

Water Quality Starts at Home

where each of us has an impact on the pollutants that we introduce into our environment. The EPA suggests these tips for protecting water quality:

1. Use fertilizers sparingly, and sweep excess off driveways and sidewalks.
2. Never dump or discard anything down storm drains.
3. Vegetate bare spots in your yard.
4. Compost your yard waste.
5. Minimize pesticide use, and consider Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
6. Direct gutter downspouts onto soil, away from pavement.
7. Take your car to a car wash instead of washing it in the driveway.
8. Check your car for leaks, and recycle motor oil.
9. Pick up after your pet.
10. Have your septic tank pumped and inspected regularly.



Additional Resources

Visit the **Green Country Stormwater Alliance (GCSA)** website listed below for more details about stormwater protection, including Best Management Practices (BMPs) and other pollution reduction strategies.



Contact Information:

For information about Green Country Stormwater Alliance, contact INCOG at 918-584-7526 or by email at stormwater@incog.org. For local information, contact your city or county stormwater coordinator.

For more information about stormwater protection, contact the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Water Quality Division at 405-702-8100 or visit the DEQ web site at: <https://www.deq.ok.gov/water-quality-division/stormwater/>

For stormwater related complaints, call the DEQ statewide hotline at 1-800-522-0206. This number is answered 24-7. Citizens may fill out an online complaint form at the DEQ web site at <https://www.deq.ok.gov/environmental-complaints/> and submit it electronically to DEQ. The site also provides contact links to DEQ.

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How to Protect Your Local Watershed





A Closer Look at

Ways to Protect Your Watershed

Understand Runoff

Urbanized areas have increased storm-water runoff in local watersheds. Because much of the urban landscape is **paved**, rainfall does not soak into the ground as well as in areas with natural cover (see the illustration below).

A typical city block generates **five times more runoff** than a woodland area of the same size. Increased urban runoff causes an increase in **pollutants** such as oil, grease, pesticides, pet waste, sediment, and other substances to enter the storm drainage system. These pollutants then flow **untreated** to local waterways.

What Local Residents Can Do

Homeowners should **use fertilizers sparingly**. **Sweep** driveways and sidewalks instead of using a hose. **Compost** yard waste.

Visit the EPA website on pesticide use at: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticides/> for information on **pesticide** regulation, use, proper disposal and EPA's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program for alternatives that minimize the use of pesticides.

Pick up after **pets**, and use, store and dispose of **chemicals** properly. Check **cars** for leaks, and **recycle** motor oil and antifreeze. **Wash cars** in driveways causes polluted runoff (oils, detergents, etc.). Instead, use car wash facilities to reduce runoff.

Protect Your Local Streams

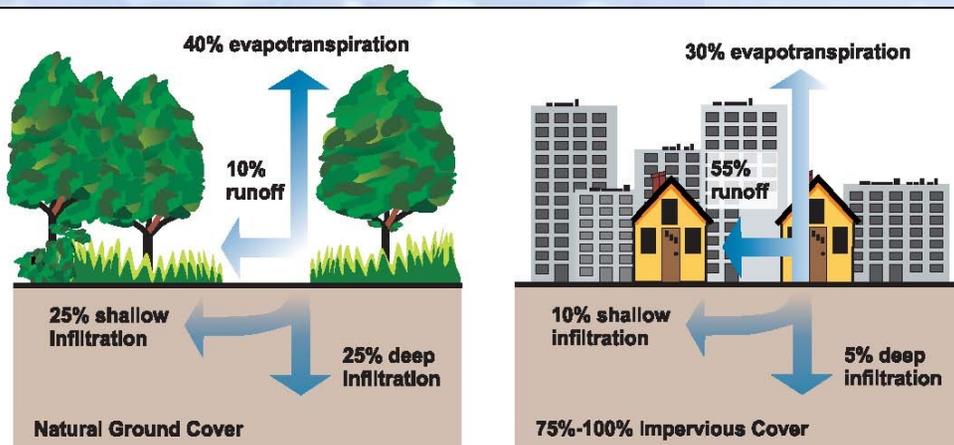
It is best to leave your local stream in a wild state. A **riparian zone** (the area along stream and pond banks where trees, grasses, and shrubs grow) should be left intact to protect the waterbody. The **natural growth** along the stream will:

- Add **shade** to keep water cool, which helps stream life,
- Provide **roots** to keep soil in place and stabilize banks,
- **Filter pollutants** from water, and
- Offer wildlife **habitat and corridors** for movement.

In urban areas, **riparian zones are often cleared** for development or to create a "manicured" look. Neighborhoods should understand the value of riparian areas and learn how to protect them.

Become a Volunteer Stream Monitor

The Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) manages the **Blue Thumb** volunteer stream monitoring program. Volunteers collect chemical, biological and physical data about local streams. Blue Thumb also has education and outreach activities. To contact Blue Thumb: <https://www.bluthumbok.com/>.



IMPERVIOUS COVER CAUSES INCREASED SURFACE RUNOFF. As little as 10 percent impervious cover in a watershed can result in physical stream degradation and biological impacts.

Households served by **septic systems** should have them inspected professionally and pumped every 3 to 5 years.

Water **conservation measures** should be used to extend the life of septic systems.