

Print Date: Wednesday, January 2, 2008

Last modified: Monday, December 31, 2007 9:07 PM PST

City puts focus on protecting waterways

By: Jenna Nielsen, Journal Staff Writer

The City of Auburn is making a New Year's resolution of its own - improve Auburn's waterways with your help.

Last week, the city kicked off its Healthy Auburn Waters campaign - a public education program aimed at informing residents how to care for local streams and rivers.

City officials hope to promote good environmental stewardship among Auburn residents by informing them to be careful about what they pour down the sink drain, into the toilet or into the storm drains.

"We need to protect our waterways and teach every person in Auburn that their actions have a direct effect on the environment," said Bernie Schroeder, city engineering division manager. "The goal of our campaign is to teach people how to properly dispose of pesticides, fuels, hazardous waste and cooking fats, and we also need to stop them from dumping any items into our storm drains. Storm drains are for water only."



Storm water is not treated and flows directly into waterways like creeks and streams. Photo courtesy to the Journal

To better inform residents, the city has launched a Web site, www.healthyauburnwaters.org, which contains detailed information about proper disposal of household hazardous waste, links to more information, recent news and directions to the Western Placer Waste Management Authority's household hazardous waste facility in Lincoln.

The goals for Healthy Auburn Waters campaign include:

- n Promote the proper disposal of pesticides and hazardous waste at hazardous waste collection events or at the Western Placer Waste Management Authority's household hazardous waste facility in Lincoln. Disposal is free for Placer County residents. See www.wpwma.com for information and limits.

- n Stop the dumping of motor oil, gasoline and solvents into drains or storm drains. These should be disposed of at the hazardous waste facility in Lincoln. Uncontaminated motor oil should be recycled at the Auburn Placer Transfer Station located at 12305 Shale Ridge Road in Auburn, at the hazardous waste facility in Lincoln or at most auto parts stores.

- n Inform residents that small amounts of cooking fats, oils and grease should be collected in a jar or tin can and then placed in a solid waste container. Quantities over one quart should be taken to the hazardous waste facility for proper disposal.

- n Remind the public that Lindane - a chemical typically used to treat lice and scabies - is a banned substance and must be disposed of properly. Lindane might be found in old bottles of lice shampoo and in some kennel sprays, all of which should be taken to the hazardous waste facility for proper disposal.

Jack Warren, city public works director, said that making changes in disposal habits of household hazardous waste are important steps to keeping the rivers, streams and lakes healthy environments for wildlife and recreation. Warren said it can also help the City of Auburn work with the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, which issues the permit to operate the city's wastewater treatment plant.

"If we can eliminate these compounds - particularly the household hazardous waste - from entering our sewer

system, we can lessen the impact on our wastewater treatment plant and help the environment," Warren said. "This education campaign is part of a comprehensive plan to keep our wastewater treatment plant in compliance and keep citizens informed about their responsibility to the environment."

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The Healthy Auburn Waters campaign

Sponsored by the City of Auburn, the public education program is aimed at teaching residents how to properly dispose of chemicals including pesticides; cooking fats, oils, grease, motor oil and fuel. Residents should not dump any of these items down their sink drain, into the toilet or down the storm drains. The Healthy Auburn Waters campaign seeks to protect Auburn waterways and save money that would need to be spent in upgrading the Auburn Wastewater Treatment Plant. For more information, visit www.healthyauburnwaters.org.

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