

What is a Watershed, and How Can I Protect It?

A watershed is an area of land that catches rain and snow and drains into a lake or river. Some are very large while others are just a few acres. Most drain into larger watersheds. Watersheds provide water for drinking, irrigation, industry, and recreation. Healthy watersheds are important for a healthy environment.

Deerfield Township falls in the Little Miami Watershed and includes portions of five smaller watersheds: Union Run, Simpson Creek, Polk Run, Muddy Creek, and Little Muddy Creek. The Little Miami Watershed is, in turn, a part of the larger Ohio River Watershed.

A watershed becomes unhealthy when water pollution threatens its wildlife and endangers the people who use it for drinking water, irrigation, and recreation. Much progress has been made in reducing point-source pollution, or pollution that can be traced to a single source such as an industrial disposal site. Nonpoint-source pollution sources, such as run-off from crop land, failing septic systems, drainage from construction sites, and pollution in storm water drainage systems, are harder to trace and control.

We all live in a watershed. What we do in that watershed affects the soil, water, air, plants, animals, and, ultimately, ourselves. Working together, we can keep our watersheds healthy. Try doing the following to make a difference:

- Don't dump chemicals, pet waste, yard waste, or other garbage into storm ditches, culverts, storm sewers, storm drains, or catch basins. They drain directly to streams and rivers instead of going through a treatment plant.
- Clean up leaves and grass clippings that accumulate on your driveway, sidewalk, or street. Never dump yard waste along stream banks, over hill sides, or into the street.
- Wash your car at a commercial car wash, or, if you must wash your car at home, do so on the lawn.
- Minimize your use of salt on driveways and sidewalks.
- Sweep (do not wash) fertilizer and soil off of driveways and sidewalks.
- If you use a septic system, make sure it is maintained in good working order.
- Cover or seed all bare soil and preserve stream side vegetation. Sedimentation (or dispersion and deposition of eroded soil particles) is our number one water pollutant source by volume.
- Avoid overuse of fertilizers and pesticides. Test your soils to determine the amount needed and apply only when necessary.
- Properly store and dispose of household chemicals, such as oil, gasoline, antifreeze, paint, stain, and pesticides.
- Pick up litter whenever you see it.

For more information on Deerfield Township's storm water activities, visit www.deerfieldstormwater.com.