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[www.sjrwi.org](http://www.sjrwi.org)



**Preventing water pollution:**  
**How urban and suburban landowners can help**



## Isn't the government in charge of that?

Although our water supply and wastewater treatment is often provided by local government, water resources belong to all of us. That means we all have responsibility to help protect and restore our water.

Urban and suburban areas are major pollution sources for our rivers and streams. Motor vehicles, lawns and gardens, roadways, rooftops, industrial sites, and construction areas all add to the stream of pollution that runs into our rivers. Without our constant vigilance, our rivers will become too polluted to save.

Small efforts can move mountains when everyone is helping. Little changes in your lifestyle will help to protect and improve our water resources.

You can help! This brochure identifies several ways in which you can help protect your water supply, whether it comes from the St. Joseph River or a groundwater well. A list of great sources for more information on each of these topics is included in the Find Out More section.

Remember, every dollar spent on prevention will save us millions of dollars in restoration costs!

*The St. Joseph River is the source of drinking water for over 200,000 people in Fort Wayne and New Haven. Each day, an average of 34 million gallons of water is drawn from the river. It is then sent for treatment, filtration and distribution through the Three Rivers Water Filtration Plant. The St. Joseph River is part of a 694,000 acre watershed in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan.*

## Find Out More →

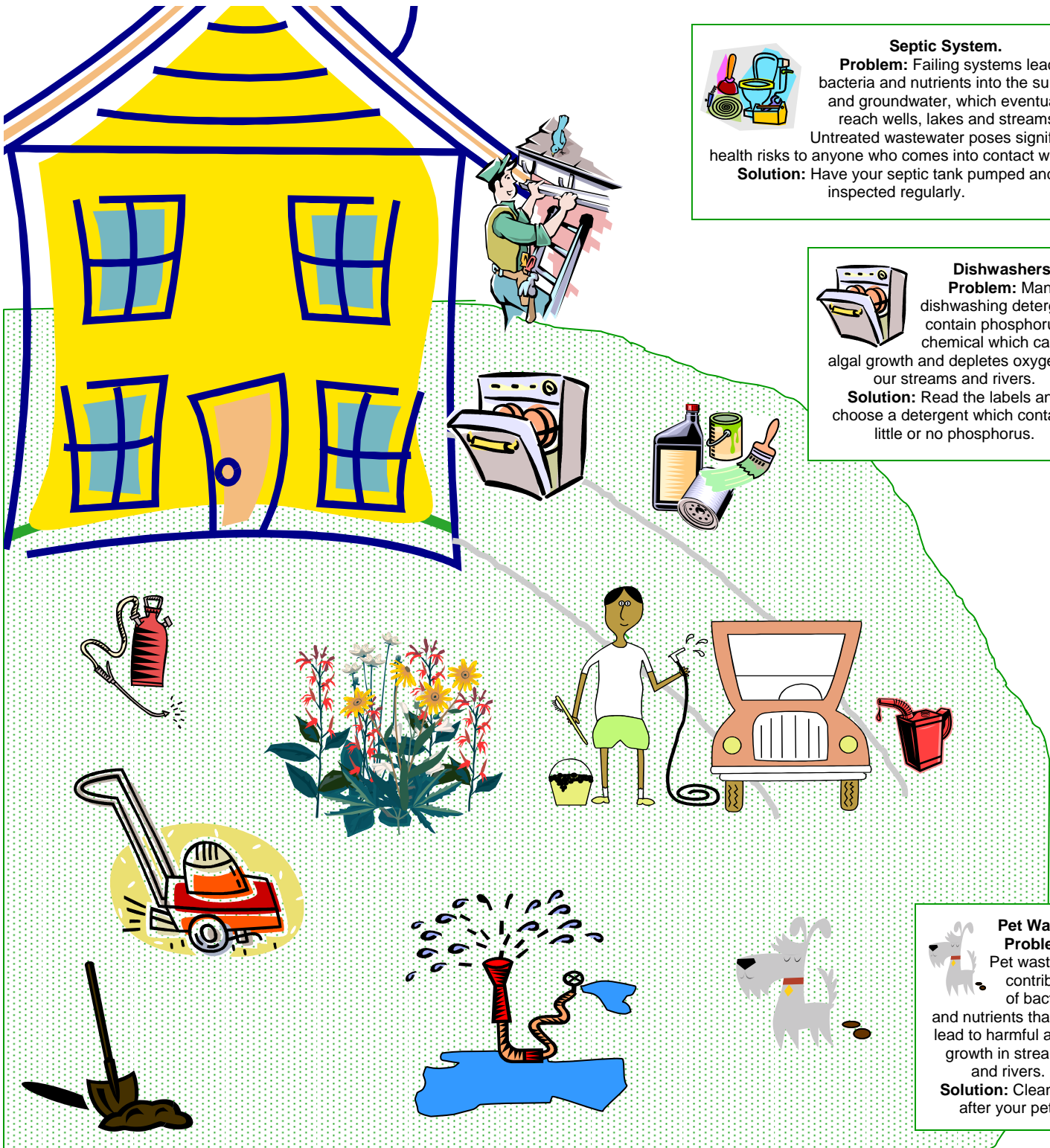
- **Local Water Quality Issues**  
**St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative**
  - [www.sjrwi.org](http://www.sjrwi.org) or 260-484-5848 ext. 120
- **Local Agricultural & Urban Issues**  
**Allen County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)**
  - [www.allenswcd.org](http://www.allenswcd.org) or 260-484-5848 ext. 3**DeKalb County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)**
  - [www.dekalbswcd.org](http://www.dekalbswcd.org) or 260-925-9560
- **Septic Systems**  
**Purdue University Cooperative Extension Services (CES)**
  - [www.ces.purdue.edu/HENV](http://www.ces.purdue.edu/HENV)
- **Raingardens**  
**Water Resources Education—University of Wisconsin Extension**
  - <http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/raingarden/>
- **Indiana Water & Air Quality, Environmental Regulations & Enforcement**  
**Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)**
  - [www.in.gov/idem/](http://www.in.gov/idem/)
- **General Environmental Issues**  
**Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**
  - [www.epa.gov/water](http://www.epa.gov/water)
  - [www.epa.gov/ebt/pages/water.html](http://www.epa.gov/ebt/pages/water.html)
- **Wildlife - Forestry - Wetlands**  
**US Fish & Wildlife Service**
  - <http://www.fws.gov/>
- **Nuisance Geese**  
**Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)**
  - [www.in.gov/dnr](http://www.in.gov/dnr)
- **Planning Departments**  
**Allen County**
  - [www.co.allen.in.us](http://www.co.allen.in.us) or 260-449-7607**DeKalb County**
  - [www.dekalbnet.org/County\\_Departments/plandept.htm](http://www.dekalbnet.org/County_Departments/plandept.htm) or 260-925-1923



