



Rainy Days And Plastic-Filled Waterways

Stormy days may cause more pollution than you might think.

The rain we receive can bring more than just much-needed water to our dry landscape. As rainwater runs off hard surfaces like pavement, sidewalks, and rooftops, it picks up pollutants. Car oil, pesticides, and plastic trash, like toys, wrappers, and drink bottles get carried to nearby storm drains and flow directly into our waterways without treatment. This is called [stormwater pollution](#). With fall in full swing, it's a good time to prevent stormwater pollution, especially plastic pollution.

Below are some ways you can help protect our waterways. Scroll on to the second page to read more.

Scare Pollution Away



The best way to prevent plastic pollution is to stop using single-use plastic. You can replace single-use items with reusable containers for food and drinks instead of plastic bags or plastic wrap. Glass or bamboo containers or beeswax wraps are great alternatives! If you're hosting a party and reusable plates and utensils aren't an option, opt for compostable items. Treat wrappers from Halloween can also be a major pollution source. Make sure that any wrappers are disposed of in the trash and try to choose boxed or foil-wrapped candy.

Sweep it and Keep it Clean



You play a major role in preventing stormwater pollution.

- Secure trash can lids so trash doesn't blow away
- Pick up loose trash
- Move your car on [street sweeping day](#) – make room for the sweepers to do their jobs
- Clear leaves and trash out of gutter pans and storm drains to prevent local flooding
- Use leaves for mulch or put them in green bins – Do not blow or sweep them into the street!

Reduce, Reuse, Refuse to Use, Then Recycle



It takes an abundant amount of energy and resources to produce and recycle plastic. Follow the 3 R's! Disposable foodware is rarely recyclable or compostable. You can use some of the previously-mentioned suggestions such as wax wraps, and metal or bamboo lunch boxes to reduce plastic and reuse materials so they don't end up in landfill.

To locate the nearest recycling programs in your area, visit our ["Recycle"](#) page on our website.

Sharing is Caring



When you share how you keep our watersheds clean by preventing pollution, you're inspiring others to take action. By working together, we can reduce our impact on our environment and our communities. (See our social bank below).

If you spot any illegal dumping on the side of the road, report it so that it doesn't make its way to our waterways. **Call 1-800-NO DUMPING (1-800-663-8674) or report online [here](#).**



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You Are the Solution to the Plastic Pollution Problem



Photo by Naja Bertolt Jensen on Unsplash

Do you ever wonder how so much plastic ends up in our waterways? A single piece of trash can have an extensive journey. Trash that ends up on our streets can easily be swept away by wind or rain into surrounding storm drains. It can make its way to the ocean from miles away! That's why even inland cleanups are just as important as cleanups that take place along the coast. According to The Nature Conservancy, **11 million tons of plastic** end up in the ocean annually and more than 50% of plastic is single-use. In 2021, **Contra Costa volunteers collected around 13,776 lbs of debris** (trash and recyclables) during California's Coastal Cleanup event!

Cleanups are a great way to take action against stormwater pollution. Eliminating plastic in our everyday lives is even more effective. This is because plastic can have several harmful effects on our water quality, aquatic life, and our own health. Some plastics like toys can get unintentionally lost, blown out of vehicles, and be swept into storm drains and the ocean. Aside from choking wildlife, plastic has several other negative effects on the environment. Plastic can actually break down into what are known as microplastics. Aquatic life, such as fish can end up accidentally ingesting these tiny particles of plastic.

While the plastic pollution problem may sound overwhelming, there are ways that you can help protect your waterways. All of us can take responsibility for reducing trash in our waterways by making a few simple behavior shifts. Check out the [Contra Costa Clean Water Program's website](https://www.contracostacounty.org/cleanwater) and use the previously mentioned tips to help Contra Costa prevent plastic pollution.



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