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YOU ARE WHAT YOU . . . DRINK?

What you put down your storm drains can come back to you!

NORTHWEST OHIO, March 2005 – “All drains lead to the ocean.” Ask any preschooler who’s seen Disney/Pixar’s *Finding Nemo*, and they’ll tell you that’s how Nemo made it out of the fish tank and home to his dad. Change “ocean” to “lake,” and that phrase will hold true here in Northwest Ohio. That’s why what you put down your storm drains is so critical – because it all ends up in the lake. But a few simple changes in how you use your storm drains and ditches can keep you safe, save you time and money, and help protect our waterways.

Through a collaborative partnership, the *Give Water a Hand* program is educating residents of Northwest Ohio about easy, money saving ways – including the proper use and protection of storm drains and ditches – to conserve water and protect our streams, rivers and lakes. “Clean water benefits plants, wildlife and all who live, work and play in this area,” says Kurt Erichsen, *Give Water a Hand* Project Manager.

Anything – trash, leaves, grass, pet wastes, antifreeze – that is carried by rainfall, snowmelt or sprinklers as it flows over our streets and yards ends up in our local waterways and eventually in Lake Erie. While the wastewater in our homes is treated by either a septic or wastewater treatment system, runoff water entering the storm drains flows directly to the nearest river, stream or ditch untreated. It can harm the creatures living in and around the waterway, can make for hazardous swimming and boating conditions, and even puts our drinking water at risk.

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Give Water a Hand is a cooperative education effort among the following:

Maumee RAP (419-241-9155)
Toledo Metropolitan Area Council
of Governments (419-241-9155)
Lucas County (419-213-4500)
City of Northwood (419-693-9327)
City of Oregon (419-698-7047)

Village of Haskins (419-823-1911)
Village of Holland (419-865-7104)
Village of Millbury (419-836-9671)
Village of Ottawa Hills (419-536-1111)
Village of Waterville (419-878-8100)
Village of Whitehouse (419-877-5383)

Township of Jerusalem (419-836-8921)
Township of Monclova (419-865-7862)
Township of Spencer (419-865-2883)
Township of Springfield (419-865-0239)
Township of Sylvania (419-882-0031)
Township of Washington (419-726-6621)

Township of Waterville (419-878-5176)
Ohio Environmental Education Fund
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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Here are some simple things to remember to keep our water clean:

- Clean up after your pet! Pick up the waste and dispose of it in the toilet, so that it may be properly treated. Leaving it on the ground increases the risk of harmful bacteria and nutrients washing into the nearest storm drain.
- Maintain your car so that it will not leak oil, antifreeze, gasoline or other fluids. These pollutants move with rainwater or snowmelt to the nearest storm drain or ditch.
- Leaves and grass clippings should never be raked or dumped into storm drains, street gutters or ditches. They decay in the water, which reduces the oxygen available to fish and wildlife when the water enters the nearest river or stream.
- If you dig it up, cover it! Immediately seed, sod or mulch after completing a construction project to prevent runoff. Not only can sediment negatively affect the waterways, it can also affect your wallet by causing flood damage and reduced property values.

Protecting our storm drains is everyone's responsibility. Some ways to help include:

- Participate in a Storm Drain Stenciling Campaign, to help people understand how misuse of our storm drains can harm our waterways.
- Report any dumping into storm drains to the local county Health Department.
- Get involved in local environmental activities as a member or volunteer.

We can all do our part to leave a legacy of clean water for future generations.

The *Give Water a Hand: You Can Make a Difference* campaign is a cooperative effort focused on educating residents of Northwest Ohio about storm water and other water quality issues. The average citizen does affect water quality and can make a positive difference. The Maumee RAP (Remedial Action Plan) and Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) are partnering with local cities, villages and townships to educate the region about improving water quality and managing water quantity.

For more information about the *Give Water a Hand* program, please call 419-241-9155 or visit us at www.MaumeeRAP.org.

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