

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date MONTH, DAY, YEAR

Contact: Name of EC Chair, Name of Town Environmental Commission

Do more to protect the health of local streams ... by doing less

What can we do to protect our streams in (Name of Town)? Let's do more... by doing less! Less mowing, less watering, less fertilizing, less pesticide application, and cutting fewer trees and shrubs near the stream can make a big difference in keeping streams healthy and the water clean.

We like to sit on the lawn with friends and enjoy the outdoors during warm weather months. We maintain those lawns to keep them short, green and pest-free. But did you know that these habits may be costly and unhealthy?

We water our lawns more during the time of year when our streams are at the lowest level, and when people and wildlife need the water most. Watering lawns represents about 40 percent of total water use in New Jersey during the summer, but experts say there is the rainfall in our state to keep lawns and gardens healthy if we follow good maintenance practices without additional watering. For example, mowing too short dries lawns out, requiring more watering and fertilizers—and overwatering actually encourages disease.

Minding the stream

Lawn chemicals find their way into local streams or lakes when it rains and the runoff flows off our lawns, picking up fertilizers and pesticides along the way. Fertilizers can cause algae to grow out of control in streams, smothering fish and other organisms that live in the water. And when pollutants get into streams, rivers and reservoirs, that water will require more costly filtering to make it safe for drinking.

Taking care of stream banks is another important way to protect water quality. Streams and rivers are sensitive systems that interact with the land surrounding them. Native trees and shrubs next to waterways are part of that system; their roots stabilize the bank and keep soil and other pollutants from washing into the stream. Branches provide cooling shade for plants and animals that live in the water, and leaves that fall into the water provide food for those water dwellers. When lawns extend right to the edge of the stream, the banks easily erode, more soil and pollutants get into the river, and the animals and plants in the streams and rivers struggle to survive.

Money-saving tips to protect stream health The Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) is working with the (Name of Town) Environmental Commission to help you find better ways to take care of your yard, and protect local streams and rivers. Here are some ways to save money by doing less:

- Mow less: lawn grass should be cut no shorter than 3 inches; short lawns need more watering.
- Water less: lawns and gardens typically need water only once a week--don't water if it has rained!

- Use less fertilizer: determine lawn or plant needs and read the directions before applying. Cut less: leave trees and shrubs on the stream banks, to provide shade and remove pollutants that harm the aquatic life.

Here are some other ways to keep your local streams clean and healthy:

- Plant hardy native plants that need less or no watering, fertilizers or pesticides.
- Take toxic chemicals to the local hazardous waste collection center; don't pour them down the sink, into the toilet, or into a storm drain.
- Recycle yard waste in a compost pile, where it can break down into a rich fertilizer for your garden. And leave grass clippings on the lawn to provide natural nourishment.
- Use pervious paving materials (wood, brick or gravel) for decks, patios and walkways, rather than solid expanses of concrete or asphalt, to allow rain to soak in before it can run off to the storm sewers.
- Pick up after pets, and dispose of their waste in the toilet or trash.

Add some info here about what the EC is and does in your town, when and where they meet and that the public is welcome. For more information contact (Name of Town) Environmental Commission at (xxxxx).

Note: A Word version of this press release is available from ANJEC—email us at info@anjec.org.