

Jefferson County Department of Storm Water Management



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JeffCo H₂O News

TRASH BLOWS!



TARP & TIE YOUR LOAD

PROPERLY TRANSPORT AND DISPOSE OF TRASH

INTENTIONAL OR NOT, TRASH THAT BLOWS OUT OF VEHICLES
OR TRAILERS BECOMES LITTER. LITTER POLLUTES OUR LOCAL WATERWAYS.

REPORT SUSPECTED WATER POLLUTION, CALL 325-5792



Focus On: Zoning – LP&DS

Land Planning and Development Services (LP&DS) conducts comprehensive planning, administers subdivision regulations, reviews and processes construction plans, assigns addresses, provides 911 database support, administers floodplain regulations, conducts GIS mapping, and administers Jefferson County Zoning Ordinances.

The Weed and Litter Ordinance requires that private property owners keep their properties maintained and free of litter and trash.

The Criminal Littering and Illegal Dumping Ordinance prohibits the improper disposal of litter, trash, debris and other materials.

A big THANK YOU to LP&DS for its efforts toward helping keep litter and trash out of Jefferson County waterways!

What's Happening?

Brown Bag Seminar Series - Don't miss this chance to enjoy the summer Brown Bag Series [seminars](#) at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. The seminars are free, no registration is required, and light refreshments are provided. Call 325.8741 for more details.

Jefferson County National Night Out - August 5 - This annual event encourages partnerships between neighborhoods and the Sheriff's Office to enhance safety and crime prevention. For a list of locations and times, visit the [Sheriff's Office website](#) or call 325-1450.

Valley Creek Cleanup - August 23 - Pitch in and help pick up litter and trash from [Valley Creek](#), 8 am - 12 pm. Free t-shirt and hot dog lunch.

Pollution Prevention Week - September 14 - 20. Litter isn't the only pollutant threatening our waterways. Everything exposed to rain is a potential source of pollution! What pollutants are lurking at [your home](#)?

SepticSmart Week - September 23-27 - Find out how to maintain your [septic system](#) to keep it working properly and reduce the chance of raw sewage entering your yard, home, or local waterways.

A Litter Free State of Mind

Keep America Beautiful was created in 1953 to address an increase in littering that coincided with the construction of the interstate system and the growing popularity of disposable containers. Local ordinances, national ad campaigns, and community cleanup efforts soon followed. Over the ensuing decades, the anti-litter movement grew to include other elements such as municipal recycling programs and the push for more sustainable products. But in spite of the tears shed by Iron Eyes Cody, the litter problem in the US has not gone away. Its effects on our communities range from diminished quality of life and safety concerns to neighborhood blight and reduced economic growth.

So . . . what is considered litter, what items are the most littered, where does litter occur, and who litters? The most common definition of litter is solid waste of any type put where it does not belong. (Some people still argue that if something is biodegradable, like gum, it does not count as litter.) Cigarette butts are the most littered items, followed by bottles, cans, fast food packaging and plastic shopping bags. Roadways, transition points such as entrances to buildings, outdoor recreational areas, and shopping centers are the most common locations for littering. People under 30 are the most likely age group to litter. More than 80% of littering is intentional. There's no doubt that litter is unsightly, but it also has environmental consequences. Wind, rain, traffic, and animals can carry litter to gutters, ditches and storm drains where it is carried untreated to waterways. According to [Keep America Beautiful](#), 80% of US waterways are littered with trash that was first dropped on land. Even worse, hazardous materials which are illegally dumped can leach into water sources, contaminate soil and pollute the air.

As with any human behavior, there is a psychological aspect to littering. Not feeling a sense of ownership for an area followed by the belief that someone else will pick it up are the most common reasons that people litter. What appears to be socially acceptable is another factor in human behavior. When an area is littered, it has an almost magnetic effect. Since "everyone else is doing it", litter attracts more litter. But a funny thing happens when an area is extremely clean. Littering appears to be unacceptable, and the incidence of littering is greatly reduced.

One way to encourage people to take ownership of their community and improve its cleanliness is to get them involved in the process. This past spring, Storm Water Management staff promoted and facilitated roadside cleanups in 23 unincorporated and 14 incorporated Jefferson County areas in conjunction with the statewide [People Against a Littered State \(PALS\)](#) Spring Cleanup. From February through June, a total of 1,509 volunteers picked up more than 59 tons of roadside litter. To support the roadway cleanup efforts in unincorporated communities, the Jefferson County Commission approved funding to purchase gloves, bags, water, and safety t-shirts. The Sheriff's Office provided traffic control for 754 volunteers who picked up 41 tons of litter in unincorporated areas. Roads and Transportation Department crews coordinated and properly disposed of the collected roadway litter.

Make littering unacceptable in your community. Participate in (or even initiate!) a roadside cleanup in 2015. Call 325.8741 to learn more. And check out some [photos](#) of the 2014 cleanups!

Single Use Society

Emptying a coffee pod into the coffee maker, drinking bottled water, bringing purchases home in plastic bags, and choosing pre-packaged food items are all very convenient. That's why it's so easy to fall into the trap of use it once and throw it away. But according to Newton's third law of motion, every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The results of enjoying these conveniences without regard for the waste they generate are landfills packed to capacity, littered roads, and trashed waterways. Every waterway on earth eventually drains to an ocean, and both the [Pacific](#) and [Atlantic](#) Oceans have enormous islands of trash. The primary component of these floating dumps is plastic, and most of it comes from land sources. Dozens of cities have passed ordinances banning the use of plastic bags for retail sales and assessing a deposit for recyclable drink containers. While these types of laws can reduce the use of specific items or encourage their recycling, they don't begin to address the enormity of waste generated as the result of single use items. There are some obvious small steps we can take to reduce our personal consumption, such as choosing items with less packaging, ramping up our recycling efforts for those convenience items we just can't do without, and opting for [reusable](#) items whenever possible. But the potential for change doesn't stop with these few examples. Consciously identifying and adopting more responsible consumption habits can change our society from single use to sustainable.

To report suspected water pollution, call 205.325.5792. Questions or comments? Email diclementel@jccal.org or call 205.325.8741.