

## Ripple Effect #90

### **Getting Back to the Basics of H<sub>2</sub>O**

Did you know that almost no water is as pure as the “H<sub>2</sub>O” it is made of – two hydrogen atoms bonded to one oxygen atom?

Well, that’s a fact. Pollutants attach themselves to water molecules, adding unwanted elements to the ‘pure’ H<sub>2</sub>O. These pollutants can range from relatively harmless to life threatening.

What is important here are not the pollutants themselves but their sources. Most of the sources of pollutants are parts of our daily lives – litter, sewage, chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides, household cleaners, wastewater, litter, oil, soil particles, trash (including food put into waste disposals), etc. In other words, a large part of water pollution happens because of things we do every day.

When we add up all of that trash and sewage, chemicals, litter and oil and soil erosion – and then factor in rain waters washing across yards and fields and into water bodies – our individual ‘small’ actions turn into one big problem with the quality of our water in the Red River Basin.

Problem is we have no single practice or person to point to as the culprit – that’s the reason for the term, ‘nonpoint’ pollution. It is ALL of us polluting a little at a time -- and it takes ALL of us to stop the problem.

So what can we do? Here’s a start:

- We can use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly, following directions and recommendations. If we are applying these on a large basis, we can use soil and plant sampling and new smart technologies for placement.
- In our yards, we can leave a foot or two between where we apply pesticides and fertilizers and the roadway or sidewalk. In our fields, we can use grass strips in water runoff areas to absorb extra chemicals and reduce soil erosion.
- We can dispose of oils or oil spills in ways that keep them out of our storm sewers or from washing into our waterways.

- We can collect pet waste and dispose of it in the garbage; if we have livestock, we can use disposal systems that prevent waste from entering waterways.

It is only as a result of all of our positive actions working together that the streams, rivers and lakes here in the Basin can get back to the basics of H<sub>2</sub>O!

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at [www.redriverbasincommission.org](http://www.redriverbasincommission.org).

