

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

7 Adopt your storm drain

Storm sewers discharge directly to rivers, lakes and streams untreated. If it goes down the storm drain, it goes in your water.

Many communities offer storm drain stenciling and adoption programs. Residents can participate in these where available, or take responsibility for keeping nearby storm drains free of leaves and trash.



Photo credit: Adrian Dancu via the Clean Water Minnesota Media Campaign

8 Pick up after your pet

Pet waste can wash into storm sewers and contribute to bacteria and phosphorus pollution in waters, including the Mississippi River. Clean pet waste from your yard and always pick up after your pet on walks.

For more information on bacteria and the Mississippi River, see page 16 and 18 of the *State of the River Report*.



Photo credit: Adrian Dancu via the Clean Water Minnesota Media Campaign

9 Lead-free shot and tackle

Lead is a toxic element that has negative impacts on wildlife that consume it. Lead is in most fishing jigs and sinkers and ammunition, and poisons wildlife such as loons and eagles. Eating just one lead sinker can poison a loon.

Hunters and anglers can help reduce lead in the environment by using non-toxic ammunition and fishing tackle, and asking bait and tackle stores to stock unleaded sinkers. If using lead ammunition, recover and remove all shot game from the field. Dispose of existing lead shot and tackle at your local hazardous waste collection site. For more information, see [www.tinyurl.com/hywevzq](http://tinyurl.com/hywevzq).

For more information about lead in eagles in the metro river corridor, see page 28 of the *State of the River Report*.



Photo credit: Michael Peredias, via <http://tinyurl.com/hywevzq> under CC BY 2.0 license



10 Lend a hand

You care about the Mississippi River – get involved in making it healthier! Become an active member of organizations like Friends of the Mississippi River or Mississippi Park Connection. These groups are doing important river protection work and need your help! Join as a member and participate in volunteer activities and action alerts.

You can also share your passion for the river by working with your neighbors to keep your streets and storm drains clean.

Find out more at www.fmr.org and www.parkconnection.org.

Photo credit: Friends of the Mississippi River

Want to do more?

Friends of the Mississippi River and the National Park Service offer dozens of educational and hands-on volunteer opportunities throughout the year to help the river. You can find out more about these programs by visiting us online.



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STATE OF THE RIVER REPORT

STEWARDSHIP GUIDE



Photo credit: Friends of the Mississippi River

The *State of the River Report* illustrates that, in many ways, the Mississippi River is cleaner and healthier than a generation ago. However, there is still much to be done in order to restore the river and reverse some disturbing trends.

Clean water is everyone’s responsibility, and we can all do our part to help protect this vital natural resource.

This guide highlights the “top 10” stewardship actions that individuals can take with your friends and neighbors to help protect and restore the Mississippi River and its watershed for future generations.

IN YOUR HOME OR APARTMENT

1 Use salt wisely

Excess chloride can be toxic to aquatic life in lakes, rivers and streams. Winter road deicers are the primary source of chloride to Minnesota’s waters, and it only takes 1 teaspoon of salt to permanently pollute 5 gallons of water.

Residents can do their part by shoveling early and often, using deicing products sparingly and sweeping up extra material for future use. Traditional rock salt is not effective in temperatures below 15°F. Some alternative deicers work in temperatures down to -20°F. Sand can be used for traction when salts won’t melt ice. More information on smart winter maintenance is available at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/follow-these-simple-tips-protect-our-water>.

For more information on chloride pollution in the metro area, see page 38 of the *State of the River Report*.



2 Don’t flush your pills

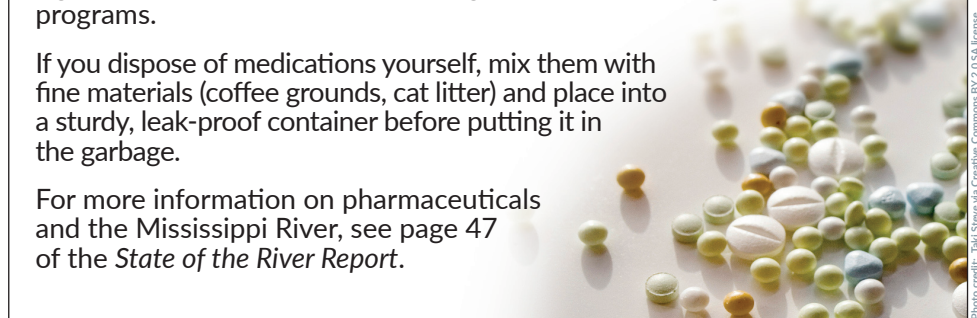
Pharmaceuticals in surface waters can have impacts on fish and other aquatic wildlife.

