

# MN WATER CONNECTION

## CLEAN WATER. LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO.

Wherever you live in Central Minnesota, there are simple things you can do to help protect the quality of the water. Here's a quick list of ways you can help:

### 1. Use Phosphorus-Free Lawn Fertilizer

More than just a good idea, it's the law in Minnesota. The nutrient value of a fertilizer is indicated by a series of three numbers printed on its container. The numbers represent percentages of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, in that order. So, a fertilizer marked with 22-0-15, for example, is phosphorus-free as the middle number is zero. Fertilizers containing phosphorus can only be used on lawns and turf in Minnesota that meet certain requirements.

### 2. Things to Know When You Mow

Raise the blade on your lawn mower. Longer grass blades above ground mean deeper roots beneath the surface. The grass can absorb more moisture and nutrients, and prevent germination of weeds by creating more shade during weed germination. Less watering, pesticides, fertilizer and work will be required, so you'll have more time to get out and enjoy our beautiful water resources that you are helping protect.

### 3. Know Where to Wash Your Car

Oil, grease, metals, detergents, and phosphorus can all end up in wash-water from cars washed outdoors in driveways, streets and parking lots - which then can easily reach storm sewers which connect to lakes, rivers, and wetlands. Instead, use a do-it-yourself or full-service car wash. Or, wash your vehicle a safe distance from paved surfaces, using phosphorus-free detergent.

### 4. Don't Forget Your Doggy Bag

Picking up after your pooch is more than just a courtesy to your neighbors - it's also being a good neighbor to area lakes and streams. That's because pet waste can contain harmful bacteria as well as phosphorus that causes excess algae and weed growth in lakes and rivers. So every time you reach for the leash, remember to grab a small plastic bag for the road. It's one more simple thing you can do to help keep the water clean.

### 5. Don't Clutter the Gutter

Ever think of that storm drain in front of your home as waterfront property? Sure, the view isn't the same, but it does connect your property directly to the nearest river or lake, without any treatment detours. That's why it's so important to keep grass clippings, compost, detergents, fertilizers and chemicals out of the storm drain. The water - not to mention the ducks, fish and everyone else - will be healthier without it.

### 6. Don't Rake Into the Lake

Feeding a lake or river leaves or other yard waste creates a bumper crop of algae, turning lakes into pools of pea-green sludge with too little oxygen for the fish. To keep our lakes fishable, swimmable, clear and clean, compost your leaves at least 100 feet from the

shoreline, or take advantage of the nearest public composting facility. Happy lakes, happy fish, happy people.

### 7. Don't Oil the Soil

Motor oil, grease, fuel, brake fluid and antifreeze leaking from your vehicle onto the driveway or street easily wash into the storm drain during snow melt or rain, and then make their way to the nearest lake, stream or river without treatment. Automotive fluids introduced to the local water environment can reduce fish and wildlife populations, impact human health and increase the cost to treat drinking water. So fix those leaks at the first sign of a drip - it's good for your vehicle and for the water.

### 8. Take Care with Cleaners, Paints & Solvents

Always purchase and use the smallest amount needed. If a spill occurs, clean immediately and dispose of waste properly. Clean paint brushes in a sink and not outdoors. Filter and reuse paint thinner if using oil-based paint. Dispose of unused materials at Tri-County Household Hazardous Waste, 320-255-6140. And above all, be sure to keep any household hazardous waste out of the storm drains as it's like adding poison to our waterways.

### 9. Learn Clean Landscaping

To keep yard waste out of the storm drain, make it a habit to cover soil and mulch piles, repair bare spots in your lawn, sweep rather than hose-down during clean-up, and use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly. These practices all go a long way toward protecting our precious water resources.

### 10. Get a Rain Barrel - Save \$

Use a rain barrel to capture and use rain water for gardening and landscaping needs. You'll save money on your water bill. Also, consider natural landscapes on your property to better retain rainwater. Ideas such as rain gardens or green roof-tops not only improve water quality of local lakes, streams and rivers, but also look beautiful and can increase your property value. The lakes and rivers thank you for reducing the amount of water you send down city streets and into the storm drain.



[mnwaterconnection.com](http://mnwaterconnection.com)

*Central Minnesota Water Education Alliance (CMWEA) is a coalition of central Minnesota cities, counties and other organizations that provides educational outreach to promote water quality stewardship. The mission of CMWEA is to develop and implement educational programs that encourage individuals in Central Minnesota to protect water resources by increasing their knowledge and making simple behavior changes. By working in concert, the members of CMWEA are able to provide a consistent water quality educational message in a cost-effective manner.*