Personal water use can affect local water quality and what can be done to improve personal water use habits.

Do you or your family. . .

1. Leave the tap water running as you brush your teeth?

The bathroom is where the biggest savings in personal water use can be gained. Two-thirds of the water used in the average home is used in the bathroom. Running the faucet while brushing your teeth uses approximately 10 gallons of water. Instead, wet your toothbrush at the start and then rinse it once or twice through the process. This will only use about a half a gallon of water so you will save over 9 gallons of water!

2. Turn the lawn sprinkler on during the middle of the day?

By watering in the middle of the day when the sun is at peak temperature, a greater percentage of the water evaporates before it can be absorbed. Water during the cool parts of the day to keep your lawn from “burning” in the heat. To prevent lawn fungus, don’t water at night. Watering in the early morning or evening is best. During dry periods, let the grass clippings stay on the lawn to help retain moisture.

3. Throw used containers of paint, solvents, or harsh cleansers in the trash?

Many products found in the home can pose a health or environmental hazard if they aren’t disposed of properly. Anything labeled as toxic, flammable, corrosive, reactive, infectious, or radioactive can threaten family health and safety. According to national estimates, each home contains from three to eight gallons of hazardous materials in kitchens, bathrooms, garages, and basements. Throwing them in the garbage can threaten sanitation workers who can be injured or poisoned by acids, fires, and explosions. Hazardous wastes that reach our landfills can leach into the soil, pollute water, and threaten all living things. Read the product label carefully to determine the best method of disposal.

4. Empty leftover paint, solvents, or cleansers into the kitchen sink or down storm drains?

Substances poured into household drains and toilets go to the sewage treatment plant where they are cleaned. However, the water is eventually discharged to the Willamette river where it can impact fish and wildlife if the toxics overload the system. The sanitary system was built to handle sanitary wastes, not hazardous wastes. Even worse, if these products are poured down storm drains, they flow directly to our waterways. As alternative options, plan your project carefully and buy only what you need. If you do have products left over, give them to friends, neighbors, or charitable institutions to use. Allow small amounts of paint to harden in their original containers, then wrap in newspaper and dispose in the trash. It’s O.K. to rinse brushes and rollers from some types of paints in an indoor sink, but never pour paints, solvents or cleansers down the drain. Check product labels carefully for disposal options.

5. Run the washing machine or dishwasher with small loads?

In the kitchen, the largest water consumer is the dishwasher — about 12 gallons per run. It’s best to make sure your dishwasher is fully loaded before you turn it on, because you’ll use 12 gallons whether you’re washing a 10-piece dinner setting or a few cups. Shorter cycles are another way to conserve water. Scrape your dishes into the trash before loading; rinsing is not necessary for most dishwashers. If you are the dish washer, don’t run the water while doing the dishes. Fill a sink with soapy water, wash

the dishes and set them on the counter. When you're done with the soapy water, drain the sink and refill it with clean water for rinsing.

6. Water your lawn frequently during the summer to achieve a lush cover?

Water only when the grass or plants show signs of needing water. If you can see your footsteps when you walk across your lawn, it's time to water. Water deeply, slowly and infrequently to develop a strong root system. Healthy lawns resist disease, require less herbicide and pesticide, and stand up to wear. In combination with rain and sprinkling, give your lawn about one inch of water per week. Water an additional half inch to one inch during dry periods.

7. Use lots of fertilizers and lawn feeder to help the lawn recover from winter?

Before you put toxic chemicals into your daily living space, consider whether they're needed. Have your soil tested to determine what, if any, amendments should be added. Plan your landscape with environmental health in mind, reducing the area that is heavily maintained. Limit the use of toxic or hazardous products. Keep the products away from storm drains, lakes, and streams.

8. Clean the driveway, sidewalk or curbside by hosing it with water?

As well as wasting water, hosing collects the surface pollutants on the driveway, sidewalk, or curbside and washes them directly into the storm drain where they flow untreated into our creeks and rivers. Use a broom to sweep up the debris and dispose of it in the trash.

9. Leave the shower running to heat up the bathroom?

Run the water only as long as it takes to get it warm and then get in quickly. Use an energy efficient showerhead to make your hot water go a long way. This not only save water, but the cost of heating it. For example, a five-minute shower using a regular showerhead uses 30 gallons of water. That same shower using an energy efficient showerhead uses only 12.5 gallons. Energy efficient showerheads are available at many local stores. They can help save thousands of gallons of water each year!

10. Wait to repair a dripping faucet until it turns into a steady leak?

A dripping faucet can add up to gallons of wasted water every week. The repair may be as simple as replacing a worn washer or gasket. Your nearby hardware store sells repair parts for most makes and models and has staff to assist you in choosing the right part. You may also find a "how to" sheet to help the process as well. If the repairs are more extensive, consider calling a friend or a plumber.

11. Use the toilet to dispose of ordinary waste around the house?

Every time a toilet is flushed, about seven gallons of water go into the sanitary sewer system and on to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. To cut down on this waste, don't use the toilet as a trash can (for tissues, gum wrappers, cigarette butts, etc.). Reduce the amount of water per flush through two options: 1) Replace your conventional toilet with a water efficient "low flow" model which uses only 1.6 gallons of water per flush; or 2) Reduce the amount of water your conventional toilet uses by filling plastic containers with water, seal, and place in the tank of your toilet. You'll save about four gallons of water per day.

12. Wash the car every weekend in the summer?

A less frequent schedule would save gallons of water. When washing your car, use a bucket for soapy water and use the hose only for rinsing. Use a shutoff trigger sprayer to control the water flow. Running the hose in the driveway doesn't get the car any

cleaner. Park the car on your lawn or gravel driveway so the ground can filter out the soap and pollutants. Don't let the soapy water run off into the street where it flows into storm drains and waterways. Consider using only water and a sponge to clean the car without soap. Or, take the car to a commercial car wash where the soapy water drains to the Wastewater Treatment Plant rather than the stormdrain system.

13. Change your oil in the street or use storm drains to dispose of used oil?

When you dump oil (or anything else) into the storm drains, it goes directly into creeks and wetlands, and eventually ends up in the Willamette River or Fern Ridge Reservoir. If you change your oil at home, use a tarp under your work surface to catch drips and spills. Collect the oil and drain the oil filter into a sealable, non-breakable container that is clearly marked and set it out for pickup by your waste hauler. Check with your waste hauler for more information about quantity, limits and pick-up frequency.

14. Sweep lawn trimmings into the curb or down storm drains or toss into creeks or ditches?

When you sweep lawn trimmings into the storm drain, surface pollutants or chemicals are swept along with them. All of these pollutants are carried with stormwater directly into our local waterways where they harm fish and wildlife. When dumped into creeks, lawn debris (perhaps with fertilizers and pesticides still attached) begin to decompose. The decomposition process requires oxygen — robbing it from the creek where fish and plants need oxygen to breathe. Left in a ditch, the trimmings clog the water flow and could cause flooding. Avoid these problems by collecting the lawn clippings for your compost pile or allowing the fine clippings to remain on the lawn to retain moisture and reduce watering costs.

15. Use a garbage disposal to get rid of food scraps?

While grinding up small amounts of food waste is the purpose of a garbage disposal, avoid using it as a trash can. The amount of water required to flush the materials adds up quickly. Scrape dishes into the trash rather than down the drain and save leftovers to make your grocery dollars go further. You may also want to set up a simple compost pile or worm bin using food scraps.