A YEAR OF WATERWAYS

12 WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT OUR WATER

THE ALLIANCE OF DOWNRIVER WATERSHEDS 2016 COMMUNITY CALENDAR
Welcome to a Year of Waterways

Clean water makes so many things possible.

Healthy ecosystems. Plentiful wildlife. Clean, safe drinking water. Inviting places to swim, fish, paddle or simply enjoy nature. Vibrant towns and cities. A legacy for future generations.

A Big Challenge... Most of the pollution entering our rivers, streams and lakes is carried by rainwater that runs off hard surfaces such as roads, parking lots and rooftops. Pollutants include dirt, motor oil and toxic auto fluids, pesticides, fertilizer, and bacteria from pet waste and failing septic systems.

We depend on our built infrastructure—stormdrains, drainage ditches and culverts—to keep water away from our homes and prevent streets from flooding. But those same systems also direct polluted and untreated rainwater straight into our smaller local waterways, which ultimately flow downstream into the Detroit River and Lake Erie.

With Everyday Solutions. Fortunately, there are simple daily actions—what we’re calling Water Ways—that you can take to help prevent water pollution. Twelve of them are featured in this calendar.

Each month, you’ll find Water Way Tips on everything from ecological car washing to disposing of pet waste, mulching, choosing fertilizers, and creating a Green Infrastructure. We hope you’ll be inspired to try them all!
A watershed is the area where water below and on the surface of the land—including rainfall—flows and collects in a particular water body.

At right, you’ll see how the land that makes up the Ecorse Creek watershed is drained by a network of smaller creeks and streams that flow into Ecorse Creek, and how the creek, in turn, flows into the Detroit River...which empties into Lake Erie.

The fact is, our everyday decisions have a direct impact on the quality of regional waterways, large and small.

**THE ALLIANCE OF DOWNRIVER WATERSHEDS (ADW)** is a council of 23 communities and public agencies working together to protect and sustainably manage the area’s water resources. ADW includes the Ecorse Creek, the lower Huron River, and the Combined Downriver watersheds.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT ALLIANCEOFDOWNRIVERWATERSHEDS.COM.
W A T E R W A Y S  T O  K N O W

W A T E R W A Y S  T O  E X P E R I E N C E  I N  T H E  A D W  A R E A

Detroit Heritage River Water Trail  Enjoy the natural beauty and wildlife of the Detroit, Huron, Rouge and Raisin rivers by canoe or kayak. Along the way, discover the rich cultural history of these waterways. michiganwatertrails.org

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge  Yours to explore: 6,000 acres of islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands along 48 miles of Detroit River and Western Lake Erie shorelines. fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river

Elizabeth Park  With its 1,300-foot riverwalk, this county park in Trenton is an ideal place for fishing, river watching, and year-round activities. waynecounty.com and elizabethparkmarina.com

Huron River Water Trail  This 104-mile (167 km) inland paddling trail connects people to the river and its history. Paddlers can stop at five Trail Towns along the way—Milford, Dexter, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and Flat Rock. huronriverwatertrail.org

Huron Clinton Metroparks  For a relaxing getaway, visit one of the several metroparks located along the shores of the lower Huron River and Lake Erie (Lower Huron, Oakwoods, Willow, Lake Erie). metroparks.com

Pointe Mouillée State Game Area  One of the largest freshwater marsh restoration projects in the world, this area consists of wetlands, diked marshes, and river bayous that offer some of the best shorebird viewing in the state. michigan.gov/dnr

Summer Discovery Cruises  These fun, educational cruises of Lake Erie, the Detroit River, and Lake St. Clair offer an opportunity to learn about lighthouses, bootleggers, sturgeon, ecology, and much more. miseagrant.umich.edu/sdc/
RESTORING AND PROTECTING WATERWAYS THROUGH GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Green Infrastructure is an array of constructed techniques for soaking up stormwater and letting it infiltrate into the ground slowly—rather than sending it through pipes to our rivers and lakes.

The Green Infrastructure approach typically uses hardy native trees and deep-rooted native plants, as well as human-made structures, to create a strategically placed community-wide system for managing stormwater. It’s a proven way to keep runoff from polluting our waterways.

Green Infrastructure techniques include:

- Rain Gardens
- Streetside Bioswales
- Porous or Permeable Pavement
- Green Roofs
- Shoreline Native Plant Buffers
- Tree Plantings

The ADW and its 23 communities have been working with other agencies such as the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments and the Detroit Water and Sewer Department to implement Green Infrastructure throughout Southeast Michigan. Learn more at allianceofdownriverwatersheds.com.

YOU can use these techniques on your own property to reduce stormwater pollution of our waterways, beautify your landscape, and increase your property value. In the long run, you’ll save money, time and effort.

WATER WAYS TO VOLUNTEER

The Huron River Watershed Council is a nonprofit organization that coordinates several fun and educational volunteer programs, including:

- Summertime river cleanups
- Annual winter, spring and fall searches for benthic macroinvertebrates (river bugs that are environmental indicators)
- Spring and summer flow and water quality sampling

All of the data collected in these programs is used to inform water resource decision-making and initiatives.

