

Your guide to ensure water stays clean in your neighborhood, town, and local waterways.



HOW TO SPOT & REPORT POLLUTION



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+ **emergency numbers**

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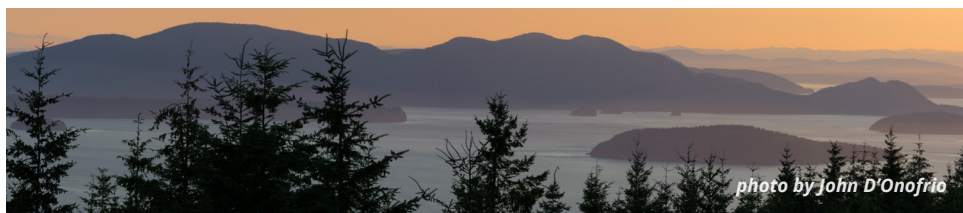
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Dear volunteer,

Thank you for taking initiative to keep pollution out of your local waters — and the whole Salish Sea.

Not exactly sure what pollution looks like? No problem! We are here to help you learn how to recognize and report it anywhere. A drop of gasoline, a plastic bag, a pile of exposed dirt, or even a few soap bubbles may not seem particularly harmful, but these pollutants can find their way to our creeks, rivers, and oceans and accumulate over time. Most contaminants found in the oceans originated on land. Now, endangered resident orcas are so overloaded with toxic chemicals they are struggling to survive.

Finding pollution can be strategic or accidental; it just takes an observant and curious person to recognize and detect pollution. You might spot pollution while you're out walking your dog, or you may choose to actively search out pollution by visiting known construction sites or strategic shorelines. Searching for pollution after a storm event can be particularly fruitful. You may spot pollution in a car, on foot, or even by boat.

Regardless of your mission or mode of transportation, **there are a few things to consider.**

- **Your personal safety is more important than pollution.** Consider working with a partner and don't touch anything that could be hazardous. Avoid hostile situations.
- Waterways are public property, but shorelines including beaches may be private. **Don't trespass on private property.**
- Understand your role to observe, document, and report. It's not worth it to be confrontational.

Sincerely,

Kirsten McDade, Pollution Prevention Specialist at RE Sources

KirstenM@re-sources.org

Eleanor Hines, North Sound Baykeeper at RE Sources

EleanorH@re-sources.org

How to report pollution:

Water Reporter app

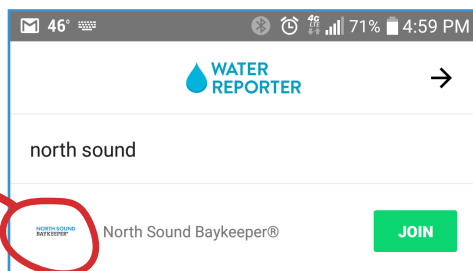


Step 1. Download and open the app, and follow the prompts to create your account.



Step 2. Find the North Sound Baykeeper campaign and click Join button.

**NORTH SOUND
BAYKEEPER®**



Step 3. You're ready to report! Click the blue plus button to create a report, type details, add photos, and more.

Take photos of the pollution!

When in doubt, report it!

Step 4. Use hashtags to help us sort reports!

#pollution

#trash

#sediment

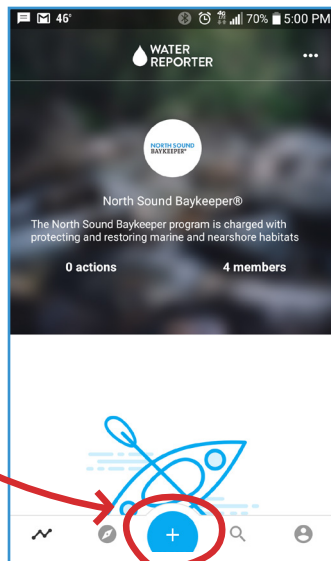
#stormdrain

#foam

#algae

#manure

#whatisthis if you aren't sure if something is a pollutant!



Other ways to report pollution

If the Water Reporter app doesn't work for you, here are alternative ways to report:

Take photos of the pollution! When in doubt, report it!

Who to contact if the pollution appears serious:

For oil spills: **(800) OILS-911**

For other pollutants: Ecology Northwest Regional office **(425) 649-7000**

Call or text the RE Sources Pollution Hotline at **(360) 220-0556**.

Kirsten McDade, Pollution Prevention Specialist, monitors the Hotline and the Water Reporter app, M-F during business hours.

