

# What Can You Do to Protect Local Waterways?

## Flush Responsibly!

Don't pour household products such as cleansers, beauty products, medicine, auto fluids, paint, and lawn care products down the drain. Properly dispose of them at your local household hazardous waste facility.

Wastewater treatment facilities are designed to treat organic materials, not hazardous chemicals. If you pour hazardous chemicals down the drain, they might end up in your local rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

Dispose of excess household grease (meat fats, lard, cooking oil, shortening, butter and margarine, etc.) diapers, condoms, and personal hygiene products in the garbage can.

These materials can clog pipes, and could cause raw sewage to overflow in your home or yard, or in public areas. Overflows often occur during periods of high rainfall or snowmelt and can result in basement backups, overflows at manholes, or discharges directly to rivers, lakes, and coastal waters.

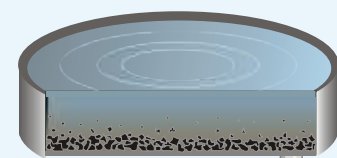
Don't pour used motor oil down the drain. Used motor oil can diminish the effectiveness of the treatment process, and might allow contaminants to be discharged. The contaminants could pollute local waterways or harm aquatic life.

If you're a dark room hobbyist, dispose of spent fixer, developer, and other photographic chemicals in separate containers and transport them to a hazardous waste facility.

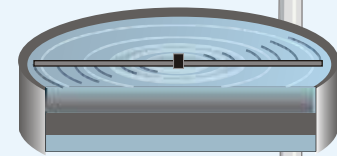
Like household hazardous wastes and used motor oil, photographic chemicals can interfere with the wastewater treatment process and could result in pollutants being discharged into local waterways.

## Wastewater Treatment 101

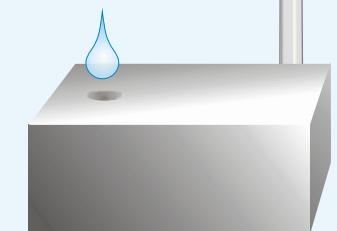
- Many communities have a wastewater treatment plant that incorporates a series of processes to remove pollutants from water used in homes, small businesses, industries, and other facilities. All wastewater first goes through the primary treatment process, which involves screening and settling out large particles.
- The wastewater then moves on to the secondary treatment process, during which organic matter is removed by allowing bacteria to break down the pollutants. The treated wastewater is then usually disinfected with chlorine to remove the remaining bacteria.
- Some communities go one step further and put the wastewater through an advanced treatment process to reduce the level of pollutants of special concern to the local waterbody, such as nitrogen or phosphorus. After this step, the treated water finally flows through pipes back to a local water body.



