

# OUR NATURAL

# environment

## WATER: A PRECIOUS RESOURCE

Water plays an integral role in all aspects of life as it is broadly felt by all who see, touch and taste it. Second to the air we breathe, water is the basis for the survival of humans, animals, nature, the environment, and the economics of our community and the world.

### WATER QUALITY AND POLLUTION

Most people think water pollution comes directly from a factory or other known source. However, the biggest source of water pollution is people. Collectively our behaviors can have a profound influence on water quality in our reservoirs, ponds, and streams, harming the environment and the people that interact with it.

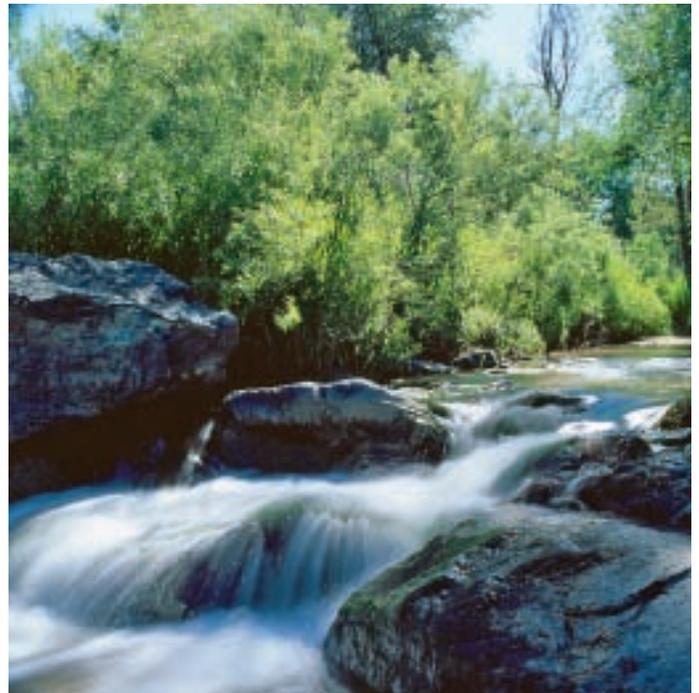
### THE FACTS OF STORM WATER OR RUNOFF

When it rains or snows it causes water runoff to flow downhill. While it seems that this runoff simply disappears when it flows into a street grate or inlet, it flows through storm sewer pipes and is directly discharged into the environment. Many people mistakenly believe that runoff is treated but in fact, it flows untreated directly into local streams, creeks, ponds and lakes where wildlife live and people swim, fish and recreate.

The mistaken belief that runoff is treated results from a misunderstanding of sanitary and stormwater systems. Generally most indoor water fixtures such as a sink, toilet, bath and shower are connected to the sanitary sewer. Water produced by these fixtures is treated at a waste water facility where the harmful contaminants are removed and the clean water is released into the environment.

Water produced by rain, snow, lawn watering and car washing becomes part of the storm sewer system. In contrast to a sanitary sewer system, a storm sewer system collects runoff that is never treated. It is transported and released into drainageways such as local creeks, ponds or lakes.

Many everyday items such as pet waste, grass clippings, engine oil, fertilizers or other everyday household items accidentally become part of the storm sewer system. When it rains, water falls to the ground and washes over these pollutants. These pollutants are then carried with the storm water to local creeks, ponds and lakes, such as Cherry Creek Reservoir. These pollutants decompose and make the water murky, green, smelly and even unusable for swimming, boating, or fishing. Pollutants affect drinking water supplies and can cause severe illness to humans.



*Understanding that storm water is not treated is an important reason for citizens to play a primary role in water quality.*

Nutrients found in fertilizers are necessary for plant life to survive, however they are one of the key causes of algae blooms in streams and ponds. When adequate nutrients are available, the algae and other plant life grow enough to provide food for fish and other aquatic life in the water. However, when an imbalance occurs in the nutrient level, the algae begin to grow too quickly to be eaten by the fish and aquatic life. The algae blooms and as the algae begins to decompose, it sinks to the bottom of the water body, reduces the oxygen level and affects aquatic life.

### MARCH SEASONAL TIP

Consider replacing an existing toilet with a high-efficiency model, which uses 1.28 gallons per flush or less. Denver Water offers rebates for new high-efficiency toilets. Visit [www.denverwater.org](http://www.denverwater.org) for more information.



*Many household items, if introduced into the stormwater system, can be harmful to aquatic life and cause severe illness to humans.*

## YOU CAN DO YOUR PART

Understanding that storm water is not treated water is an important reason for citizens to play a primary role in keeping our storm water clean. Becoming aware of the outcome of everyday activities will reduce the chances of pollutants becoming accidentally introduced into our water and the environment.

- Maintain your vehicle and small equipment so that it does not leak fluids.
- Properly dispose of pet waste by throwing it away with your trash. Pet waste stations are available at many Village parks and trails.
- Follow lawn fertilizer, herbicide and pesticide label instructions and clean up spills promptly and according to manufacturer instructions.
- Do not litter.
- Properly dispose of or compost yard waste.
- Participate in the Village's Residential Household Waste

Collection Program by calling 1-800-449-7587.

- Control erosion by encouraging plant growth or ground cover on bare soil.
- Never put any materials into the curb and gutter, storm drain or

ditch. This includes organic materials such as grass clippings, leaves and soil.

- When emptying swimming pools, dechlorinate the water and never discharge directly into a storm sewer or roadside ditch. Because a grass lawn can help filter pollutants, the discharge point should be as far from the street as possible to maximize the filtering effect.

## PET WASTE STATIONS

At many parks, the Village provides free pet waste bags. It has been estimated that one gram of dog poop can contain 23 million fecal coli form bacteria that can cause people to get sick! While many people think of pet waste as merely a nuisance, it greatly affects water quality and our drinking water supplies. The free bags are provided so pet owners will clean up after their pets and properly dispose of the waste. Trash containers are provided for your convenience near all pet stations.

For more information on water quality, please contact GV Public Works at 303-708-6100. *GV*



*Animal waste is one of the many seemingly small sources of pollution that can add up to big problems for water quality.*