

## Why Change Your Chemical Habits?

Your actions with fertilizers, pesticides, cleaners, vehicle fluids and other household chemicals directly affect the health of the water quality in the Rouge River watershed- which impacts you, everyone around you, wildlife and their habitat, and even the communities downstream.

A **watershed**, also referred to as a **drainage basin**, is the land area that delivers rain & snow/ice melt to a stream or lake. Everyone who lives in Michigan, lives in a watershed!



When rain and snow/ice melt travel across the land (watershed) and into storm drains, it is called stormwater or runoff. As this runoff travels, it picks up trash, animal waste, chemicals, sediments and dissolved substances along the way until it discharges into the nearest waterbody. Small streams join to form rivers and flow across sloping land, eventually flowing into a lake. These bodies of water impacted by runoff provide recreational opportunities, habitat for wildlife, and even drinking water for communities. By using chemical alternatives, changing how you use chemicals, and disposing of chemicals correctly, you are protecting the health of the Rouge River watershed!



Rouge River Watershed

## Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event Information

Wayne County	<a href="http://bit.ly/ARC-WCHHW">http://bit.ly/ARC-WCHHW</a>
Macomb County	<a href="http://bit.ly/ARC-MCHHW">http://bit.ly/ARC-MCHHW</a>
Oakland County	<a href="http://bit.ly/ARC-OCHHW">http://bit.ly/ARC-OCHHW</a>
St. Clair County	<a href="http://bit.ly/ARC-SCHHW">http://bit.ly/ARC-SCHHW</a>
Washtenaw County	<a href="http://bit.ly/ARC-WashCHHW">http://bit.ly/ARC-WashCHHW</a>
DEA Prescription Take-back	<a href="http://bit.ly/ARC-DEA">http://bit.ly/ARC-DEA</a>

## Alliance of Rouge Communities

The Alliance of Rouge Communities, or ARC, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization consisting of local municipalities, counties, educational institutions and stewardship groups working together to improve the Rouge River. Founded in 2005, the ARC is funded by membership dues from local governments and supported by grants. The ARC and its partners work cooperatively to protect the Rouge River while meeting water quality requirements mandated by the state's stormwater permit and restoring beneficial uses, such as canoeing, fishing and other recreational activities, to the Rouge River. The ARC delivers better water quality for less cost to its members!

Visit our website at [www.allianceofrougecommunities.com](http://www.allianceofrougecommunities.com) to learn other ways you can make a difference in the water quality of the Rouge River by practicing healthy habits like:

- Recognizing illegal dumping & how to report it
- Maintaining your septic system
- Properly disposing of fats, oils & grease (FOG)
- Landscaping with native trees & plants
- Properly cleaning your boat to stop invasive species
- Volunteering in your community



Working together, restoring the river



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Working together, restoring the river

when it comes to household  
**CHEMICALS**



change your habits to  
help protect water quality  
in the Rouge River

- Change to a chemical alternative
- Change the way you use chemicals
- Change how you dispose of chemicals

For more information, visit:

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## CHANGE TO A CHEMICAL ALTERNATIVE

### In Your Home

- Peroxide works great to clean the inside of the refrigerator, coffee pot and even your cutting boards.
- Baking soda and vinegar can be used in the bathroom or for kitchen appliances.
- Olive oil together with vinegar works well as a furniture polish.
- Tackle lingering smells on upholstery by combining baking soda, water and any essential oil and spray.
- Castile soap, found at your local grocery store, can be mixed with water for an all-purpose cleaner.
- The acidity of lemon juice is strong and can break down some tough stains on clothing.

### In Your Yard

- Mulch your grass and leaves into your yard to act as a natural fertilizer and keep grass at a 3-inch height which encourages deeper roots which resists pests and weeds.
- Look for a compost-based lawn food instead of a chemical-based fertilizer.
- Native plants are adapted to local soil and climate conditions requiring less fertilizer and naturally resist pests and diseases eliminating the need for pesticides.
- Use horticultural soaps or oils and spot spray instead of using pesticides.
- To deter rodents, use cedar chips, lavender or white peppercorns instead of mothballs. Mothballs contain chemicals and are considered poisonous.

