

## know where it goes

take simple  
steps to reduce  
STORMWATER POLLUTION



# Who's Got The Scoop?

You've probably encountered it lying on the sidewalk and wondered why that dog's owner didn't pick it up. What you might not have considered is that stepping in it is only one consequence of not scooping the poop. In fact, dog waste is one of the seemingly small sources of pollution that can add up to big problems for water quality, and even human health.

Being a *natural* product, it might be tempting for many dog owners to assume that their dog's waste simply decomposes. And while it's not the most neighborly thing to leave your dog waste on the sidewalk or street, sometimes you just find yourself caught without a plastic bag. However, the reality is that dog waste doesn't just decompose.

When left on a paved surface, dog waste becomes yet another contaminant that stormwater (the water you see flowing down the street during a heavy rain) can transport to local waters. When heavy rains wash down the sidewalk and street, and right over the dog waste, they pick up particles of that waste. That stormwater then flows either directly to local waters such as [name of local water body] or down storm drains and then to local waters. That's right. Storm drains do not filter or treat the water; they simply provide a pipe to transport it to the nearest water body.

So what's in dog waste that can make it a legitimate source of pollution? Animal waste of most kinds contains both nutrients and pathogens. While we usually associate the word "nutrients" with healthy food choices, when animal waste decomposes, the nutrients provide too much food for aquatic plants. The consequence is excessive growth of algae and weeds. If you've ever seen a lake or pond covered with green slime, then you've seen this in action. Animal waste also contains pathogens, disease-causing bacteria and viruses that can make local waters unswimmable and unfishable, and have caused severe illness in humans.

So what's a dog owner to do? Fortunately, the solution is fairly simple. Just keep a plastic bag with you on every walk with your dog. Then you'll have the equipment necessary to remove your dog's waste. (There are even compact, refillable bag dispensers that attach right to your dog's leash.) Once you've collected it, throw the waste in the nearest trash can, and you're done, removing not only a pedestrian hazard but a water quality hazard as well.