RiverSmart

Be RiverSmart about things you do at home.

A River Network Project

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Top 10 RiverSmart Tips

Much of our tap water comes from rivers. And we all do things around the house every day that can affect our rivers and streams – the very water we drink. Remember, your rivers are closer than you think. Be RiverSmart about the things you do by following these easy tips:

1. Repair leaky faucets and toilets right away.
Leaky sinks and toilets can waste 50 gallons of water in one day, depleting our rivers. For a leaky faucet, look for a faulty o-ring or valve seat. Toilet leaks aren't always so obvious. Try pouring colored liquid into the tank. If after 15 minutes you see dye in the bowl, you may need to replace the flapper.

2. Turn off the tap while brushing your teeth and washing the dishes.

You can save 3-5 gallons a day. Try using a cup when brushing and shaving. And fill up the sink first when washing vegetables or doing a load of dishes. It's a small change that will make a big difference.

3. Run the washing machine and dishwasher only when they are fully loaded.
You can save between 300-800 gallons of water each month.

4. Dispose of household cleaners, paint and other chemicals safely.

Many cleaning products found in our homes and garages are too dangerous to be disposed of in the trash or down the drain. Read the label: anything marked "Poison" or "Danger" should be taken to your local hazardous waste center. Use water-based paints and dry off excess paint with a paper towel before rinsing your paintbrush.

5. Sweep off – instead of hosing – the driveway, patio or sidewalk.
Hosing for 15 minutes wastes 150 gallons of water. Water run-off from our driveways or sidewalks carries contaminants, such as dirt, motor oil, fertilizers and animal waste, into our rivers.

6. Install water-saving showerheads and high-performance, low-flush toilets.
An outdated showerhead wastes 20 extra gallons a day or 7,300 gallons a year – and that's just for one person! An average family of four can save 14,000-17,000 gallons of water a year by replacing pre-1993 toilets with new high-efficiency ones. High-efficiency toilets, washing machines and dishwashers not only save our rivers, they save us money.

7. Fix car leaks promptly.
Leaky cars leave drips or puddles of motor oil and other fluids on our streets and driveways. When it rains, these contaminants run down our streets, through the storm drains, and into our rivers. So clean stains on your driveway or street and fix car leaks right away. Preventing polluted run-off will help keep our rivers and drinking water safe.

8. Take care when changing your car's motor oil and dispose of the oil safely.

One quart of motor oil can pollute 250,000 gallons of river water, so use a large pan if you are changing motor oil yourself. Never pour leftover oil down a storm drain or into the trash – instead, drop it off at your local hazardous waste center.

9. Water your lawn and garden only in the morning or evening.
Water evaporates quickly during the middle of the day. Remember, a lawn only needs 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week, and you can set out a can to measure for you. Watering less creates deeper, stronger roots and a healthier lawn. Or you could try letting the lawn go brown, as nature intended during summer months. Another option is to plant native plants or xeriscaping that require less water altogether.

10. Buy and use environmentally friendly products.

Choose safer, multi-purpose cleaners marked with only a "Caution" warning, rather than products with "Poison" and "Danger" on the label. Avoid chlorine, phosphate products and solvents like paint thinner. Visit www.riversmart.org to find recipes for inexpensive, safe alternatives.

To find out more, go to www.riversmart.org