Allen County  
Soil & Water  
Conservation District



This project has been funded wholly or in part by the United States Environmental Protection Agency under assistance agreement C6975750-04 to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency, nor does mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation for use.



**Septic System.**  
**Problem:** Failing systems leach bacteria and nutrients into the surface and groundwater, which eventually reach wells, lakes and streams. Untreated wastewater poses significant health risks to anyone who comes into contact with it.  
**Solution:** Have your septic tank pumped and inspected regularly.



**Dishwashers.**  
**Problem:** Many dishwashing detergents contain phosphorus, a chemical which causes algal growth and depletes oxygen in our streams and rivers.  
**Solution:** Read the labels and choose a detergent which contains little or no phosphorus.



**Lawn Maintenance.**  
**Problem:** Uncollected yard waste can clog up storm sewers. Bare spots in your yard erode soil into the storm drain. Excess lawn chemicals add pollution to the storm water runoff that goes directly into the river.  
**Solution:** Compost or bag your yard waste. Reseed bare spots to keep soil in place. Apply lawn chemicals according to label directions. Use no- or low-phosphorus fertilizers; use pesticides sparingly. Avoid application during or immediately before a rainstorm to prevent washing of chemicals into the storm water runoff. Sweep excess dry chemicals from driveways, sidewalks and roads.



**Construction Projects.**  
**Problem:** Construction projects can cause erosion of soil into the nearest storm drain or ditch.  
**Solution:** Use silt fencing, straw bales or other means of trapping sediment on the property and keeping it out of the storm drain. Clean up construction debris regularly. Reseed disturbed area as soon as possible.



**Geese.**  
**Problem:** Nuisance Canada geese which don't migrate contribute to the bacterial pollution of our waterways and decrease aesthetics of parks and residential areas, particularly around ponds and rivers.  
**Solution:** If you create habitat for the geese, they will come! Geese love well-tended turf grass such as we see on golf courses, parks and neighborhood commons. Don't feed the geese! Plant native species which grow taller than 12 inches, particularly along the shore of ponds. Contact your Department of Natural Resources for help with removing geese and controlling their return.



**Gutters, Downspouts and Paved Surfaces.**  
**Problem:** Impervious surfaces (those which don't absorb the rain water) add pollutants to the storm water runoff which travels, untreated, to the nearest storm drain and to the river. Water travels faster over impervious surfaces and this velocity increases the risk of erosion.  
**Solution:** Direct your downspouts away from paved areas and into a rain garden, which increases infiltration of rain water into the ground, helps protect your neighborhood from flooding, attracts songbirds and butterflies, and reduces pollution.



**Car Maintenance.**  
**Problem:** Washing your car on the street or paved driveway allows dirt, detergent and automotive fluids and oils to run directly into the storm drain and into the nearest stream or river without any treatment.  
**Solution:** Take your car to a car wash where the wastewater is channeled to the sewage treatment plant. Check your car for leaking oils and fluids, and recycle your motor oil - NEVER dump it down the drain!



**Toxic Chemicals.**  
**Problem:** Improper disposal of chemicals often sends them directly into our rivers and streams.  
**Solution:** Read label directions for proper disposal and watch for your local Tox-Away Day which enables you to dispose of any unused chemicals such as paint, motor oil, cleansers, batteries and mercury-containing light bulbs.



**Conserve Water.**  
**Problem:** Overuse of water increases runoff and increases the volume of water which is treated and pumped from the water filtration plant.  
**Solution:** Don't overwater your lawns. Water running down the sidewalk isn't doing your lawn much good! Sweep instead of hosing your sidewalks and driveway. Wash only full loads in your dishwasher and washing machines.



**Pet Waste.**  
**Problem:** Pet waste is a contributor of bacteria and nutrients that can lead to harmful algae growth in streams and rivers.  
**Solution:** Clean up after your pet.

