

Recycle your oil and antifreeze.

Motor oil and antifreeze contaminate water and can harm or kill animals and plants. Never pour used motor oil or antifreeze down a storm drain, onto the soil or into a waterway. Put used oil or antifreeze in a sturdy container and take it to a recycling center.



Critiquing the creeks: the condition of each watershed

Environmental professionals from many disciplines are engaged in the challenging task of protecting our urban streams. The emerging practice known as watershed protection requires a commitment from MSD and others to lessen the adverse impact of development on local watersheds. In order to improve water quality, we need to better understand the factors affecting our 11 watersheds.

BEARGRASS CREEK WATERSHEDS

South Fork

The South Fork of Beargrass Creek watershed encompasses about 27 square miles, including the southeastern portion of downtown Louisville. This watershed is the most urban of the 11 watersheds. The South Fork of Beargrass Creek begins above the Bardstown Road area and flows through the eastern section of downtown Louisville before emptying into the Ohio River. Several miles of the stream are enclosed in concrete, U-shaped channels.

Water-quality problems in this stream often are severe. A high percentage of the watershed is paved, and runoff contributes to high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the stream. The area also includes sewers that sometimes overflow. Fecal bacteria levels exceed water-quality standards more than half the time. In addition, fast-moving storm water scours the stream banks, causing erosion and damaging or destroying habitats.

MSD is working to reduce the number of sites where sewer overflows occur. Other solutions include revegetation of stream banks and modification of stream channels to slow the flow.

The beauty of natural locations such as the South Fork of Beargrass Creek in downtown Louisville disguises the reality of our polluted streams.



BEARGRASS CREEK WATERSHEDS

Middle Fork

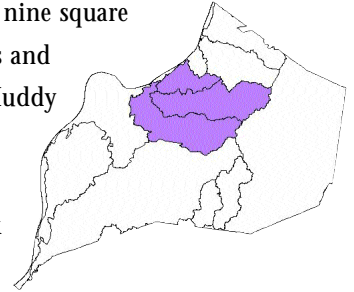
This watershed covers about 25 square miles and includes an eastern section of metropolitan Louisville. The Middle Fork begins in the Middletown area, runs through St. Matthews, Cherokee Park and Seneca Park, and converges with the South Fork and Muddy Fork of Beargrass Creek. Overall impacts to this watershed are moderate to severe, but impacts here can be highly variable, depending on stream flow.

The area includes sites where sanitary sewers and combined sewers sometimes overflow. Fecal bacteria levels exceed water-quality standards about half the time. In addition, fast-moving storm water erodes stream banks and dumps sediment on streambed organisms. Runoff from extensive paved surfaces also diminishes water quality and habitat quality.

Solutions include reducing sewer overflows and runoff from paved surfaces. Revegetation of stream banks will improve both habitat and water quality.

Muddy Fork

This watershed covers about nine square miles, including Indian Hills and part of St. Matthews. The Muddy Fork runs along the Ohio River, converging with the South Fork and Middle Fork of Beargrass Creek just before emptying into the river. The Muddy Fork also receives backwater from the river. Water-quality problems in this watershed are moderate to severe. The causes include a high number of failing septic tanks and widespread use of lawn chemicals. Fecal bacteria levels exceed water-quality standards about a third of the time.



Much of the area consists of paved surfaces, and runoff from these surfaces causes various problems. Besides washing high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus into the waterways, fast-moving storm water scours stream banks, causing erosion. The rushing water also smothers some aquatic habitats with sediment and sweeps away others.

Sewers would alleviate some of the problems, as would a reduction in the use of lawn chemicals. Revegetation of stream banks and modification of stream channels to slow water flow would improve both habitat and water quality.



YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Choose not to litter or dump.

Street litter often gets swept into streams and storm drains. Recycle as much trash as possible and put other litter into garbage cans. Don't dump yard waste into or near waterways. When the discarded vegetation breaks down, it can decrease oxygen in the streams and release chemicals that can kill aquatic organisms.