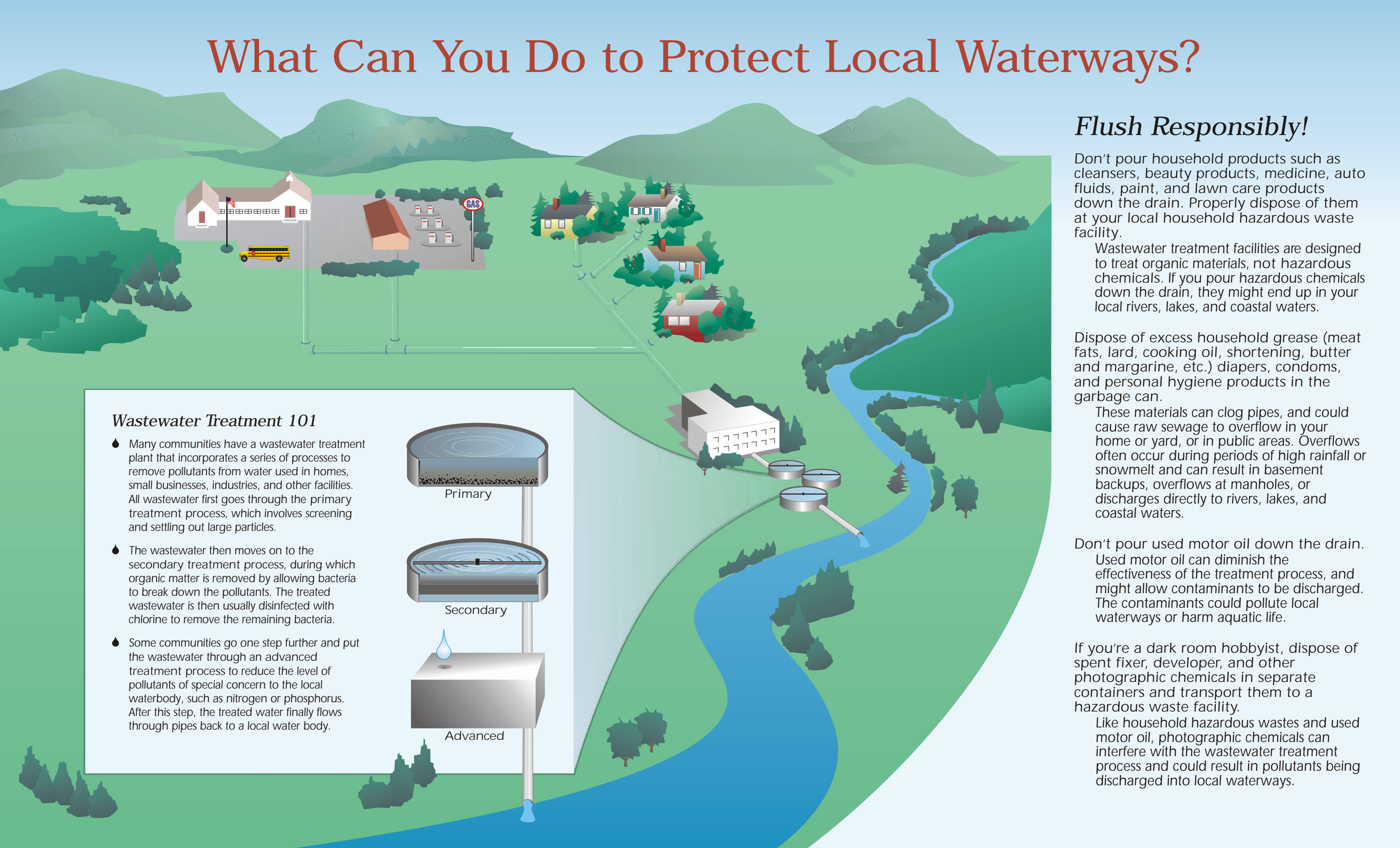
Primary



Secondary



Advanced





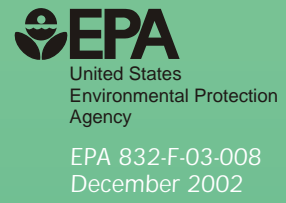
## Not Down My Drain!

- X cleaners
- X beauty products
- X medicine
- X auto fluids
- X paint
- X lawn care products
- X grease
- X diapers
- X condoms
- X feminine hygiene products
- X motor oil
- X photographic chemicals

# Where Does All the Dirty Water Go?



For more information on the wastewater treatment process, please contact your local health or public works department. Please visit [www.epa.gov/owm](http://www.epa.gov/owm) for more information on wastewater treatment.



## Protect the Environment in Our Community

### What You Flush or Pour Down Your Drain Affects the Rivers, Lakes, and Coastal Waters in Our Community

Where does the water go after you flush the toilet or drain the sinks in your home?

When the wastewater flushed from your toilet or drained from your household sinks, washing machine, or dishwasher leaves your home, it flows through your community's sanitary sewer system to a wastewater treatment facility. The wastewater from homes, along with wastewater from businesses, industries, and other facilities, is treated by a variety of processes (see inside for more information) to reduce or remove pollutants.

What happens to the treated water when it leaves the wastewater treatment plant? The treated wastewater is released into local waterways where its used again for any number of purposes, such as supplying drinking water, irrigating crops, and sustaining aquatic life.