

WATER - our MOUNTAIN GOLD



Suggestions from the
Central Sierra Watershed Committee

Where Does All the Dirty Water Go?

Your sewer system in action...

*What You Flush or Pour Down Your Drain or Storm (street) Drain Affects the
Creeks, Rivers, and Lakes in our Communities*

Where does the water go after you flush the toilet or drain the sinks in your home?

When the wastewater flushed from your toilet or drained from your household sinks, washing machine, or dishwasher leaves your home, it flows through your community's sanitary sewer system to a wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater from homes, along with wastewater from businesses, industries, and other facilities, is treated by a variety of processes to reduce or remove pollutants.

What Can You Do to Protect Local Waterways?

Flush Responsibly!

- ✓ Don't pour household products such as cleaners, beauty products, medicine, auto fluids, paint, and lawn care products down the drain.
- ✓ Properly dispose of them at your local household hazardous waste facility. Wastewater treatment facilities are designed to treat organic materials, not hazardous chemicals.
- ✓ If you pour hazardous chemicals down the drain, they may end up in local creeks, rivers, and lakes.
- ✓ Check with County for hazardous waste collection days.

Dispose of excess household grease (meat fats, lard, cooking oil, shortening, butter and margarine, etc.) diapers, condoms, and personal hygiene products in the garbage can. These materials can clog pipes, and could cause raw sewage to overflow in your home or yard, or in public areas. Overflows often occur during periods of high rainfall or snowmelt, and can result in basement backups, overflows at manholes, or discharges directly to rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

Don't pour used motor oil down the drain. Used motor oil or radiator coolant can diminish the effectiveness of the treatment process, and may allow contaminants to be discharged. These contaminants could pollute local waterways or harm aquatic life.

If you own a RV empty your waste tank at one of the local RV dump stations located at Bass Lake-Forks Dump Station, Chowchilla and Madera Fairgrounds, and the Midpines KOA Campground to prevent chemicals from entering the sewer system or watershed.

If you're a dark room hobbyist, dispose of spent fixer, developer, and other photographic chemicals in separate containers and dispose of them on a hazardous waste disposal day (Contact Madera County Environmental Health Dept). Like household hazardous wastes and used motor oil, photographic chemicals can interfere with the wastewater treatment process and could result in pollutants being discharged into local waterways.

Wastewater Treatment: Many communities have a wastewater treatment plant that incorporates a series of processes to remove pollutants from water used in homes, small businesses, industries, and other

facilities. All wastewater first goes through the primary treatment process, which involves screening and settling out large particles. The wastewater then moves on to the secondary treatment process during which organic matter is removed by allowing bacteria to break down the pollutants. The treated wastewater is then usually disinfected with chlorine to remove the remaining bacteria.

What happens to the treated water when it leaves the wastewater treatment plant?

Some communities go one step further and put the wastewater through an advanced treatment process to reduce the level of pollutants of special concern to the local water body, such as nitrogen or phosphorus. After this step, the treated water flows through pipes for percolation into the ground through spray fields and/or percolation ponds.

REMEMBER! These materials are harmful to our watershed!

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| ⊗ | Cleaners | ⊗ | Condoms |
| ⊗ | Grease | ⊗ | Feminine hygiene products |
| ⊗ | Anti freeze | ⊗ | Paint |
| ⊗ | Beauty products | ⊗ | Lawn care products |
| ⊗ | Motor oil | ⊗ | Photographic chemicals |
| ⊗ | Radiator Coolant | ⊗ | Hazardous waste |
| ⊗ | Diapers | ⊗ | RV Waste Tanks |
| ⊗ | Medicines | | |

Do Not Dump These Down your Drain or Storm/street Drain!

For more information on the wastewater treatment process, please contact your County offices for additional assistance: Madera Environmental Health Department at 559.675.7817 or Mariposa County Utility District at 209.966.2515. Or visit www.epa.gov/owm for more information on wastewater treatment.

The CSWC meets on the last Wednesday of every month at the Sierra Ambulance Office, 40755 Winding Way, Oakhurst, at 9 AM, and is open to the public. For information, please email leavesofgrass@netptc.net

The mission of the Central Sierra Watershed Committee is to promote the quality, quantity, and aesthetic values of our water resources through the conservation and restoration of our watersheds.

CSWC members include: Interested citizens, ranchers, homeowners; local Native American tribes; North Fork Community Development Council; Chowchilla-Redtop and Coarsegold Resource Conservation Districts; Chowchilla City Council; Upper Merced River Watershed Council; California Water Institute; Sierra Foothill Conservancy; Madera Irrigation District; Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation & Development Council; US Army Corps of Engineers; Regional Water Quality Control Board; Madera County Environmental Health & Engineering; CA Department of Water Resources; Madera County Board of Supervisors; Madera Agriculture Commissioner; San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District; Natural Resource Conservation Service; and the United States Forest Service.

Note: The contents of this article do not necessarily reflect the views of the State.