

# Tips for Green Leaders

-in-

## FREDERICK COUNTY

# The Dirty Truth About Litter

You have probably noticed how litter along roads or in parks can make a scenic landscape look unsightly, but did you also know that it pollutes the water we use for recreation, or that it impacts ecosystems hundreds of miles away? This all happens because rain and wind blow litter into stormwater systems and waterbodies.

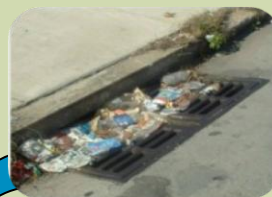
To reduce the risk of flooding, stormwater systems are used to carry rainwater and snow melt into nearby streams and rivers. Stormwater systems are different than sewage systems and do not pass water through treatment plants. Certain newer stormwater systems have measures in place to remove some pollutants before the water flows into waterways. However, these systems don't remove litter. Water that flows into storm drains along a street enters into the stormwater system, where it eventually flows into nearby waterways, ultimately reaching the ocean.

Litter along streets is easily swept into stormwater systems by wind or rain and transported to nearby streams and rivers. Even litter in areas far from storm drains, such as parks or sides of highways, can be carried by wind or rain into stormwater drainage ditches or directly into waterways. In addition to making these waterways look dirty, litter contains chemicals that can contaminate the places where we go swimming and fishing. Fish ingest toxic chemicals from plastics which can be transferred to us when we eat seafood. Litter that is dropped in Frederick County can end up floating in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay or the Atlantic Ocean and harmfully impact marine ecosystems.

Unfortunately, many areas are currently covered in litter. There are over 51 billion pieces of litter along roads in the United States. An estimated 269 thousand tons of plastic are floating in oceans around the world, with more entering the sea each year. Community members can help reduce the litter in their neighborhood by organizing or participating in cleanup events. Every small action helps!

## Where Does Your Litter Go?

Trash is littered  
on the ground in  
Frederick County



Litter is blown  
or washed into  
storm drain

Litter is carried  
through storm  
drain to nearby  
stream



Litter travels  
downriver

Litter ends up in  
the Chesapeake  
Bay and Atlantic  
Ocean



Litter in ocean  
harms the  
health of  
marine life



## Did you know?

**FACT:** Litter cleanup costs an estimated \$11.5 billion in the United States each year.

**FACT:** Tobacco related litter (mostly cigarette butts) makes up almost 38% of all litter in the United States.

**FACT:** Cigarette butts contain toxic chemicals that leach into the environment overtime.

**FACT:** The amount of trash entering the ocean each year is about 8 million tons. That's the same as five grocery bags of trash per foot of global coastline.

**FACT:** 90% of all sea birds have plastic in their stomachs.

**FACT:** The overall financial damage of plastics to marine ecosystems is \$13 billion each year.

**FACT:** 80% of plastics in the ocean come from land-based sources.

**FACT:** Plastic items have been found in all areas of the ocean, including in the deep sea and frozen in Arctic sea ice.

**FACT:** Plastics do not biodegrade in the ocean but instead break down into little pieces that are consumed by fish. Toxic chemicals in plastics are absorbed by fish, and are more concentrated in larger fish higher up on the food chain, like tuna and swordfish, and can be transferred to humans via seafood.

## GET INVOLVED

Do your part to help reduce litter in Frederick County

### Frederick County Adopt-a-Road Program

Contact Frederick County Office of Highway Operations at 301.600.1564 or email [OHighOpsEmail@FrederickCountyMD.gov](mailto:OHighOpsEmail@FrederickCountyMD.gov).

### Maryland Adopt-a-Highway Program in Frederick County

For more information contact the Coordinator for Frederick County at 301.624.8250 or visit [sha.maryland.gov](http://sha.maryland.gov).

### Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup

Every April, groups host cleanup events all over the Potomac River Watershed as part of the Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative.

For more information visit [fergusonfoundation.org](http://fergusonfoundation.org), or to find a cleanup event in your area go to [trashnetwork.fergusonfoundation.org](http://trashnetwork.fergusonfoundation.org).

### Catoctin Creek Park and Nature Center Annual Stream Cleanup

Join this annual event in the spring to clean up the Catoctin Creek.

Look for information about this cleanup event by visiting [catoctincreek.blogspot.com](http://catoctincreek.blogspot.com).



The Tips for Green Leaders in Frederick County is a public outreach component of the Frederick County Office of Sustainability and Environmental Resources. For more information, please visit [www.SustainableFrederickCounty.org](http://www.SustainableFrederickCounty.org), or call 301.600.1413.