You can also email Kirsten at kirstenm@re-sources.org.

Report an incident online to Ecology:

ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Get-involved/Report-an-environmental-issue/NWRO-issue-reporting-form

Other resources by location

Statewide

Hazardous Materials Spills: 911

Marine Mammal Stranding: (800) 853-1964

Derelict Fishing Debris: (800) 477-6224

Whatcom

Bellingham's Stormwater Hotline: (360) 778-7979

Port of Bellingham Marinas (includes Blaine): (360) 676-2500

Whatcom Health Dept. Litter Reporting: (360) 778-6000

Skagit

Skagit County Public Works, Pollution Hotline: (360) 336-9400

Anacortes Maintenance and Operations Division: (360) 293-1921

Burlington's Public Works: (360) 755-9715

Mt. Vernon's Water Quality Hotline: (360) 336-6204

Port of Anacortes Marina: (360) 293-0694

POLLUTION ON LAND

The pollutants that originate on land can be easily washed into our creeks, streams, and the ocean after rain events. Keeping our land clean and free of pollutants is the best way to keep our stormwater clean.

Storm drains discharge directly into Puget Sound, and some of them even flow into salmon-bearing streams like Whatcom Creek.

In neighborhoods & urban areas

- Trash and illegal debris piles on land or on beaches.
- Dumping grass or other yard waste on public property or right of ways.
- Dog poop — Not just any time, but if you notice a pattern in a particular area, document and report.
- People feeding geese and ducks — again, not just any time, but if you notice a pattern in a particular area, document and report.
- Leaky cars — oil and grease.
- Fertilizers — should only be applied when plants are growing and it's not raining. Consider using organic fertilizers, or none at all!



**Treated wood
creates oil sheen**

POLLUTION ON LAND

Storm drains

Nothing but water should be entering a storm drain! Especially after rainfall, watch for...

- Clogged storm drains — Unclog yourself if safe to do so! Report if unsafe or if there's a pattern of clogging in a particular area.
- Wastewater from car washing, pressure washing, cleaning, paint chipping, hazardous materials, or over-watering.
- Over-application of fertilizers.
- Failing septic systems.
- Erosion of dirt into storm drain or water body.



TIP:
Clear debris if safe to do so!

POLLUTION ON LAND

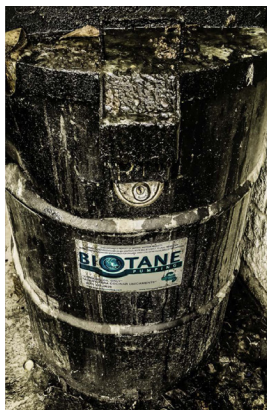
Don't wash cars where soap goes down storm drains!



REMEMBER:

Use these Water Reporter hashtags to help sort reports!

#pollution, #trash #sediment, #stormdrain, #algae, #manure
or #whatisthis if you aren't sure if something is a pollutant.



Restaurants

Restaurants on the waterfront or near storm drains can be a pollutant source. **What to watch for...**

- Greasy discharges from dumpsters, oil drums, or buckets.
- Potential plumbing leaks.
- Direct dumping of food waste or other products.
- Wet, sticky, or smelly residue or debris.

POLLUTION ON LAND

Agricultural sites

Fecal coliform bacteria from warm-blooded animals (mostly livestock) and nutrients (from manure and fertilizers) are the two biggest pollutants of concern in agricultural areas. **They enter the water directly or during rain events. These can cause fish kills. Watch for...**

- Animals in or very near water.
- Draining or leaking of manure ponds.
- Manure spreading during winter months and when it's rainy or stormy.
- Over-application of fertilizers.
- Excess sediment in ditches.

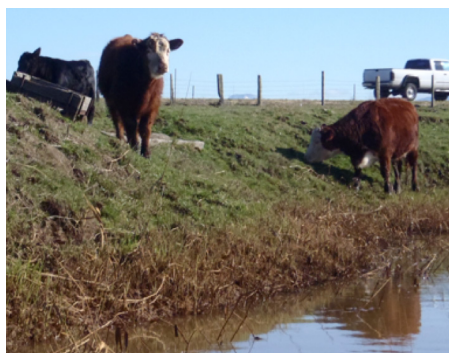


REMEMBER:

Don't trespass and avoid any confrontation. Stay safe!



