

Situation #1

Juan lives over in this house in Harlingen. He drives his car that is leaking oil to work in McAllen, and then drives home again later that day. He does this every day of the week.

Solutions

Maintain your car; fix any leaks. Limit driving, if possible, if you can not maintain your car or take public transportation. Use environmentally safe windshield washer fluid that is low in phosphates.

Situation #2

Clay is working on building new homes and he has two loads of dirt dumped at the work site near McAllen for example. He doesn't block the surrounding storm drains or put up a silt fence or berm around his work site to keep the dirt from running off of the site and down the drains and into the nearby creek.

Solutions

To prevent erosion and movement of dirt/soil from construction sites, install some type of containments like a silt fence, strawbale berm, or compost sock. Clean up any chemicals or trash on the construction site to avoid unnecessary runoff during possible storms.

Situation #3

Peggy the painter just finished a job painting the gym floor at the middle school. Because she is in a hurry to get to her next job, she does not want to take time to dispose of the paint correctly. So, before she leaves to her next site, she dumps the bucket of paint and a can of paint thinner into the street.

Solutions

To prevent paint and other chemicals from entering storm drains and waterways, take all chemicals used to wash buckets and brushes as well as any unused paints and chemicals to a proper recycling and disposal facility. Your city may have a facility or if no facility exists, hazardous waste collection events are scheduled regularly locally to handle these materials.

Situation #4

The home owners in this neighborhood are competing with each other for the greenest and prettiest lawn. Mike decides to spread plant food (fertilizer), but he doesn't read the instructions and puts out too much plant food in his yard.

Solutions

To keep your lawn from being a source of fertilizer (nutrient) pollution, limit the amount of chemicals and nutrients applied to your lawn.

If you buy inorganic fertilizers from your local hardware and garden store, follow directions and apply only the amount specified. Every fertilizer is different in terms of nutrient content and availability so check the label to see how much of each nutrient the fertilizer contains and buy accordingly. More is not better and timing is another factor. Another option is to use compost made from recycled yard and food wastes; make your own or buy from a local distributor like the City of McAllen or local garden stores.

Do not apply any soil amendment just before a big rain as you can lose the nutrients and chemicals in runoff from your yard. **The best advice is to regularly (once a year or every other year) obtain a soil test to determine the exact nutrient and other needs of your yard.**

Situation #5

There is a summer festival in the park. About 2,000 people attend and buy a lot of popcorn, sodas, and cotton candy. Thinking the city workers will pick up the trash, most folks just toss their wrappers and cans on the ground. That night a huge rainstorm moves through.

Solutions

Do not throw trash of any kind on the ground. Better yet, pick up trash even if it is not yours. Remember, cigarettes buds are trash also. Do not tolerate littering! Report illegal trash dumpers to your local sheriff's department.

Situation #6

Farmer Joe lives right outside the city. In the winter time, he doesn't use his fields to grow crops. Without plants to cover the field, the loose soil is carried away by wind and water into the nearby stream.

Solutions

Support agricultural best management practices that prevent soil and nutrients from running off the fields. Some examples of best management practices include: residue management that prevents soil erosion from wind and water; soil testing to determine actual fertilizer needs of the crop; field leveling that keeps irrigation water on the field rather than allowing it to carry residue and soil off of the field.

Situation #7

Many of the families that live here have dogs. These families like to take their dogs out for walks around the neighborhood. When the dogs poop, the families don't pick up after them and instead leave the poop on the ground.

Solutions

To prevent this type of pollution, pick up your pet's poop and throw it away in a trash can. To collect the waste, take a plastic bag with you on your pet's walks or anytime you take your pet out in public.

Situation #8

John's neighbor doesn't take care of his septic system properly. When flooding occurs the nutrients and waste from the septic tank seep into the groundwater.

Solutions

First of all, ensure your septic tank and drain field is not too close to a stream or drainage ditch. Also, maintain your septic system properly and have it regularly checked.

Situation #9

Mr. Jones owns a resort near the Arroyo Colorado. He wants to have a beautiful lawn for his guests, so he uses fertilizer (“plant food”) and other chemicals on the grass. But, Mr. Jones didn’t read the directions and he put the fertilizer on the grass when it didn’t need any food so instead of being used by the grass, the fertilizer just stayed on the ground.

Solutions

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