

## **STRATEGIES AND KEY ELEMENTS OF A WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM**

Protecting our fragile watersheds is a priority need for every citizen and every community. The greenbelts and floodplains, streams and waterways, riparian lands and wetlands: all are unique and irreplaceable. These are the important assets that a watershed protection program is designed to preserve and safeguard. Our quality of life and safe drinking water for our families - - all depend on being successful in watershed protection.

Strategies (the tools) for a successful Watershed Protection Program can be quite varied, but typically will include many of the following measures and activities:

### **1. STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING WATERSHEDS**

- Preservation of existing natural areas, including flood plains and riparian lands.
- Enforcement of erosion control measures at construction sites.
- Establishing guidelines for use of fertilizers and chemicals in landscaped areas, to minimize runoff.
- Use of organic practices for landscape and gardening activities.
- Recycle yard clippings into organic compost.
- Improving native vegetation in buffer zones between waterways and developed areas.
- Using floodplains for parks and open space, for habitat and for utility corridors or trail systems.
- Use of voluntary conservation easements to acquire property rights to valuable greenbelt land, enabling the preservation of these resources for future generations.
- Conversion of braided streams and gravel pits to wetlands or greenbelts.
- Using water assets and resources for community recreation, for educational purposes, and to enhance quality of life.
- Cooperation and collaboration between communities who jointly share water resource assets such as creeks and other elements of the common watershed.
- Promoting public education and watershed awareness programs.
- Installation of Watershed Awareness Signs in public places and along roadways.

## 2. KEY ELEMENTS FOR A WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM

- Establishing Greenbelts. A coordinated Watershed Protection Program by the communities located in the Lewisville/Grapevine Lake watershed will help preserve and protect existing waterways, greenbelts, floodplains, streams, riparian lands and wetlands. These assets perform the vital function of filtering out pollutants such as pesticides and fertilizers and other harmful chemicals from entering the streams and waterways, thereby helping safeguard the quality of water entering water supply lakes.
- Protecting Water Quality. We all live in a watershed, the area around our neighborhood or community from which rainwater drains to a common waterway. A watershed includes yards, roadways, parks, construction sites, streams, flood plains, etc.
  - A. Each person's individual actions in the watershed directly affect the valuable downstream water resources. Everyday activities around homes and businesses have an impact - - either good or bad - - on the watershed.
  - B. Trash left in the watershed is a common problem - - both a pollutant to the water and an eyesore to the neighborhood. Community groups often organize volunteers to help clean up local waterways.
  - C. Overuse or improper use of fertilizer, pesticides and other chemicals in landscape activities is a significant source of pollutants that find their way into water resources.

Therefore, key strategies to protect water quality include the development of guidelines to educate the public about such pollutants, and encouraging the use of organic practices in gardening and landscapes. A strong educational program in schools and for the public about protecting watersheds and water quality is vital. A typical theme for public information can be: "Do you know your watershed address?"

- Water Conservation. Water is a precious resource for life. In planning for adequate future water supplies, conservation of existing resources at home and at work is a first step. Communities working together, offering public information programs concerning earth-friendly landscape techniques and irrigation practices can be a major strategy for water conservation. As a double benefit, the strategies that promote water conservation also tend to protect the quality of water resources. For example, the Texas Smartscape program encourages the use of organic techniques for landscaped areas (requiring less fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals) to help conserve water, and to protect water quality, also.
- Collection of Household Hazardous Waste. Proper disposal of Household Hazardous Waste helps protect the watershed and our drinking water resources. Many typical household products such as solvents, pharmaceuticals, cleaning supplies, batteries, paint, pesticides and weed killer pose potential hazards to our drinking water sources. Working with the communities in the watershed, Upper Trinity sponsors a program to safely collect and dispose of such leftover hazardous materials from households.
- Education/Public Awareness. Watercourses extend into and through each community in the watershed - - knitting neighborhoods and communities together with a shared environmental resource. Strong public education, public awareness and outreach programs must play a major role in the success of water quality preservation and protection measures.