

We are so blessed in Beaufort County to have the creeks, rivers and sounds with abundant recreational and seafood resources. It is also the responsibility of residents and visitors to be good stewards of that natural beauty and wealth. An appreciation of the natural beauty and water quality is not enough. It takes commitment and lifestyle modifications to really protect the resource. What each person living in and visiting the area does is important and can affect our whole unique ecosystem. Water leaves one property as rain, or Stormwater runoff, and travels (seeking its own level – sea level here) across paved surfaces and ditches to either ponds or tidal creeks and marshes. Because rainwater also carries dissolved organic and inorganic substances – leaves, litter, fertilizers and chemicals – to those receiving bodies of water, the health of the plants and animals living in them can be affected. Another unique problem that we have on the coast is the volume of fresh water entering a saltwater estuary can also affect the young fish, shellfish and invertebrates which make their living and go to school in salt water. Too much fresh water lowers the salinity and may raise the temperature of the estuary.

Practicing environmentally friendly landscaping is one of the easiest ways to help protect the waterfront. Use plants that have adapted to our heat and humidity, native plants from the Southeast or non-invasive plants from other continents should need less irrigation water once they are established. Checking irrigation equipment for leaks or faulty heads is another way to reduce fresh water from going down the storm drain. Installing rainwater harvesting barrels or cisterns, rain gardens and using planted buffers on slopes and along property lines can also recover that water for the lawn, beds, and house plants. Native plants and low fertility lawn grasses also reduce the amount of fertilizers and chemicals used as pesticides. Leaving the clippings on the lawn and mulching leaves keep them out of the streets, landfills, and storm drains.

Litter trashes everyone. I am always surprised at the amount of trash along the roads, marshes, and rivers of our Beautiful County and grateful for the volunteers with Keep Beaufort County Beautiful "Adopt a Highway" who pick up the litter that someone else threw out of his window or that flew out of the back of her truck. Those volunteers and other "Friends" help to keep litter from clogging the storm drains and are making a serious effort of protecting the waterfront.

Please visit the Clemson University Carolina Clear website for more information on Carolina Yards and Neighborhoods <http://www.clemson.edu/public/carolinaclear/>

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