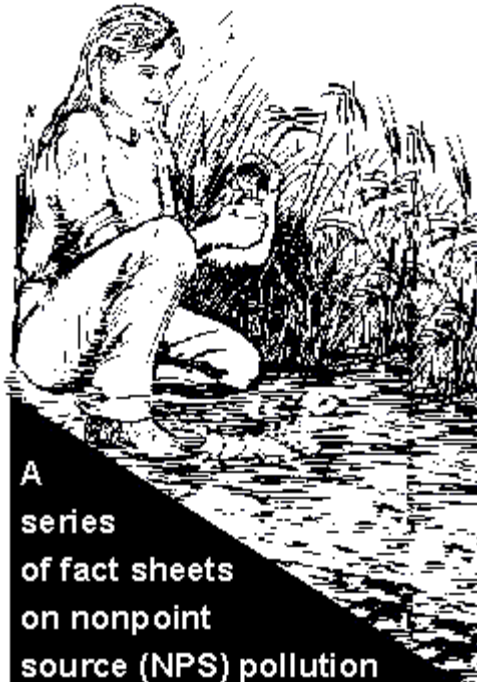


Opportunities for Public Involvement in Nonpoint Source Control



A series of fact sheets on nonpoint source (NPS) pollution

Did you know that volunteers often collect information on the health of waterways and the extent of NPS pollution?

NPS pollution occurs when water runs over land or through the ground, picks up pollutants, and deposits them in surface waters or introduces them into groundwater.

Pointer No. 2
EPA841-F-96-004B

Over the last 25 years, communities have played an important role in addressing nonpoint source (NPS) pollution, the Nation's leading source of water quality problems. When coordinated with federal, state, and local environmental programs and initiatives, community-based NPS control efforts can be highly successful. To learn about and help control NPS pollution, contact the community-based organizations and environmental agencies in your area. These groups often have information about how citizens can get involved in the following types of NPS control activities.

Volunteer Monitoring

Local groups organize volunteers of all skill levels to gather water quality data. This information can help government agencies understand the magnitude of NPS pollution. More than 500 active volunteer monitoring groups currently operate throughout the United States. Monitoring groups may also have information about other NPS pollution projects, such as beach cleanups, stream walks, and restoration activities.

Ecological Restoration

Ecological restoration provides opportunities for the public to help out with a wide variety of projects, such as tree planting and bank stabilization in both urban and rural areas. Restoration efforts focus on degraded waters or habitats that have significant economic or ecological value.

Educational Activities

Teachers can integrate NPS pollution curricula into their classroom activities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), federal and state agencies, private groups, and nonprofit organizations offer teachers a wide variety of materials. Students can start on an NPS control project in the primary grades and carry their work through to the intermediate and secondary levels.

Water Conservation

Using technologies that limit water use in the bathroom, kitchen, laundry room, lawn, driveway, and garden can

reduce the demand on existing water supplies and limit the amount of water runoff. More than 40 states now have some type of water conservation program to help citizens and businesses implement conservation practices. Government agencies, utilities, and hardware stores have information about different products that help households conserve water.

Household Management

Learning to limit NPS pollution at the household level can reduce the overall impacts of NPS pollution on water quality. Households, for example, can irrigate during cooler hours of the day, limit fertilizer applications to lawns and gardens, and properly store chemicals to reduce runoff and keep runoff clean. Chemicals and oil should not be poured into sewers, where they can result in major water quality problems. Pet wastes, a significant source of nutrient contamination, should be disposed of properly. Households can also replace impervious surfaces with more porous materials.

Public Meetings and Hearings

Decisions made during public hearings on stormwater permitting and town planning can determine a community's capability to manage NPS pollution over the long term. Laws or regulations may require federal, state, or local agencies to hold public hearings when permits are issued or when town plans are formed. Notices about hearings often appear in the newspaper or in government office buildings.

Community Organizations

Many communities have formed groups to protect local natural resources. These community-based groups provide citizens with information about upcoming environmental events in their watershed, such as ecological restoration, volunteer monitoring, and public meetings. Watershed-level associations are particularly effective at addressing a wide range of NPS pollution problems.

Environmental Information on the Internet

Citizens can obtain a tremendous amount of environmental data and educational material with a computer linked to the World Wide Web. EPA's site (<http://www.epa.gov>) on the World Wide Web provides up-to-date information on Agency activities and enables citizens to find out about air and water quality data in specific communities.