NEWSLETTER

Issue 36 May 22, 2024

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Reminder - Rome Annual 'State of Our Lakes' Lunch

All property owners in the Town of Rome are invited to attend a forum on Saturday, June 8th at the Rome Town Hall sponsored by the 14 Mile Watershed Alliance, the Town of Rome and the Tri-Lakes Management District to discuss lake and stream water quality issues in our watershed.

The June 8th forum will have exhibitors throughout the town hall and will feature presentations addressing the water quality in our lakes and watershed, an update on the nanobubbler project, followed by lunch and a question & answer period. At the end of the event, door prize, raffle and silent auction winners will be announced.

Please add June 8th 11:00-2:00 to your calendars. See you there!

Ideas for Protecting Our Lakes and Watershed

Consider Installing a Rain Barrel

Most of our concern with lake water quality focuses on how clear the water appears. Volunteers and professionals collect Secchi disc measurements to allow us to track clarity over time and across different water bodies. Researchers can compare

measured clarity with water samples to understand why clarity varies over time and across lakes. The amount of suspended algae and sediment in the water is often the main determinant of how clear the water appears. Abnormally wet summer weather will increase the amounts of sediment, nutrients and algae found in a typical lake.

Additionally, blue green algae blooms are more common in warm, nutrient rich (eutrophic) bodies of water. Runoff from hot summertime rains provide the perfect fuel for algal blooms, but it's not the rainwater by itself that's driving change. Rainwater alone is relatively nutrient poor, but once it makes contact with the ground and becomes stormwater runoff, it picks up a range of sediment particles and delivers them to streams, rivers, and lakes. In any single rain event, there is a direct relationship between the amount of rain, the volume of runoff, and the capacity of that runoff to carry larger and larger particles. We observe this on exposed soils whenever runoff is heavy enough to create rivulets or even gullies. The volume of runoff reaching a river or lake is closely related to the land use and percent of a watershed covered by impervious surfaces.

Prior to European settlement, forests and prairies dominated the landscape and Wisconsin's watersheds mostly lacked impervious surfaces (except places with exposed bedrock). The topography of the land surrounding lakes was complex and uneven, with decaying logs and myriad holes from places where trees had blown down from hundreds of years of storms. This situation was ideal for lake clarity, since most runoff would be slowed down and would soak into the ground before reaching open water.

Today's landscape around lakes provides a stark contrast to the pre-settlement era. With tractors and bulldozers, humans leveled out the land and removed many low spots where rain once collected and soaked into the ground. The amount of impervious surface has dramatically increased through buildings, roads and parking lots. Beyond impervious surfaces, lawns, ditches and swales present a landscape that is intentionally designed to quickly move water away.

This modified landscape produces predictable results when heavy summer rains occur: massive amounts of water move fast across the land and quickly fill in low areas. The stormwater carries more sediments and nutrients, eventually depositing them into rivers and lakes. The potent water comes into lakes at or near the surface, and in summer the lake is already stratified with warm water at the top, so the new polluted runoff tends to stay near the surface. If lake levels increase from stormwater, waves at the shoreline can re-suspend nutrient rich sediments that tend to accumulate above the ordinary high-water mark. Add a long period of daytime sunshine and warm air over the lake surface and you'll find a perfect condition for blue-green algae blooms.

(portions reprinted from Lake Tides, vol. 42-3, Summer 2017)

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP REDUCE RUNOFF INTO OUR LAKES?

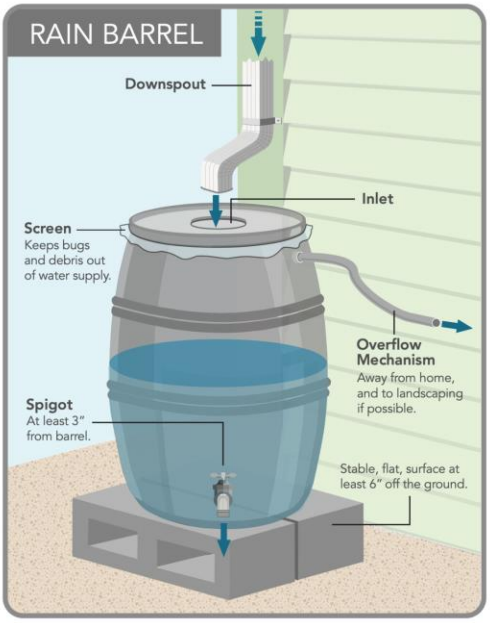
ACTION: SET UP A RAIN BARREL

IMPACT: Help more rain soak into soil and reduce runoff

Did you know that each inch of rain that falls on 500 square feet of roof equates to about 300 gallons of water? Instead of letting this precious resource just run off into the lakes, you can use a rain barrel or two to collect and store it until you need it. Besides helping conserve your area's water supply, you can reduce your water bills by using your collected rainwater in your garden.

Rain barrels can be purchased or can easily be made out of a plastic outdoor trash can. **To make your own, follow this link for complete instructions:**

https://www.bhg.com/gardening/design/projects/how-to-make-rain-barrel/



The 14 Mile Watershed Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement of surface and groundwater in the 14 Mile Creek Watershed. See us at 14milewatershed.org and https://www.facebook.com/14MileWatershed

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