

WHEN YOU'RE WASHING YOUR CAR IN
THE DRIVEWAY, REMEMBER YOU'RE
NOT JUST WASHING YOUR CAR
IN THE DRIVEWAY.

WATER
QUALITY
CONSORTIUM



All the soap, scum, and oily grit runs along the curb. Then into the storm drain and directly into our lakes, streams and rivers. And that causes pollution, which is unhealthy for fish. So how do you avoid this whole mess? Easy. Wash your car on grass or gravel instead of the street. Or better yet, take it to a car wash where the water gets treated and recycled.

CLEAN WATER IS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US

It's up to all of us to make it happen. In recent years sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced. Now, more than 60 percent of water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil, fertilizers from farms and gardens, and failing septic tanks. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water — and that adds up to a pollution solution!

Why do we need clean water?

Having clean water is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean water provides recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, drinking water and adds beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water — and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, marine and ground waters clean.

What's the problem with car washing?

There's no problem with washing your car. It's just how and where you do it. Most soap contains phosphates and other chemicals that harm fish and water quality. The soap, together with the dirt and oil washed from your car, flows into nearby storm drains which run directly into lakes, rivers or marine waters. The phosphates from the soap can cause excess algae to grow. Algae look bad, smell bad, and harm water quality. As algae decay, the process uses up oxygen in the water that fish need.

CLEAN WATER TIP: How can you wash your car and help keep our waters clean?

- Use soap sparingly. Use a hose nozzle with a trigger to save water.
- Pour your bucket of soapy water down the sink when you're done, not in the street.
- Or wash your car on a grassy area so the ground can filter the water naturally.
- Best of all, take your car to a commercial car wash, especially if you plan to clean the engine or the bottom of your car. Most car washes reuse wash water several times before sending it to the sewer system for treatment.

To find out more about the impacts from washing your vehicle and what you can do to prevent water pollution, consult the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection website at www.depweb.state.pa.us

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This information is brought to you by the Water Quality Consortium, a group of public agencies working together to reduce nonpoint water pollution through education.