### With Your Vehicles

- Wash cars and boats with a phosphate-free soap and avoid solvent-based cleaners.
- Use water, a coarse cloth and elbow grease to clean your vehicles.
- Natural cleaners like baking soda, borax and lemon or lime juice can be used on cars and boats.
- If your car leaks on pavement, clean it up promptly using an appropriate absorbent material, such as cat litter, and dispose of it properly.
- Use your local car wash which sends the wash water to the sewer system to be treated instead of in your driveway where the wash water goes to the storm drain and into the rivers and streams.

## CHANGE THE WAY YOU USE CHEMICALS

### In Your Home

- Follow the directions on the cleaning products- a little usually goes a long way!
- Properly store unused chemicals in their original container.
- Use rechargeable batteries when possible to reduce disposal of batteries which contain harmful chemicals.
- Septic system owners should avoid rinsing chemicals down the sink drain which can actually kill the beneficial bacteria, reducing the efficiency of your system.
- Supplements and additives in septic systems generally do not improve operation and some may actually harm your system and can cause groundwater contamination.

### In Your Yard

- Don't overuse pesticides which contain hazardous chemicals that can travel through the soil and contaminate groundwater.
- Consider fertilizing only once a year, late summer or early fall, when roots store nutrients over the winter months for future use in the spring growth season.
- Sweep excess fertilizer particles off paved surfaces and back onto the lawn.
- Don't fertilize right before a heavy rain, use your sprinkler or hose to lightly water after fertilizing to move the nutrients into the root zone of the soil.
- Use less salt in winter by shoveling early and often, or spray a brine (mix 1 1/2 gals. hot water with 3-4 cups rock or table salt) before it snows.

### With Your Vehicles

- Wash your car on the grass which acts as a filter instead of the driveway where the wash water goes to the storm drain and directly to the river.
- Use appropriate containers to store gas, used oil, transmission fluid and power steering fluid.
- Sweep your garage and dispose of debris in the trash to clean the floor instead of hosing it down where the water, with any contaminants, go into the storm drain.
- Work rags soaked with car fluids, which can cause spontaneous combustion fires, can be stored in a large container with a lid like a drywall compound bucket. Fill it halfway with water and a cup or two of powdered or liquid laundry detergent and mix completely. Keep the lid on at all times and submerge used rags in the solution.

## CHANGE HOW YOU DISPOSE OF CHEMICALS

### In Your Home

- Never dump cleaners, paints, or oils down a storm drain.
- Read the label of cleaners for disposal instructions, some can be disposed of in the same way that they are used, like down a toilet or sink (don't do if you have a septic system).
- Look for take-back programs to dispose of prescription medication. Never flush them down the toilet which can end up polluting water, impacting fish and wildlife, and contaminating food and water supplies.
- Check local hardware stores for take-back programs for fluorescent light bulbs and batteries.
- Dispose of cleaning supplies, paints/stains, oven cleaners, aerosol cans, etc. at a Household Hazardous Waste collection event in your community.

### In Your Yard

- Never dump excess fertilizer or pesticides down a storm drain. They should be disposed of through your community's Household Hazardous Waste collection event or check with stores that sell the product to see if they have a disposal program.
- Don't dump chemicals on the ground or into your septic system, this could cause materials to seep into soils and contaminate the groundwater supply.
- Always pick up pet waste promptly and dispose of it in the trash - even in the winter. When it rains or the snow melts, bacteria from pet waste that isn't picked up can wash directly into storm drains and drainage ditches and eventually into the streams and rivers.

### With Your Vehicles

- Dispose of used vehicle fluids like oil, transmission fluid and brake & power steering fluids at a participating collection site like a car repair shop, or you can take the fluids to a Household Hazardous Waste collection event.
- Excess antifreeze and windshield washer fluid should be taken to a Household Hazardous Waste collection event.
- Those rags you use when changing car fluids should also be disposed of at a Household Hazardous Waste collection event.
- Old car or boat batteries may be taken back to the retailer you bought it from for a refund of the core deposit.

