



https://www.herald-palladium.com/news/local/keep-it-blue-water-survey-online/article_e0d42699-79e9-52db-970a-4ee326d1a1de.html

TOP STORY

'Keep It Blue' water survey online

By JOHN MATUSZAK - HP Staff Writer Jun 17, 2019 Updated Jun 17, 2019

BENTON HARBOR — What do you know about water?

That's what the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission wants to learn through its "Keep It Blue" online survey for residents in Berrien and Cass counties, that will assess the community's knowledge and level of concern with local water quality issues.

The survey only takes five to seven minutes to complete and can be found at www.letskeepitblue.org. There is a link on the St. Joseph city website, www.sjcity.com.

The survey asks participants about the quality of water in the lakes, rivers and streams where they live, and how they think they affect those bodies of water.

Some questions test residents' knowledge, asking where they think storm water goes, and the biggest contributors to water pollution (hint below). It asks about the best practices to washing a car and getting rid of household waste and grass clippings.

Respondents can include the water-related issues that are of most concern to them.

The survey is part of the Storm Water Public Education Plan for southwest Michigan. The goal of the project is to educate the public about water quality issues and the measures that can be taken to reduce pollution. The land in Berrien and Cass counties is either within the lower St. Joseph watershed, Galien watershed or has drainage flowing directly into Lake Michigan.

More than 60 percent of polluted runoff, which flows into local streams, rivers, and lakes, begins at home due to everyday activities associated with lawn and pet care, septic systems, infrastructure development, and other general auto and home maintenance actions.

Michigan plays an important role, as it is adjacent to 20 percent of the world's fresh water.

The proper disposal of trash, auto oil and fluids, lawn byproduct such as pesticides/herbicides and fertilizer as well as grass clippings, animal wastes, and home cleaning products can assist in reducing pollution. Properly maintaining septic systems and employing green infrastructure techniques such as rain gardens and rain barrels can also help reduce polluted runoff into local streams, rivers and lakes.

The goal of the survey is to assess change in community behavior and awareness concerning local water quality issues. This information will then be available to use in adjusting the goals and practices of PEP to more effectively reach and educate residents of southwest Michigan about water resources and their protection.

Spills, environmental emergencies, and illegal dumping can be reported by calling the 24/7 hotline at 800-292-4706.

Information is at www.swmpc.org/keepitblue.asp and www.swmpc.org/water.asp, including tips for maintaining water quality.

Contact: jmatuszak@TheHP.com, 932-0360, Twitter: [@HPMatuszak](https://twitter.com/HPMatuszak)