

# Utah Water Week Message: Help Keep Utah's Water Clean

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Utah Water Week

runs from May 7- 13, and is a perfect time of year for each of us to consider the importance of water in our lives. In a dry state like Utah, where irrigation is important for maintaining our crops, gardens and lawns, we tend to focus on how much water we have. It's easy to forget that the quality of this water will actually determine how (or if) we can use it. We all value clean water to drink and use around the home, but those aren't the only reasons we need clean water. Swimming in our lakes and reservoirs is only safe if the water is free of pathogens. Irrigation water with high salt concentrations is unusable. Fish and other aquatic life are the most dependent on clean water, needing water that is the right temperature, has sufficient dissolved oxygen and is free of toxins and other pollutants.

We've made great progress in this country in reducing water pollution - particularly in treating municipal and industrial waste. We're still improving those treatment methods but the biggest problems these days are water pollutants that don't come from a single source. Fertilizers, pesticides, personal care products, and motor oil are just a few examples of substances that can cause serious harm when they reach our waters. Excess fertilizers that are washed into our lakes contribute to floating rafts of harmful algae, green cloudy water, and low oxygen levels.

A single quart of motor oil can pollute 250,000 gallons of water. Improper disposal of medicines and personal care products are literally medicating our waters.

It's always cheaper and easier to prevent water pollution than to clean up dirty water. Luckily, there's a lot of pretty simple and straightforward actions we can all take to help keep our waters clean. In fact, a lot of Utahns are already helping out. Homeowners are using more environmentally-friendly products and are composting their kitchen waste rather than sending it down the garbage disposal to a WWTP or a septic system. Gardeners and farmers are taking care to use no more fertilizer than their plants need and are implementing new irrigation methods that reduce runoff into streams and lakes. Pet owners are picking up after their pets and disposing of the waste properly. Pharmacies are partnering with our municipal offices so we can return medicines for proper disposal rather than dumping them down the drain. Municipalities are keeping their roads clean and finding innovative ways to capture and treat storm water. Farmers are reducing polluted runoff from animal operations, and across the state landowners and land managers are restoring streamside vegetation that helps intercept pollutants

This [water week](#), take a look around you and think of ways you can help keep our water pollutant-free. Together, our small actions will have big impacts on keeping our water clean.

For more ideas, visit our website at <http://extension.usu.edu/waterquality>.

Remember.....water is life and quality matters.