

RICE CREEK WATERSHED DISTRICT *Dialogue*

Salt the Fish on Your Plate, Not the Ones in the Lake

Did you know that our creeks and lakes get polluted during our winter months? Since the early 1950's, our metro area waters have become increasingly salty. Chloride (salt)

levels in our water have become so high that many metro area creeks are now considered unhealthy. According to the Environmental Protection Agency standards, many creeks around the state are unhealthy due to high chloride levels. Standards are being developed for lakes and soon we will be able to identify area lakes with high chloride levels too.

Chlorides are applied on our roads, sidewalks and parking lots to melt ice. However, once dissolved in water, the salty mixture goes directly to our creeks and lakes from our streets and homes via our storm drain system. Chloride is considered a "conservative pollutant", meaning it does not break-down into a non-toxic substance. Once chloride is in a stream or lake, it is nearly impossible to get rid of. Salt harms plants and animals, contaminates our drinking water, damages buildings, and corrodes vehicles, roads and bridges. Too much salt results in costly damages and serious environmental consequences. Even if your bag of deicer says environmentally friendly it does not mean it is friendly to our waters especially, if the word 'chloride' is listed in the ingredients.



Photo by Phil Romans

Tips to Keep Your Roads, Driveways and Sidewalks Safe and Our Waters Healthy

1. **Before the storm**, apply a liquid deicer before snow storms to prevent snow and ice from building up. This is not a substitute for shoveling; it just makes it more effective.
2. **Shovel that snow**. Shoveling, snow blowing, plowing and/or sweeping are all effective measures that will remove snow and minimize ice build-up.
3. **Less is better**. When applying salt, if there are leftover crystals still visible then the salt has been over-applied. The left-over salt can be swept up and reused or disposed of in the trash.
4. **Temperature matters**. At low temperatures, salt begins to become less effective. When the temperature falls below 15°F, consider using small amounts of sand for traction.



Photo by Fortin Consulting

Make a difference this winter; help us keep salt out of our waters! If you would like to know more about this topic and other topics related to water quality, go to www.ricecreek.org to sign up for the RCWD eNews on the right side of the homepage.