

## BACKGROUND: COMMON WATERSHED POLLUTANTS

**Nonpoint Source Pollution:** The sources of water pollution are referred to as "point sources" or "nonpoint sources". Point sources are usually industrial discharges or sewage discharges, and come out of a distinct pipe. San Diego's rivers and streams have very few point sources of pollution. Nonpoint sources of pollution are many and diffuse -- watering lawns, washing cars, hosing down sidewalks, agricultural irrigation and rain. These sources of water pick up of a variety of pollutants, and carry them to San Diego Bay.

You may be surprised to learn that nonpoint sources are the most serious sources of pollution in our nation's waterways. Not only are many of the chemicals in urban runoff toxic, but they persist for years in the environment, limiting recreation and damaging the health and population dynamics of fisheries and wildlife.

**Household toxics:** Many products used in the home contain toxic or hazardous chemicals which contribute to urban runoff. The main categories of household toxics are cleaning products, paint products, pesticides and automotive products. Those used outdoors, especially auto products and pesticides, pose the greatest risk to water quality. A few common household hazardous materials include:

|                        |                  |                          |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Aerosols               | Furniture polish | Rubber cement            |
| Ammonia                | Gasoline         | Rug & upholstery cleaner |
| Anti-freeze            | Herbicides       | Silver polish            |
| Automobile cleaner     | Insecticides     | Snail and slug killers   |
| Barbecue lighter fluid | Mothballs        | Toilet bowl cleaner      |
| Batteries              | Motor oil        | Transmission fluid       |
| Brake fluid            | Oven cleaner     | Tub and tile cleaner     |
| Chlorine bleach        | Paint            | Turpentine               |
| Detergents             | Paint thinner    | Varnish                  |
| Disinfectants          | Pesticides       | Water seal               |
| Drain opener           | Rodent poison    | Wood finish              |

Refer to the Home Safe Home Fact sheets in the left hand pocket for less toxic alternatives.

**Industries and Businesses:** Businesses use many of the toxic products listed above, and can also switch to less toxic products. Parking lots, gas stations, outdoor landscaping, and construction can also be major sources of pollutants in urban runoff

**Other nonpoint sources of pollution:** Tire dust, grease, trash and litter, animal wastes, air pollution, and eroded sediments all contribute to pollution of our waterways. Erosion is a natural but usually very slow process. Human activities which remove ground cover can greatly increase the rate of erosion.

**Student activities:** These activities are designed to introduce students to common pollutants produced by human activity that are found in urban runoff .

- 1) "Outta Sight, Outta Mind" or "Household Hazardous Waste. Whose Problem is It, Anyway?" - (in Spanish) - short videos introducing household toxics.
- 2) Reading Labels
- 3) A Raindrop Goes to The Sea