

Watershed Connection

Summer Issue 2008

Summer is here, and you're busy. We can appreciate that!

Here are some tips to make your life easier, and keep your Walnut Creek watershed healthy.

Native Thistle at Walnut Creek



Go Native!

Native species are species that originate in a specific area and are adapted to Nebraska's environment. They have established a place in their ecosystem.

Non-native species can become aggressive and dominate native ecosystems, becoming *invasive species*. These invasive species cause environmental or economic harm.

Invasive species impact native ecology, the economy, recreation, and human health. Invasive species in the US cause environmental damage and losses adding up to \$120 billion per year. Global trade and travel have contributed to this problem, making plants and animals from all over the world available to Nebraskans.

Healthy native communities resist the introduction of invasive species and are better habitat for wildlife, provide attractive vegetative structure, higher quality food resources, and promote nutrient cycling.

What Is A Watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains water, sediment, and other materials downhill to a body of water.

What you do impacts your watershed. You have a *direct connection* to the management of the health of the lakes that you fish in and the water resources you enjoy.

Everything that you do in your watershed impacts the health of your watershed, and of your clean lakes. The fertilizer and pesticide we put on our lawns,

litter we pass along the roadsides, leftover products we dump down the storm drains, all can end up in your lakes.

What happens in your watershed affects your health and the health of the animal, plant, and invertebrate communities that depend on your clean lakes.

Communities are seeing how watershed management *protects our water resources, providing benefits ecologically, socially,*

and economically.

Effective watershed planning can increase property values and improve the health of its inhabitants, human, plant, and animal. Watershed planning requires participation from a variety of individuals, including you. So stay in the know!

If you and your family have an interest in keeping your watershed healthy, both for personal health and natural resource recreation, get involved!

For more information, check out:
watercenter.unl.edu.

What's In Your Lake?

People wouldn't think about dumping used oil, fertilizer, pesticides, grass clippings and leaves, cleaning agents, soapy water, or paint into an Omaha metro lake. However that is the case when people dump these things down a stormwater sewer drain. These pollutants can be dumped or carried by rain, snowmelt, and excess water to stormwater drains.

Do you know where stormwater runoff goes? A treatment plant? China? In the Omaha metropolitan area, your lakes and streams serve as the storage site for stormwater runoff.

Stormwater is carried directly to the Walnut Creek Lakes and the Papillion Creek system without any filtering or treatment.

Stormwater runoff contains pollutants that seriously harm our waters. Stormwater often contains materials found on streets, sidewalks, driveways and parking lots such as oil, antifreeze, gasoline, soil, litter, pet wastes, fertilizers, pesticides, leaves, and grass clippings. When these materials enter lakes and streams they pollute the water, kill fish and reduce the potential and enjoyment of

recreational activities.

Let's use the stormwater drains for rain only! The path to clean lakes and stream starts at each of your homes or businesses. For questions, or to report a situation, **contact the Stormwater Hotline at 444-3908.**



Go Native! (continued)

Non-native species can require intensive management, are costly to control, and potentially lower diversity. Diverse native ecosystems are healthy, colorful, and alive with life!

What can you do to promote native species?

Homeowners and gardeners, plant native species in your yards and gardens! This will attract wildlife to your yard and beautify your home. Do not release plants, insects, or animals into the wild. This includes roaming house cats and dogs off leash! Destruction by these animals can threaten native species and prevent their return.

Boaters and anglers, inspect your equipment. Drain all of the water from your boat before leaving. Do not dispose of live bait in the water or on land.

Campers and hikers, please do not move firewood! It can carry aggressive invaders like the emerald ash borer. Leave it at home, and buy firewood on site. Inspect your clothing and equipment for seeds, insects, etc. before you leave a site.

Most importantly, be an aware and concerned citizen! Early detection and prevention is our best defense. This impacts you!

Find out more at snr.unl.edu/invasives.



Non-native Thistle

Green Your Lawn

A healthy lawn can filter and absorb materials that might have been washed into your water supply. *Here are some tips to help you grow a healthy and nature friendly lawn.*

Next year, hold off on watering. Mild stress early in the season will push the root systems to grow deeper and saves water. Look for your grass to turn a darker shade of green.

Water your lawn early in the day when it is still wet with dew. Turf grasses need about 1" of water per week to maintain growth.

Thoroughly cover your lawn and soak it well. Shallow, frequent waterings promote shallow root systems, and more watering! Check your irrigation system for leaks and uneven coverage.

Let it grow naturally! Mow your lawn at the highest setting. This promotes thick healthy lawns that resist weeds and reduces the need for herbicides.

Mulch your grass clippings instead of bagging. This recycles the nutrients in your lawn and reduces the need for fertilization and waste.

Conserve water! The more you water the more you will need to mow. Make sure you are not soaking the driveway or street.

Avoid watering if rain is expected. Overwatering can also promote pests and adds to stormwater runoff,

polluting our water supply.

Avoid applying fertilizer or pesticides to stressed lawns. Brown lawns do not necessarily mean dead lawns. You can help your lawn become more drought resistant by letting it go dormant during hot and dry times.

With a little attention, you can help save your time, energy, water, and money and protect your lakes in the process.

One Step Further...

- Challenge your family to produce only 1 bag of trash for the week. What changes can you make together to achieve this goal?
- Try buying products in bulk. Purchase items that are packaged in recyclable or biodegradable materials. You'll find your family might even start eating a little healthier!
- Plant a garden! It's a great way to get the family outside and active. Best of all, you'll produce some yummy treats, saving money on groceries along the way.

Clean Lakes Council

Walnut Creek welcomes *Mike Cunningham*, your new Walnut Creek Assistant Park Superintendent!

Mike and your Walnut Creek Clean Lakes Council are available to help you with your watershed concerns. Take advantage of our answering service for

any concerns you have about your Walnut Creek Lake and Recreation Area.

For comments, questions, or to find out more, contact the Walnut Creek Clean Lakes Council Chair, **Barry Keller**, at **339-8976** or **Walnut Creek at 592-8877**.

