



Protecting our waterways

Actions for individuals

Floods and our waterways

It is surprising how much junk ends up in our waterways. When it rains or floods - mud, chemicals and litter are washed into stormwater drains and carried out into local waterways.

South East Queensland's climate makes it prone to extreme wet weather that can cause flooding. Floods are a natural, reoccurring process that have shaped the landscape of South East Queensland.

However, if we do not manage our catchments properly, floods can negatively affect waterway health and threaten aquatic plants and wildlife.

"Follow my top tips to protect catchment creatures like me."



Healthy Waterways

Stormwater drains carry mud, litter and chemicals into our local creeks.

Actions for individuals

We all have a role to play in protecting and improving waterway health. Everything we do in our cities and rural areas is eventually reflected in our waterways.

Small lifestyle changes can help to protect and improve waterway health, allowing us to leave healthy waterways for future generations to enjoy.

Follow Healthy Waterways' top tips:

- Mitigate mud
- Conquer chemicals
- Limit litter
- Love your waterways.

Mitigate Mud

When mud is washed off the land into our waterways and oceans it can smother and kill seagrass, reducing the amount of food for fish, turtles and dugongs. The millions of tonnes of mud that entered Moreton Bay during the January 2011 flood have now settled on the bottom of the Bay. This mud layer will negatively impact animals and plants that live on the bay floor.

Activities which disturb the land (such as gardening and renovations that leave soil uncovered) can increase the amount of mud that is washed off your property and into local waterways.

What you can do

- Plant native vegetation in your backyard and along waterways.
- Keep exposed dirt to a minimum by mulching.
- Sweep up dirt and mud rather than hose it down the drain.
- Use a low force hose when watering your garden to prevent soil washing off the surface.
- Keep steep slopes to a minimum when designing the landscape of your backyard.
- Build a raingarden in your backyard to reduce stormwater pollution.
- Report muddy water running off construction sites to your local council.



Planting trees along our waterways can reduce the impact of mud by slowing the flow of water.



Build a Raingarden

Building a raingarden on your property is a fun and inexpensive way to improve local water quality and enhance the beauty of your backyard.

Raingardens are garden beds that use native plants and soil to capture, filter and treat stormwater runoff from your driveway or roof. Raingardens reduce flooding by sending the water back underground, rather than into the street. In addition, raingardens promote biodiversity by providing habitat for wildlife. Find your step-by-step guide at: www.waterbydesign.com.au/factsheets



Conquer chemicals

Household and gardening products (such as paint, oil and fertiliser) contain a range of toxins that can kill aquatic wildlife and degrade water quality.

During heavy rain and floods, chemicals and fertilisers can enter our waterways if they have not been properly stored or applied. These excess chemicals cause severe impacts, such as mass fish kills and toxic algal blooms. Even when these products are diluted, they should never be tipped down stormwater drains or dumped near waterways.



Wash your car on grass so soapy water doesn't end up in our creeks.

What you can do

- Never pour household chemicals such as oil and paint into gutters or down stormwater drains.
- Wash small amounts of left over water-based paint into garden beds if necessary.
- Use eco-friendly, low phosphorous household cleaning products.
- Keep products containing harmful chemicals in waterproof containers and store them up high.
- Avoid applying garden fertilisers, pesticides or chemicals if heavy rain is expected.
- Wash your car on the grass rather than on the driveway or use an eco-friendly car wash facility.
- Dispose of household chemicals correctly. Check out www.recyclingnearyou.com.au to find your local hazardous waste centre.

Limit litter

Queensland has the highest amount of litter of all mainland states in Australia. Litter dropped on land is washed by rain into stormwater drains and transported into our waterways where it harms wildlife and water quality.

Plastic is the most common form of waterway litter. Plastic never biodegrades, it breaks up into smaller and smaller pieces, gradually turning our waterways into a 'plastic soup'.

In South East Queensland, the Healthy Waterways Clean Up Program recorded a 50% increase in the number of plastic water bottles collected from local waterways between 2007-2010.

What you can do

- Dispose of rubbish in the bin and ensure rubbish is secure.
- Use the three R rule: **reduce** your use of plastic, **reuse** items and **recycle** as much as possible.
- Pick up any litter you see and remind everyone to dispose of rubbish carefully.
- Use a reusable water bottle instead of buying plastic water bottles.
- Carry a litter bag in your car or on your bicycle.
- Report littering at www.ehp.qld.gov.au



Organising a local cleanup can be a fun event for families and friends



Love your waterways

South East Queensland is blessed with stunning waterways that underpin our unique lifestyle and cultural identity.

However, studies have consistently predicted that without significant investment, our waterways will deteriorate.

We can all help to protect our precious waterways through small everyday actions.

Let's preserve the waterways of South East Queensland for future generations to enjoy.

What you can do

- Learn about your local catchment.
- Visit and enjoy South East Queensland's waterways.
- Get involved with your local catchment group.
- Join Healthy Waterways as a member.
- Talk to your local council member about waterway health issues.

Healthy Waterways

Healthy Waterways is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation working to improve waterway health in South East Queensland.

By becoming a member of Healthy Waterways, you will belong to a network of people who are working together to protect our waterways.

Contact us to find out more.



Healthy Waterways

Join your local catchment group to learn about what you can do to help.



[Watch our cartoon now!](#)

Scan this QR code with your smart phone to watch our 45 second cartoon.



[Like us on facebook](#)

Find out more about waterway health and keep up-to-date with the latest news and events.



Healthy Waterways
PO Box 13086, George St, Brisbane, QLD 4003
Phone: (07) 3177 9100 Fax: (07) 3177 9190
www.healthywaterways.org

© Healthy Waterways 2012-011

There are other fact sheets and educational resources available. For more information about the waterways of South East Queensland please visit the Healthy Waterways website.

Front banner: iStock

Back banner: Healthy Waterways