Our Water is at Risk

Many of us in the Pine Barrens get our drinking water from the Kirkwood Cohansey Aquifer. In some areas of the Pine Barrens, this reservoir of water sits just inches below the ground, and it provides virtually all of the water found in Pine Barrens streams and ponds. The Kirkwood Cohansey Aquifer is vital to our ecosystem and to our health. It is threatened by overdevelopment, overuse, and pollution.

You may have heard stories in the news about plastic litter floating down rivers after a storm. You might also be familiar with the concept of "fish kills," or areas where an excess of nutrients causes algal blooms that use up oxygen when they decay and prevent other species from surviving. These are the results of non-point source pollution. Polluted stormwater runoff washes over the land and into our waterways. Because the aquifer is close to the surface, it is susceptible to pollution from: fertilizer, pesticide, road salt, pet waste, gasoline, septic systems, sediment and litter.

Learn what you can do.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program

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For More Information, Event Dates, and Additional Resources, Visit:

SavetheSource.org

SAVE THE SOURCE
PROTECT WATER FOR PEOPLE AND THE PINES

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Pinelands Preservation Alliance
American Littoral Society Coastal Conservation
ANJEC Local Environment Matters
New Jersey Audubon www.njaudubon.org
New Jersey Conservation Foundation
New Jersey League of Conservation Voters
Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station
South Jersey Land & Water Trust

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CREEK FRIENDLY YARDS

Beautify Your Yard & Improve Your Environmental Impact

We all have the power to affect how much pollution ends up in our waterways. Making the change to a creek-friendly yard can even save you time and money.

Here are some practices that you can use, to reduce your water use and help keep our water clean.

Conserving Water in the Yard

- ✓ Water your yard no more than twice a week, or as needed if it starts to brown. Ensure that the water actually reaches the yard, rather than the driveway, road, sidewalk, or other impervious surfaces.
- ✓ Install a rain sensor on your lawn irrigation system to prevent it from running when it is raining.
- ✓ Water in the early morning or in the evening after 6pm to minimize water loss due to evaporation.
- ✓ Check your sprinkler system frequently for leaks.
- ✓ Wash cars or boats with a bucket, sponge, and a hose with a self-closing nozzle; or, take them to a car wash where the water is captured and prevented from running off.
- ✓ Install a rain barrel to capture rainwater from your roof. Use this rain barrel to water your garden, wash vehicles, etc.

Best Practices for a Creek Friendly Backyard

GARDEN WITH NATIVE SPECIES

Native species are adapted for our environment, so they do not need fertilizer, pesticide, or extra water, unlike non-native species. This can save you money and reduce a potential source of pollution. Native plants also provide a whole host of additional benefits. For example, they help infiltrate water into the ground, prevent soil erosion and provide vital habitat for pollinators and animals.

MINIMIZE TURF GRASS

While it's nice to have some yard space with turf grass, one strategy for creating a creek-friendly yard is to reduce the size of that turf grass lawn and plant it with native species.

MINIMIZE IMPERVIOUS COVER

Impervious cover is a hard surface where water can't soak into the ground. Keep paved driveways and concrete sidewalks small. Where possible, replace with gravel, permeable pavers, or stepping stones.

COVER EXPOSED SOIL

Sediment erosion is a large source of pollution in our water. If you have exposed soil in your yard, cover it with mulch or fill in the area with plants.

PLANT A BUFFER AREA

Think about where you can strategically place a buffer area in your yard. Native plants with long roots create a "sponge" that soaks up extra water and pollution before it can travel further. If your yard connects directly to a creek, planting suitable native species between your yard and the creek can help stop pollution in its tracks before it reaches the creek, and may also reduce flooding. A buffer may also be appropriate between your yard and the road, though you should be careful not to impair drivers' visibility.

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REDUCE USE OF FERTILIZERS, PESTICIDES, AND OTHER CHEMICALS ON YOUR YARD

Before using fertilizer on your yard, conduct a soil test to see which nutrients are needed (if any). If you must use fertilizer or pesticides, target your usage and apply them only where necessary, being sure to follow the instructions. Simple changes like applying lawn treatments when there isn't rain in the forecast can affect how much they actually treat your yard, and how much becomes pollution.

DISCONNECT DOWNSPOUTS

Allow downspouts to run onto permeable surfaces such as the lawn, a rain garden, or a gravel driveway. This gives water a chance to soak into the ground.

PLANT A RAIN GARDEN

A rain garden is a a depressed garden designed to give runoff a place to soak into the ground. Just like a buffer area, rain gardens can slow the spread of pollution and help reduce flooding. Rain gardens are a great place to direct disconnected downspouts or the overflow from a rain barrel.

PARTICIPATE IN THE LANDSCAPE MAKEOVER PROGRAM

Residents of certain areas of New Jersey are eligible to participate in the Landscape Makeover Program, where consultants from Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program help people to build their own rain garden. After the rain garden is complete, participants are eligible for a rebate of $3/square foot, up to $450. More information can be found online by visiting SavetheSource.org and clicking on Landscape Makeover.