

Watershed Happenings

💧 *Thank you* to all of those who were able to attend our watershed meeting at the South McLean Soil Conservation District on March 25th. It was great to see how many of you are passionate about water issues. While we cannot address every water related problem that watershed residents have, there are still plenty of water quality issues that we can help you with. We look forward to working with each of you in the near future!

💧 We are proud to have been featured in four area newspapers. The article, entitled '*Unfit for Recreational Use?*' provided a great introduction to our project and summarized some of the water quality issues that got us here. Keep an eye on your local newspaper as we share watershed developments in the coming weeks, months, and years.

Turtle Creek Watershed Project
South McLean Soil Conservation District
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Turtle Creek Watershed Project



Working with producers and land owners to restore our streams and lakes to their healthy natural conditions.

This Month's Mailer:

- ◆ Land use in our watershed.
- ◆ A few of the many things we can help you do.
- ◆ Thanks for a successful meeting!

To Learn More:

- ◆ Read through this pamphlet.
- ◆ Visit our website.
- ◆ Call, visit, or email our Watershed Coordinator at the South McLean Soil Conservation District.

701-448-2474

24 2nd Ave E. in Turtle Lake

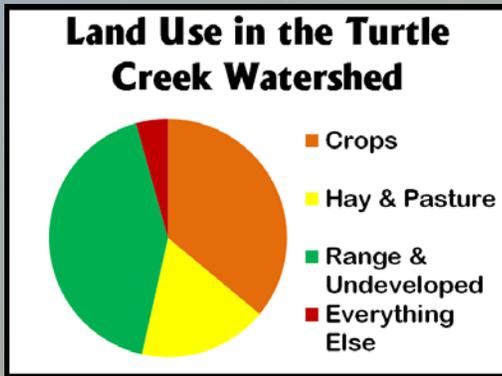
<https://sites.google.com/site/turtlecreekwatershed>

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Don't hesitate to contact us!

How Can I Help?

Why are we focusing on producers?



Let me state the obvious: There are a lot of farmers and ranchers in our neck of the woods. The sheer abundance of crop and livestock operations in the watershed means that our only shot at solving our water quality problem is to focus on agricultural solutions.

Cover Crops

What's the Problem?

If you are a crop producer, the time between harvest and planting can be a challenging time for nearby waters. During this time there is no vegetation to help water infiltrate the soil on crop fields. This results in greater erosion and lesser nutrient filtration from roots and soil biota because less water enters the soil to begin with.

What Can I Do?

Recently, many crop producers have begun planting winter-hardy cover crops after harvest. In addition to helping with the infiltration problem, cover crops are known to benefit the soil by supporting healthy soil ecosystems and maintaining healthy soil chemistry. Help protect our watershed by doing what you do best: growing!

Off-Stream Watering

What's the Problem?

Left to their own devices, cattle tend to use the same water they drink from as a restroom. For obvious reasons, this can have a negative effect on the health of your livestock. It also introduces E.coli, Nitrogen, and Phosphorus to our surface waters.

Unmanaged cattle also have a negative effect on riparian vegetation; they have a tendency to loiter near streams. Day in and day out, they compact the soil near streams and overgraze the same riparian vegetation that helps stabilize stream banks and stop pollutants from reaching the stream.

What Can I Do?

A watering tank coupled with a pump and a pipeline to the stream can provide a cleaner, healthier watering source for livestock. It is recommended that fencing is used to manage livestock access to the stream, but the necessity for this step may vary depending on your property; cattle will typically drink from the freshest water source available when given the option and you may find that they stop spending so much time in the crick all by themselves.

Many livestock producers have reported much improved riparian zone conditions after adopting a grazing management system. The reason for this is simple; if cattle aren't allowed to continuously gather in the same place, soil compaction is limited, riparian vegetation is not overgrazed, and there is some evidence that this type of light disturbance may actually be beneficial to the ecosystem.

Riparian Buffers & Grassed Waterways

What's the Problem?

Do you know how when you walk up close to a stream there are all kinds of plants that you don't find when you're a bit further away? Known as riparian species, there are lots of plants that thrive and survive only near streams. In addition to supporting biodiversity, a healthy riparian zone is absolutely critical to water quality. Roots of these plants act as pathways for runoff to go into the ground, at which point any eroded soil is deposited before entering the stream and nutrients may be taken up by roots. Other benefits include bank stabilization, in-stream erosion control, and temperature regulation of stream water. It is difficult to overstate the importance of healthy riparian ecosystems in improving and maintaining the health of surface waters.

What Can I Do?

Keep native vegetation growing within a short distance of your stream undisturbed where possible. In a lot of places native grasses, trees, and other plants will need to be re-established through plantings. A buffer extending at least 100 feet from the stream is generally optimal. If 100 feet isn't practical smaller buffers can still do wonders for water quality and are very strongly encouraged.