge. Leave trees and shrubs that grow naturally next to the stream. Consider planting a native wildflower meadow on the water side of your lawn!

More Healthy Stream Tips

Excess fertilizer runs off into streams when it rains, causing algae growth, and harming aquatic life. Test the soil; follow directions to use only what you need!

Frequent mowing stresses your lawn and dries it out, requiring more watering. Keep the lawn no shorter than 3 1/2" and leave the grass clippings; you will conserve water which keeps your stream flowing!

Native plants are adapted to local conditions-- they don't need pesticides that can harm aquatic life. For NJ native plant lists go to www.npsnj.org

Soil and mulch piled near streams can wash downstream during floods and cause pollution. Store stuff away from the stream.

Paved surfaces contribute to more and faster runoff. When installing walkways and driveways, use porous materials that allow rainwater to seep into the ground.

Consult your local watershed association for more ideas on how to protect your local streams!

Stream Protection for Healthy Neighborhood Streams

