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Protecting groundwater and surface water
quality within the District

Dog Waste and Water Quality



DOG WASTE AND WATER QUALITY



*“Please clean up after
your pet!”*

Whether you are hiking on a local trail, playing with your dog in a park, or just in your own backyard, it is important to clean up after your pooch. Dogs may be “man’s best friend”, but what they leave behind is not.

Dog waste left along the trail, sidewalk, street, or even your own yard, can introduce pollutants that may be washed into local streams by rain or melting snow. The storm drains in Bozeman drain **directly** into Bozeman Creek, carrying a variety of pollutants, including dog waste, into the water. Even shallow groundwater can be impacted in areas with concentrated dog waste.

Why is dog waste a problem?

- **Dog waste can transmit disease.** This makes water unsafe for recreating; for both you and your four-legged friend.
- **It’s hard on water quality.** Just like lawn fertilizer, dog waste contains nutrients that encourage algae growth in streams. Too much algal growth makes the water unattractive for recreating. When the algae decays, it uses up oxygen in the water which can stress or kill fish when combined with the stress of warm water temperatures.

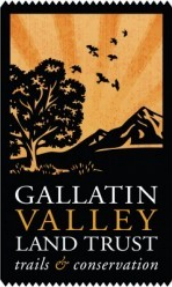


Did you know? Bozeman Creek is impacted by excess nutrients and high levels of *E. coli* bacteria, an indicator of fecal contamination including dog waste. The Montana Department of Environmental

Leaving bagged dog waste by the side of the trail does not solve the problem! Pick up properly after your dog.

Quality has listed Bozeman Creek as “impaired”, meaning it does not meet certain water quality standards.

Our Partners:



DOG WASTE AND WATER QUALITY

What are the health risks?

Dog waste can carry a variety of infectious organisms like viruses, parasites and harmful bacteria. Improper disposal of dog feces is not only unappealing, but can pose a health risk to humans and other dogs. Some of the disease or parasites that can be transmitted from dog waste to humans include:

Hookworms and Roundworms: Intestinal parasites that infect dogs. They can be transmitted to humans through contact with dog waste. **Toxicara canis** is a common parasitic roundworm in dogs that can cause Toxicariasis in humans. Symptoms include fever, breathing problems, stomach pain, vision problems, eye pain and redness.

Campylobacter: This bacteria causes a disease called Campylobacteriosis and is found in dog feces. It can cause diarrhea, fever, cramps, nausea and vomiting in humans.

Giardia: A common infection in dogs. The protozoan can be transmitted to humans through contact with pet waste. A common source of infection is from contaminated outdoor water. Giardia can cause severe diarrhea in humans.

Cryptosporidium: A protozoan carried by dogs and other mammals. Symptoms include diarrhea, nausea, stomach cramps and dehydration.

Salmonella: This bacteria can be transmitted to humans through contact with dog waste. Symptoms include diarrhea, fever and abdominal cramps.

Canine Parvovirus: This species of parvovirus only infects dogs and is not transmittable to humans. However, humans can transmit it to their own dog simply by stepping in contaminated feces and transporting it on their shoes. It is a highly contagious viral illness in dogs.

Is dog waste a good fertilizer?

No! The health hazards associated with dog waste are greater than any potential benefits from its fertilizer value.



Can I compost the dog waste?

No! Your compost pile doesn't get hot enough to kill disease-causing organisms in the dog waste, and they might end up in your garden.

What can I do to make a difference?

Dog waste may not be the largest or most toxic pollutant in our streams, but little by little it adds up. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has dog waste listed as a nonpoint source contaminant along with oil, grease, herbicides and pesticides. (EPA-841-F-04-005)

Nonpoint source contaminants are pollutants that originate from numerous small sources over a large area of the landscape.

Dog ownership involves a lot of responsibility. But, the task of cleaning up after “Fido” can be as simple and painless as taking a plastic bag or pooper scooper along on your next walk or outdoor adventure with your pooch. The tricky part is deciding what is the best way to properly dispose of the dog waste after you have picked up after your pet. Although no option for disposal is perfect, there are a few choices:

1. Put it in the trash. This is probably the easiest to do. Put the waste in a securely closed bag and deposit it in the trash. Many of our local trailheads have doggie waste bag stations making it easy to take a couple with you at the beginning of your hike and then you can deposit the bag in a trash receptacle back at the trailhead. Leaving the bagged waste by the side of the trail does not solve the problem.



2. Bury it in the yard. Microorganisms in the top layer of soil break down the waste and release nutrients to fertilize nearby plants. Dig a hole or trench that is:



- at least 5 inches deep;
- away from vegetable gardens (do not compost it);
- away from any stream, irrigation ditch or well.

3. Flush it down the toilet. If you utilize city services, the water from your toilet goes to a sewage treatment plant that removes some pollutants before the water reaches a stream or the groundwater. If you are on a septic system, this option is discouraged.

By doing our part to keep dog waste off our trails and out of our local streams, we can improve water quality and help to protect human and pet health from unnecessary infections and disease.