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**NEWS & EVENTS ...**

**NC Big Sweep 2013**

*We are looking for volunteer groups to participate in this year's NC Big Sweep anytime between Sept. 15 and Oct. 31.*

*If you or your group wants to volunteer, please contact Stormwater Program Manager Terry Hackett at 919-732-1270 Ext. 77.*



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**Our Stormwater Drains  
to the Eno River!**

**Your Yard May Impact Our Stormwater**

North Carolina's No. 1 water quality issue is stormwater runoff pollution. Stormwater runoff can become polluted as it flows across impervious surfaces, exposed soil or even lawn areas. Pollutants — such as oil, grease, excess fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, bacteria, trash and sediment — can mix with the stormwater runoff and then enter our stormwater drainage system. From there, the polluted stormwater runoff is discharged — **untreated** — into our streams, rivers and lakes. Stormwater runoff pollution can adversely impact aquatic ecosystems and our drinking water supplies.



*Allowing lawn clippings to enter the stormwater drainage system can cause adverse environmental impacts and is illegal.*

In the Town of Hillsborough, our stormwater drainage system includes storm drains, catch basins, pipes, open channels, ditches, swales, curb and gutter streets, as well as other man-made and natural stormwater runoff conveyances. It is illegal to pour, dump or even allow anything other than stormwater runoff to enter our stormwater system. This includes lawn clippings and other yard waste.

However, many citizens wonder how lawn clippings could possibly have an adverse impact on stormwater runoff. Lawn clippings actually contain significant amounts of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous). If clippings are blown onto street surfaces or into storm drains, lawn clippings eventually get washed into local waterways where they break down. Those nutrients become soluble in the water. This causes nutrient levels to increase well above natural levels and essentially provide fertilizer to algae. In balance, algae are beneficial to the aquatic ecosystem, but when excessive nutrients reach a lake, algae grow out of control. This is often referred to as an "algal bloom."

Algal blooms reduce water clarity and create foul odors and taste in the water. This may seem like a minor nuisance, but it drives up the cost to treat drinking

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**Did You Know?** When wastewater pipes become blocked by oil and grease, sewer overflows can occur. Sewer overflows can have potentially serious impacts on the environment and human health. The simplest way to help prevent overflows is to minimize grease disposal into the collection system from homes and restaurants.



## TEN Ways YOU Can Protect Water Quality in YOUR Back Yard!

1. Leave grass clippings on your lawn and/or use a mulching blade on your mower. Grass clippings are a natural, nontoxic fertilizer.
2. If you don't want to leave clippings on the lawn, compost them or dispose of them in your municipal yard waste collection.
3. Don't put grass clippings or other yard waste into street curbs or ditches. Yard waste washes into waterways and feeds problem-causing algae.
4. Get your soil tested so you know exactly what fertilizer you need.
5. Sweep up ANY fertilizer that falls on hard (impervious) surfaces, such as driveways and sidewalks.
6. Use fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides sparingly, if at all.
7. DO NOT APPLY fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides if the forecast calls for rain. If it rains, products will wash off into waterways before they have a chance to work.
8. Use mulch to keep weeds out of flower beds and landscape areas; learn about integrated pest management.
9. Maintain healthy riparian buffers and vegetate bare areas to reduce erosion.
10. Consider using native plants in your landscape, which reduce the need for chemicals and are more drought-resistant.

water and limits recreational opportunities. Even worse, as algal blooms die and decompose, large amounts of oxygen are removed from the water, causing significant fish kills. In fact, blue-green algal blooms can sometimes produce toxins harmful to wildlife, pets and humans.

Lawn clippings and yard waste are not the only problem. Excess fertilizer applied to your lawn can pollute stormwater. This is also true of pesticides, herbicides or other chemicals used to maintain your lawn.



*Sweeping fertilizer and lawn clippings back onto your lawn is a good way to prevent stormwater runoff pollution.*

Bacteria is another source of stormwater pollutants from your lawn. When stormwater flows through pet waste, it can carry bacteria to the stormwater drainage system. Likewise, if grease builds up in your pipes, raw sewage can overflow sewer cleanouts and in some cases cause manholes to overflow. Stormwater can carry sanitary sewage overflows — and the harmful bacteria it contains — straight to the closest surface water.

Erosion is yet another source of stormwater pollution from your lawn. Bare areas in your yard can allow sediment to be washed into the stormwater drainage system, where it can clog and cause flooding. Sediment reaching streams eventually settles on the bottom, smothering aquatic life and their habitat. Sediment can even clog fish gills. Phosphorous also binds to soil particles, so excessive erosion also exacerbates nutrients in local waterways.

Just remember that what you do to your lawn may end up in the Eno. For this reason, the town provides yard waste removal, including pickup of loose leaves in the fall.

*For more information, contact:*

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*Only Rain Down the Drain*