



HOW PEOPLE CAN HELP

The *Puget Sound Starts Here* campaign focuses on getting people to act in ways that will help restore and protect Puget Sound. The actions presented in the campaign address water pollution, and encompass yard care, car care, pet care and home care. If each of the more than 4 million people living in the 12 counties that make up the Puget Sound region makes even one small change, the combined efforts will have a tremendous positive impact.

Recommended Actions

- **In the Yard:** Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly, or use compost instead.
- **With the Car:** Take the car to a commercial car wash, and have oil leaks fixed.
- **Around Pets:** Use a bag to pick up pet poop and place it in the trash (not in the yard waste bin).
- **Home and More:** From cleaning products to septic maintenance, be aware of home care practices.

Action Specifics

Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly, or just use compost: Scientists have found 23 pesticides in Puget Sound streams, many at levels that can harm salmon and other wildlife. When stormwater flows over yards and gardens it picks up pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers and carries them into streams, rivers, lakes and Puget Sound. These chemicals poison wildlife and absorb oxygen in water, contributing to dead zones.

Take the car to a commercial car wash: The water from car washing contains oil, zinc, lead, copper, solvents and antifreeze. All of these enter the Sound – or bodies of water that lead to the Sound – when cars are washed on the street, in driveways or in parking lots. Soaps are a significant problem and are harmful to fish and the aquatic insects they eat. Soaps contain surfactants, which are chemicals designed to coat dirt and grime so they don't settle back onto the car. Surfactants also coat fish gills and prevent fish and aquatic insects from getting necessary oxygen. The water from commercial car washes flows into the sanitary sewer system where it is treated before entering local waterways.

Fix car oil leaks: Motor oil is a pollution problem in Puget Sound region streams, rivers and lakes. Oil doesn't dissolve in water, which means it sticks around for a long time. It's toxic to people, wildlife and plants.

Scoop pet poop and throw it away: Pet waste is raw sewage. It contains hazardous organisms that cause bacterial contamination in local streams, rivers and lakes. When it rains, bacteria in pet poop is carried by stormwater runoff to storm drains, ditches and streams that feed local rivers, lakes and Puget Sound. Pet waste contains fecal coliform bacteria and other disease-causing organisms such as salmonella, roundworms and giardia. These bacteria can make water unsafe to drink or swim in. Keep the yard clean of pet waste by scooping at least weekly if possible. Always carry plastic bags when walking a pet.

Use less hazardous cleaning solutions: Even though most home cleaning products are processed through sewage treatment plants or septic systems, many of the harmful chemicals they contain still end up in local waterways. This also happens when sewer systems overflow during big storms and heavy rains. Whenever possible, use natural cleaning products in the home. This includes detergents for dishwashing that do not contain phosphorus. For other



cleaning needs, avoid products that say “poison” or “danger.” A low-cost household cleaning kit can be created using white vinegar, baking soda, borax, castile soap, and a spray bottle.

Create area where rainwater can infiltrate the soil: Rainfall that hits hard surfaces – streets, sidewalks, parking lots, patios, driveways and rooftops – is much more likely to pick up contaminants and become polluted stormwater. By using pavers, bricks or wood chips instead of concrete, more rain can soak into the ground. A good way to help rainwater infiltration is to build a rain garden.

Maintain septic systems: Improperly maintained septic tanks can be unsafe and create water pollution. Signs of failure include a saturated yard, odors, lush growth and backed-up toilets or drains. Tips to maintain septic systems include installing water-saving devices to prolong the life of the septic drain field, and not putting septic tank additives, bleach, liquid drain cleaner and paint down the drain (they can damage the entire system). Most septic systems should be inspected every three years by a state licensed or health district certified service provider. Some septic systems might need inspection every six months. Follow the inspector’s recommendations for system pumping.