Products We Use Daily Are Polluting Our Streams

By: Holly Utrata-Halcomb, District Administrator

Pharmaceuticals and by-products of personal care products are the top contaminants of emerging water quality concerns. According to the Alliance for the Great Lakes, studies have found a 70% increase of these contaminants in all streams over the past five years. Sources could include home septic systems, combined sewer overflows, manufacturing facilities, failing sewers and municipal sludge application to land.

Pharmaceuticals are an $80 billion industry. Half of the antibiotics used are for livestock. Manure is then applied to the land. Bacteria are the work horses of streams; breaking down pollutants. Exposure to antibiotics can kill the bacteria. Eventually, forms of bacteria will develop that are resistant to the antibiotics. This resistance can then be transferred to humans.

What can we do?
Help educate your friends and family to never flush unused pharmaceutical drugs. Take them to a recycling site – see http://rxdrugdropbox.org/

Personal Care Products The FDA has banned 19 chemicals in antibacterial soap and personal care products, but the industry has until October 1, 2018 to comply. Triclosan is at the top of the list for personal care items. There is evidence that triclosan, triclocarban and the other chemicals can disrupt hormone cycles and cause muscle weakness, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council, which originally asked the FDA to ban the ingredients.

The FDA has also issued a ban on Microbeads, which is defined as any solid plastic particle less than 5mm in size and intended to be used to exfoliate or cleanse. They are often used in products like toothpastes and facial cleansers, but end up in waterways. These tiny beads contained non-degradable polymers that may take hundreds of years to break down. Aquatic life consumes these microbeads which accumulate in their gut and can cause death. Recent research by US scientists estimated that more than 8 trillion microbeads enter US aquatic habitats each day. Manufacturers must phase out the use of Microbeads by July 2019.

What can we do?
Why wait to stop using products that contain Triclosan and Microbeads? Read the ingredients of what you are buying and simply do not support companies that expose you and the environment to these harmful chemicals and beads!

These new government bans have sparked new research on “Green Chemistry”. New research is currently taking place to make drugs more biodegradable. As for the Microbeads – just use an old fashion wash cloth!!
Have you ever considered what it would be like if the world were one village? How many people would there be? What languages would be spoken? What would the nationality be? Would there be enough food, enough places to live? This book by David Smith looks at the entire planet as if it were one village. As he promotes ‘world-mindedness’, an approach to life that emphasizes knowing your neighbors, not just your next-door neighbor, but the neighbors we share this planet with, he does a great job breaking down the dynamics of our complex planet.

David takes the entire world population of 7 billion, 200 million people and crunches them into one small village of 100. As you enter the global village that David has created you see how different people from all over the world live and the resources they have available to them. In a town of 100 only 87 residents have access to safe drinking water, the remaining 13 must spend hours searching for safe drinking water. In that same village of 100, 44 people don’t have food security while 56 do. This book does a great job of fostering word-minded thoughts and does a great job of opening eyes and minds.
Pollinator Species, such as the monarch butterfly, are experiencing population declines across the United States. To help foster the creation of Monarch Habitats, the Ohio Pollinator Habitat Initiative (OPHI) is partnering with the State of Ohio’s Soil & Water Conservation Districts in a Statewide Milkweed Pod Collection starting September 1st – October 27th. Milkweed is essential to the survival of Monarch Butterflies in our state, due to its location along the migration path. The Monarch butterflies that hatch here in the summer migrate to Mexico for the winter, where they will restart their life cycle and return in the spring. During September through October everyone is encouraged to collect common Milkweed pods from established plants. It is best to pick the seed pods when they appear dry, gray, or brown in color. If the center seam pops with gentle pressure this indicates that they are ready to be picked. Seed pods can be stored in paper bags, labeled with the county from which they came, the date and time along with species collected, if not common milkweed. Pods can be dropped off at the Hamilton County Soil and Water Conservation District Office by Oct. 27th.

Get ready for Caring For Our Watersheds

CFW asks students to submit a proposal that answers the question: “What can you do to improve your watershed?” Students can work independently, or as a team of no more than four to research their local watershed, identify an environmental concern, and come up with a realistic solution.

- Proposals should be approximately 1,000 words and include visuals and a budget. Due February 2, 2018.
- Entries are scored by a panel of judges in the following areas: realistic idea, environmental impact, clear communication, innovation, scope, budget and visuals.
- Ten finalists/teams will get up to $1,000 to implement their projects and then make a 5-minute verbal presentations at a final competition on Saturday, April 28, 2018.
- All finalists win cash rewards (up to $1000) for themselves and matching rewards for their schools. Schools also receive $100 for every ten complete proposals submitted, even if they do not send students to the finals. For more information, go to www.caringforourwatersheds.com and click on Ohio.

To volunteer, please contact Gwen. We always need help mentoring students, reviewing proposals, inputting scores, etc. If you can help, we can find a task that fits your schedule and preferences.