Volunteer at hrwc.org!
Use less, save more.

Small daily decisions can make a big difference. For instance, every day an average family uses nearly 40 gallons of water just for showering. That’s 17 percent of all residential indoor water use! Choose a showerhead with a WaterSense label and you’ll save 2,900 gallons of water per year... and enough electricity to power a house for 13 days!
If you see illegal dumping into curbside stormdrains and ditches, don’t hesitate. Get on the phone. By making that call, you’ll be doing your part to protect water quality for our entire community.

Call 1-800-292-4706 to report illegal dumping.

For hazardous or flammable spills, call 9-1-1 immediately.
March 2016

Redbuds at Labo Park, South Rockwood

MARC AKEMANN
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**Daylight Savings Time Begins**

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**Palm Sunday**

**Vernal Equinox**

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**Easter Sunday**

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**Water Way**

Pick up after your pets.

Left on sidewalks or lawns, pet waste washes directly into stormdrains and enters our local waterways in the form of raw, unfiltered sewage. As a pet owner, do your part by scooping, bagging and trashing. It makes for better water quality as well as cleaner sidewalks and happier neighbors.
Water Way 4 Forget the phosphorus.

Phosphorus-based lawn fertilizers are restricted under Michigan law. Prevent the growth of harmful algae in downstream lakes by avoiding them. Instead, keep down weeds and encourage root growth by letting your grass grow to a height of 3” or more. Then use a mulching mower to put back nutrients and organic matter. To find out what would benefit your lawn the most, consider having your soil tested. More tips at socwa.org/lawns_gardens.shtml
Water Way 5 Go native.

If you garden, make a point of using plants that are native to Michigan—like Black-Eyed Susans. Deep-rooted Michigan native plants are not only beautiful, they also trap and filter polluted runoff from roadsides and rooftops.

And you may be able to use fewer pesticides and less water to keep them healthy.

To find out how, visit hrwc.org/take-action/capture-rain
Put poisons in their place.

When possible, avoid using toxic household cleaners and chemicals. Also, remember that household cleaners, chemicals, oil, paint and other toxics should never be poured down a sink, into a storm drain or onto the ground. To keep them out of our water supply, always dispose of them at a county collection site.

For disposal guidelines and drop-off locations for all home toxics, check your county’s website.
Detroit River Kayakers at Elizabeth Park, Trenton  

Todd Marsee, Michigan Sea Grant
Water Way Clean on the green.

Commercial car washes should always be your first choice, since they’re required by law to treat their wastewater. But if you’re washing your car at home, park it on the grass.

Your lawn will soak up the dirty water, break down the soap, and prevent runoff into the stormdrain—and nearby waterways.
Water Way 8 Go brown to go green.

In late summer, stop watering your lawn and let it go dormant. It won’t harm the grass, and it will save a lot of water. In addition, to capture rainwater before it disappears into stormdrains, consider using rain barrels, rain gardens and deep-rooted Michigan native plants.
Water Way 9 Adopt a stormdrain.

Stormdrains are underground pipes that carry unfiltered rainwater, melting snow and pollution directly into our rivers, lakes and drinking water. Learn how to care for your curbside stormdrain and keep it free-running at hrwc.org/adoptastormdrain.
There’s much to be said for mulch. Leaves and grass that make their way into waterways add excess nutrients and use up valuable oxygen as they decompose. But with the help of a mulching mower, you can use leaves and grass clippings as a natural fertilizer...and keep them on your lawn, where they belong.
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**Water Way** Follow this prescription for safe drug disposal.

Never flush prescription meds down a toilet. To safely dispose of unused or old medicines, find a nearby take-back program. Or wrap the containers in duct tape and several layers of plastic bags before putting them in your trash. For more details on local take-back programs for prescription and over-the-counter drugs, go to [greatlakescleanwater.org](http://greatlakescleanwater.org).
Water Way  

**Go easy on the salt.**

The best way to keep salt out of our streams during cold weather months is by shoveling snow and ice early and often. And if you occasionally need a de-icer for sidewalks and driveways, choose an environmentally friendly product.
TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS CALENDAR

The partner communities that produce the Alliance of Downriver Watersheds Community Calendar have one shared goal: to educate residents about the impact of their day-to-day actions on rivers, streams, and lakes. ADW members recognize that only by working together can we can secure our watersheds as a permanent and bountiful source of clean drinking water, natural beauty, and diverse recreational opportunities.

In creating this calendar, the ADW made it a priority to contain costs and engage local vendors. Featured photos were sourced from photographers who live and work in Southeast Michigan. The Huron River Watershed Council shared its expertise on watershed pollution prevention by providing content and managing the calendar’s overall production.

Sincere appreciation to everyone who helped make this 2016 calendar a reality!

CALENDAR PHOTOGRAPHERS:
Marc Akemann
James Marvin Phelps
Todd Marsee, Michigan Sea Grant

THANK YOU!
COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND RESOURCES

To report illegal dumping or other environmental pollution concerns, call the MDEQ Pollution Emergency Alert System 800-292-4706 in addition to the Wayne County 24 Hour Environmental Hotline 888-223-2363.
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