

# Pollution

## Water Quality Education

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) divides water pollution sources into two categories: point and nonpoint source pollution.

Point source pollution comes from a defined place, such as wastewater treatment plants and industrial facilities, but it can also collect in storm drainage from larger urban areas and runoff from construction sites. The EPA administers a permit program to control point source water pollution by regulating the facilities that discharge these pollutants into water.

Nonpoint source (NPS) pollution comes from many diffused sources that are not so easily collected and treated. NPS pollution is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and man-made pollutants, depositing them in lakes, rivers, wetlands, coastal waters and underground sources of drinking waters.

NPS pollution is the leading cause of water quality problems in the United States. These pollutants have harmful effects on drinking water supplies, recreation, fisheries and wildlife.

Some NPS pollutants are:

- Excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from farms, ranches and homes.
- Oil, grease and toxic chemicals from urban runoff.
- Sediment from improperly managed construction sites, crop and forest lands, and eroding stream banks.
- Salt from irrigation practices.
- Bacteria, such as E. coli; nutrients, including phosphorus and nitrogen from livestock and pet wastes; and faulty septic systems

If you live in the city, you can help control nonpoint source pollution by:

- Applying the proper amount of fertilizer and pesticides on your lawn.
- Properly disposing of household hazardous wastes.
- Using a commercial car wash that treats or recycles its wastewater, or washing your car on your yard so the water soaks into the ground.
- Picking up pet wastes and disposing of it properly.
- Purchasing household detergents and cleaners that are low in phosphorus.
- Cleaning up spilled brake fluid, oil, grease and antifreeze. Don't hose them into the street where they can eventually reach local streams and lakes

If you live on a ranch or farm, you also can change the ways your land is managed to help decrease nonpoint source pollution by:

- Maintaining stream bank vegetation and manage lands to reduce erosion.
- Preventing livestock from entering streams to avoid bacterial contamination.
- Managing animal waste and irrigation to minimize contamination of surface and groundwater
- Apply fertilizers and pesticides carefully to avoid runoff losses

Remember: what you do affects the quality and quantity of the water you drink and use. By using these practices to reduce pollutants from entering your water resources, you are helping protect water now and in the future. Help save Texas water and make every drop count.

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