Election Results

Scott P. Huber and Michael C. Miller were elected to the Board of Supervisors. They will begin their terms in 2018.
Poster and Essay Contest
It’s time to get your creative juices flowing! The 2017-2018 Hamilton County SWCD poster and essay contests are here! This year’s theme is “Watersheds: Our Water, Our Home”. Take some time to learn about the 2,267 watersheds that can be found in the United States! Check the website for additional information and submit your best work. http://www.hcswcd.org/poster-essay.html

Home School Programs
The Hamilton County SWCD has partnered with the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County to provide a free home school program series. These workshops are specifically designed for home school families. Programs allow participants to get hands-on while learning about soil and water. Please check with the hosting library to register for each program. The recommended age for each program is just a recommendation. Younger participants are always welcome, but may need assistance from other participants or an adult. If you have any questions please don’t hesitate to contact Sara Fehring.

Programs:
Global Market - Nov. 9 (Norwood Library)
Big Watershed Game - Jan. 11 (Symmes Library)

Upcoming Teacher Workshops
Every year, the District continues to offer great teacher workshops on a variety of topics for various grade levels. This year is no different. Between now and February the District will be hosting four different teachers workshops; Growing Up WILD, Project Wild and Project WET. Growing Up Wild is an early childhood education program that builds on children’s sense of wonder about nature and invites them to explore wildlife and the world around them. Project WILD is a program that links students and wildlife through its mission to provide wildlife-based conservation and environmental education. Project WET places a special focus on incorporating reading, writing, math and social studies while teaching about water resources through hands-on, investigative and easy to use activities.

For more information about these workshops or to register please visit, http://www.hcswcd.org/teacher-workshops.html, or call Sara.
Volunteer Storm Drain Labeling Opportunities

Hamilton County residents pass by numerous storm drains each day whether they are commuting to school or work, or just walking around the block. These curb-side drains are widely misunderstood and misused. We have interacted with many people who assume that water entering the storm drain goes to a wastewater treatment plant; however, this is not the case in most of the County – storm drains typically drain directly to local creeks and rivers. Educating residents that the drains on our streets lead directly to local streams helps them to realize that everything we do on the land impacts our local waterways and the wildlife that depend on them. These people make different choices about littering and no longer look with indifference as their neighbors dispose of liquid waste down the storm drains. The community becomes zealous in protecting water quality in the creeks in which their children play and fish, and in the rivers from which our drinking water is drawn.

So, what can YOU do to help spread the word? ORGANIZE A STORM DRAIN LABELING EVENT TODAY! With a little organization and determination, a small group of people can label a lot of storm drains in just a few hours. By organizing a storm drain labeling event in your neighborhood you can improve water quality. Contact us for more information, we will be happy to help you coordinate the event and provide all the resources and guidance you will need. We can also send you information on upcoming storm drain labeling events nearby. So what are you waiting for? Contact Adam today at (513) 772-7645 x 15!

P.S. If you see anyone dumping anything down a storm drain report it to the Stormwater Hotline (513) 946-7000.

Swimming Pool Water is Toxic to Aquatic Wildlife.

By Adam Lehmann

As you make plans to drain your swimming pool this season, make sure that the chlorinated water does not end up in the storm drain or in a local stream. Chlorine pollution is toxic to in-stream wildlife at all levels of the food chain (algae -> insects & crayfish -> salamanders, frogs & fish). Even species that manage to tolerate short periods of chlorine exposure can be impacted by loss of food supply down the food chain. The seasonality of draining swimming pools can lead to particularly harmful impacts to some species based on their unique life cycles. For example, many groups of aquatic insects only lay eggs once per year which hatch in the spring to early summer; so, if these populations are wiped out by pollution from chlorinated swimming pool water in September, it may be nearly a year before these populations can begin to rebound. Immature salamander larvae and tadpoles are aquatic organisms often unable to leave the water to escape the chlorine pollution. A common local salamander species, the Northern Dusky, hatch from their eggs from late August to early October (coinciding with the swimming pool draining season). Even if the chlorine does not directly kill these salamanders at this sensitive life stage, polluted flows of chlorinated swimming pool waters may force larvae and their mothers to leave nesting site before the young are prepared to survive on their own.

This is a great example of how individuals in the community can make a meaningful difference in the health of our local stream ecosystems. Discharging thousands (and in some cases tens of thousands) of gallons of chlorinated swimming pool water into local streams can have a major impact – if you multiply this effect by every pool in your neighborhood you can see how this has come to be a major problem in our community. To properly dispose of your chlorinated swimming pool water flow these steps:

1. Shut off the chlorination system or quit adding chlorine depending on your system
2. Wait for chlorine to dissipate in the pool (may take up to two weeks).
3. Ensure that pH of the water is between 6.5 and 8.5
4. Discharge the water onto an area of your yard where it will not flow into a stream, storm sewer, or neighboring property, and that will not pond up for a prolonged period (water will likely need to be discharged slowly to prevent runoff).

If drainage of water cannot be contained on-site call Hamilton County Public Health to learn about other options (513-946-7966).
Mission Statement: A public organization committed to assisting the citizens of Hamilton County through education, technical assistance and leadership to be stewards of our soil and water resources.

All District programs are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.