

The Big Picture of Water & Our Influence on it

A watershed is a natural basin that drains water runoff to the nearest headwaters then to streams and finally to rivers.

Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes and go hand in hand with stormwater runoff. From a big picture perspective, **stormwater serves as a vehicle for hitch-hiking pollutants, and watersheds are the roadmaps of where pollutants can end up.**

The pollutants that get picked up by urban runoff (heavy metals, oil, gas, salt, fertilizer, trash, soil erosion, etc.) can not only pollute the nearest stream, but they can also travel downstream and affect the water quality for others as well. This is especially true when it comes to fertilizer.

Amazingly, our excess and inappropriately applied fertilizer can impact the water quality all the way down to the Gulf of Mexico! These excess nutrients grow large amounts of algae which depletes the oxygen in the water as it decomposes. This oxygen depletion called **hypoxia**, ultimately results in **dead zones** or areas in the water where aquatic organisms cannot survive.

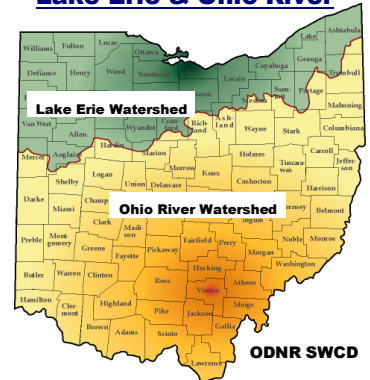
Although agriculture is a large contributor of excess nutrients, urban runoff contributes to this problem as well. The everyday actions of each of us make a big difference for water quality both on a local level and national level.

WATERSHEDS Come in All Shapes and Sizes

LOCAL Level Great Miami River



STATE Level Lake Erie & Ohio River



NATIONAL Level

Mississippi River Basin



EACH OF US CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

- If** possible, keep rainwater in your yard and let it percolate through the soil through the use of a rain garden. Or water your flowers with the rain you've captured in a rain barrel.
- When** you expose soil to build something new, remember to leave as much vegetation on site as possible during the construction process to help keep the loose soil trapped, preventing it from going down the storm drain.
- Test** your soil for existing nutrients before you fertilize. Many soils already have enough nutrients. Soil testing can tell you what nutrients your soil needs, if any. It's cheap, easy and can save you money. Call your county's OSU Extension Office for more details.
- Only** fertilize after a rain. If you fertilizing before a rain, it washes away and you've lost your money. You can also try using a phosphate-free or organic fertilizer.
- Make** sure to sweep any excess back that gets on the sidewalk, driveway or street back into your yard with a broom. Hosing it off could take it straight to the storm drain.
- Measure** your fertilizer (and all chemicals) carefully, as instructed on the manufacture's label. More is not always better.
- Remember**, storm drains are only for rain. Report all illegal dumping (grass clippings, leaves, oil, paint, etc.) to your city or township.
- And most importantly**, tell your friends and family how they can help too.

National Impact NASA Satellite Image of Hypoxic Zone (algal blooms) in the Gulf of Mexico



Gulf of Mexico

For more information

visit www.thecleanwaterbusiness.com