

Want to save money on your water and sewer bill? An easy way to help save money on your water and sewer bill is to reduce pollution.

A portion of your water and sewer bill pays for upkeep and repairs to wastewater treatment plants and sewer lines. If the term "wastewater treatment" is confusing to you, think of it as "sewage treatment." Wastewater is used water. It includes substances such as human waste, food scraps, oils, soaps and chemicals. In homes, this includes water from sinks, showers, bathtubs, toilets, washing machines and dishwashers.

Treatment plants treat water to reduce and remove pollutants in wastewater to a relatively clean and safe level for people and wildlife. Much of the water used by homes, industries, and businesses must be treated before it is released back to the environment.

Wastewater also includes storm runoff. Although some people assume that the rain that runs down the street during a storm is fairly clean, it isn't. Harmful substances that wash off roads, parking lots, and rooftops can harm our rivers and lakes.

You can do simple things to reduce pollution which then decreases the amount of polluted water that treatment plants have to treat. The following are just a few examples:

Conserve water by taking shorter showers, turn off the water while brushing your teeth or handwashing dishes and use the dishwasher and washing machine for full loads.

Clean up after your pet. Pet waste left on the ground gets carried into streams by storm water and pollutes the water with bacteria, parasites and viruses that are harmful to people and wildlife.

Don't flush "unflushable" items such as baby and adult wipes, feminine products, rags, paper towels, cat litter, cigarette butts, bandages, diapers, Q-tips or unused medicine. Flushing these items down the toilet will not only pollute the water but will also cause damage to sewer lines.

Take care of fluids that are leaking from your car. Vehicles that drip fluids such as oil, grease, gasoline, antifreeze and brake fluids contribute to polluting the water because the fluids gets washed into the water system by rain water. Make sure you repair leaks as quickly as possible. Dispose of fluids by taking them to an auto store to be recycled. Oil and other petroleum products are toxic to people, wildlife and plants. Used motor oil is the largest single source of oil pollution in our lakes, streams and rivers. Americans spill 180 million gallons of used oil each year into our waters.

Reducing the amount of water you use, cleaning up pet waste and properly maintaining your vehicle all helps to reduce pollutants in our water. By reducing pollutants, waste water treatment plants can work more efficiently, will have less water that needs to be treated and in turn, will have fewer repair costs to equipment.

All of us benefit from clean water and all of us have a role in keeping our lakes, rivers, and ground waters clean.