Stark water color difference



POLLUTION ON LAND

Construction sites

Construction sites can result in the discharge of turbid (muddy) water from digging and exposing earth to rain-water, as well as releasing petroleum products and excess nutrients. **What to watch for near work and construction sites...**

- Sediment control mechanisms should be in place and functioning such as - silt fences, hay bales, plastic covering, mulching, matting, or seeding.
- Storm drains should be protected from runoff.
- Entrance and exit sites should be stabilized with rock or gravel.
- Vehicles leaving the site should not track soil.
- Armoring and dredging.
- Oil sheens.



10th and Bennett

No attempt to catch sediment

Failing to catch sediment



POLLUTION IN OR NEAR WATER

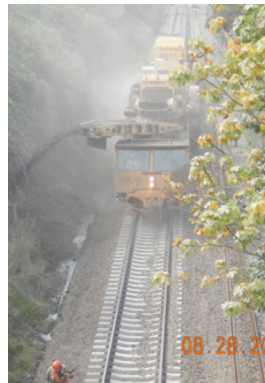
Railroad activity

Trains travel up and down the waterfront multiple times a day and are dangerously close to critical habitat. **Watch for any type of debris coming from the tracks and/or the trains themselves:**

- Oily machinery.
- Sheens from treated wood.
- Excess dust.
- Coal pieces.



Treated wood near railroads leaving sheen in water



Industrial activity

Bellingham's waterfront holds a variety of industries that have the potential to contribute pollution. **Watch for...**

- Any non-clear discharge going down a drain.
- Oil sheens.
- Sediment or dust.



Tag your post with **#whatisthis** if you aren't sure if something is a pollutant!

POLLUTION IN OR NEAR WATER

Discharge & drainage pipes

Water discharged at the end of pipes is a complex intermingling of municipal and industrial water that can include stormwater, industrial wastewater, combined sewer overflow, and sewage treatment water. **What to watch for coming out of a pipe...**

- Turbid (muddy) and discolored discharge from pipe.
- Very odorous discharge.
- Gushing discharge during dry weather.
- Debris accumulated on shore or in the water.
- Erosion around the pipe.
- Broken or exposed pipe.



POLLUTION IN OR NEAR WATER

Nothing should be discharged into the water, including pressure washing waste, fuel, sewage, or repair waste such as paint chips and sanding dust. Copper, zinc, and oil and grease are the major pollutants of concern.

Near marinas, boatyards, shipyards, ponds, creeks, and wetlands

This is a broad category because **any of these signs of pollution could be at any of these water bodies.** Watch for...

- Soap or detergents.
- Sanitary solid waste and/or toilet paper.
- Fuel or oil sheens.
- Paint or wax sheens, paint chips, sanding dust.
- Fish processing waste.



POLLUTION IN OR NEAR WATER

Foam

- **Natural:** Begins white but quickly turns tan, yellow, brown. It easily breaks apart if poked. It may smell earthy and have bits of dirt, plants, and insects.

NATURAL



TIP:

Poke foam with a stick and see if it breaks apart. If so, it's probably natural!

- **Potentially polluting:** Usually white, looks like bubbles. Will often see a rainbow sheen. May smell and look like soap. Tends to stick together even when poked.

ARTIFICIAL



POLLUTION IN OR NEAR WATER

Algal blooms are becoming more common in the spring and summer months due to increased temperatures and nutrients in our waterways. Blooms can be **green, yellow, brown, pink, or even red**. Many algal species produce toxins that are harmful if they come in contact with your skin or are ingested - **pets can get seriously sick and die from drinking water contaminated with algae!** Even algal blooms that don't produce toxins can be deadly. When algae dies and is consumed by bacteria, the bacteria use up the oxygen in the water, creating lethal conditions for fish and other aquatic species.

Algal blooms



**Freshwater bloom
in south Bellingham**



**Saltwater bloom off
Friday Harbor, San
Juan Island**

POLLUTION IN OR NEAR WATER

Oil sheens: Natural or not? Poke it and see!

If you poke fossil fuel sheens, the hole will quickly fill back in. **Natural sheens will break apart and not re-form when poked.**



This is pollution!

Fossil fuels causing a sheen that does not stay broken apart.



This is NOT pollution!

This is a natural oil layer caused by plant matter.

Not sure what it is? **When in doubt, report it to us on Water Reporter!**

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## **Don't have your own cleanup gear? Borrow some from us!**



**Grabbers, Gloves, Buckets**

If you want to help, we've got you covered.

**Contact Kirsten McDade:**

KirstenM@re-sources.org, or (360) 220-0556







# **You are on the front lines of preventing pollution.**



Observe • Document • Report