Expired or unwanted medications should never be flushed or disposed of down the drain. Wastewater treatment systems are not designed to remove these pollutants. If it goes down the drain, it goes in your water.

If your local drug store does not participate in a drug take-back program, contact your county solid waste office, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, or visit DisposeMyMeds.org to find nearby drug take back programs.

If you dispose of medications yourself, mix them with fine materials (coffee grounds, cat litter) and place into a sturdy, leak-proof container before putting it in the garbage.

For more information on pharmaceuticals and the Mississippi River, see page 47 of the *State of the River Report*.

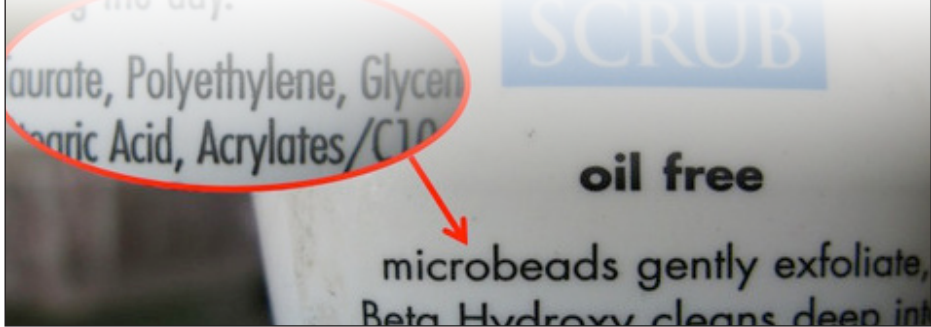


3 Avoid microplastics in your purchasing

Microplastics are tiny pieces of plastic that end up in the environment through the breakdown of litter, car tire wear, or after plastics in clothing and consumer products are washed down the drain. Microplastics present potential risks to wildlife and human health, and can be found in the metro river’s water, sediment and aquatic life.

Download the smartphone app from www.beatthemicrobead.org to scan product labels and determine whether they contain microbeads. Consumers can also choose clothing made from natural fibers, avoid single-use plastics such as plastic bags and take-out containers, and remain careful not to litter or flush plastic materials down the toilet.

For more information on microplastics and the Mississippi River, see page 42 of the *State of the River Report*.



IN YOUR YARD AND GARDEN

4 Rake up, sweep up, pick up

Leaves, grass, lawn chemicals, trash and winter salts can wash into storm sewers and pollute local rivers, lakes and streams throughout Minnesota.

Remember: if it’s in our streets, it’s in our streams. Remove these materials from your street, sidewalk and driveway before they wash into the river.



5 Keep the rain drop where it falls

Excess runoff contributes to higher flows and can carry pollutants into local rivers, lakes and streams. Make sure your downspouts are directed to gardens and other areas that can use the water - not onto your driveway, street or sidewalk. Capture and store runoff with rain gardens, rain barrels and perennial vegetation before it reaches the street.

For more information about how rain gardens and other landscaping choices can help improve water quality while providing a beautiful, year-round landscaping amenity, see www.bluthumb.org.

To learn more about how flow impacts the Mississippi River, see page 12 of the *State of the River Report*.



6 Maintain a river-friendly yard

Healthy yards can help reduce runoff pollution and improve habitat. To maintain a water-friendly lawn, set your lawnmower on a high setting (3”), leave grass clippings on the lawn and avoid excess watering.

If you use lawn chemicals and fertilizers, use them wisely (never over-apply these products) and always keep them on the lawn – not sidewalks, streets and driveways.

Homeowners or property managers who hire lawn care providers should look for those who have completed the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s Summer Turf Care Best Practices certification.

If the only time you visit a corner of your lawn is to mow it, consider replacing it with flowering plants or native vegetation. These absorb water more effectively than turf and provide beneficial habitat.

Residents concerned about pollinator health can plant pollinator-friendly landscapes. Additional information is available at www.tinyurl.com/zcfpn95.

