

## Know Your Watershed

### What is a Watershed?

We all live in a watershed. A **watershed** is the land that water and snowmelt flow across or under on the way to the lowest point, a stream, river, marsh, or lake. The landscape is made up of many interconnected basins, or watersheds. On its way, water travels over the surface and across farm fields, forest-land, sub-urban



lawns, and city streets, or it seeps into the soil and travels as groundwater.

### Your Watershed Community

What happens in your small watershed also affects the larger watershed down-stream.

In Summit County we have three major

watersheds: The Cuyahoga River, Tuscarawas River and Rocky River. There are many activities in these watersheds that affect the water quality of our streams.



## Harmful Habits

### Construction

More than 1.5 million acres of land are developed each year in the United States. Without careful construction methods, the exposed soil on these sites can erode into our streams and rivers. Excess sediment alters the natural stream flow and fouls the water, creating a harmful situation for aquatic plants and animals.



### Impervious Cover

Development also changes the land by replacing natural cover with rooftops, roads, parking lots, and other surfaces that are impermeable to rainfall. Since rainwater cannot penetrate these surfaces, it runs off carrying with it litter, oil, and other chemicals that it has collected. These chemicals include gasoline, paints, fertilizers, pesticides, and detergents. This polluted runoff flows into storm sewers, which flow directly into our lakes and streams. Impervious cover produces 16 times more runoff than a forested area.

### Agriculture

Fertilizer, manure, and pesticides, if not properly applied, can degrade the quality of streams. Nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen do stimulate plant growth, but when these nutrients enter the lakes and

streams through agricultural runoff, they can cause large algal blooms. These algae blooms can be harmful for both human and aquatic life.

### Be a Solution to the Pollution

So... you don't run a farm, you don't control development, you don't litter... how are you affecting your watershed? There are several things you can do around your home to help clean up your runoff.



**Car Washing:** Wash your car on your lawn using phosphate-free soap. This keeps soapy water out of the storm drain, and can double as a drink for your lawn! Or go to a commercial car wash where the drains are tied into a sanitary sewer system.

**Pet Waste:** Bag it!

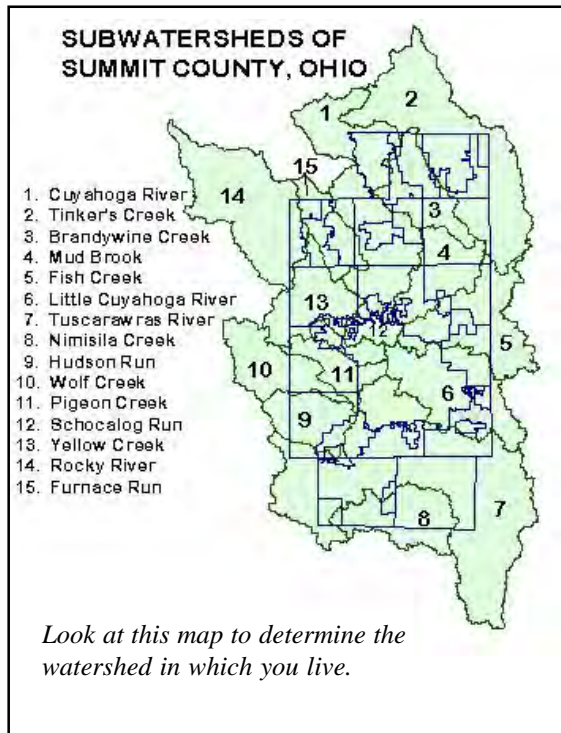
**Sand and Salt:** Use wisely! After the snow piles have melted, sweep up extra sand and salt from driveways and sidewalks.

**Chemicals:** Dispose of used oil, paint, and other chemicals at a household hazardous waste collection site.

**Re-Direct Downspouts:** Make sure downspouts from your roof are not only directed away from your foundation, but onto your lawn and not your driveway or sidewalk. Use rain barrels to collect water to be re-used around your lawn.

## Know Your Watershed

Everyone in Summit County lives in a watershed. You influence what happens in your watershed, good or bad, by how you treat its natural resources – the soil, water, air, plants, and animals. The three major watersheds in Summit County can be further broken down into fifteen subwatersheds. The map below shows the subwatersheds of Summit County. Can you find your watershed?



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