



## **Watershed Protection in Columbia**

Most of the land in Columbia drains to streams in the **Little Patuxent River** or the **Middle Patuxent River** watersheds. A small portion of Columbia (near Route 100 and Route 103) drains to the **Patapsco River**. Each of the drainage basins or watersheds for these rivers includes many smaller watersheds (or subwatersheds). The Columbia subwatersheds include all the land, waterways, plants, people and animals in these geographic areas.

The **Columbia Watershed Management Plan (CWMP)** is scheduled for completion in late spring 2009. **Columbia Association** is developing the plan with assistance from the **Watershed Advisory Committee**, a citizen group with representatives from all Columbia Villages. Preliminary findings were presented to the public in January 2009. Go to [www.columbiawatershed.org](http://www.columbiawatershed.org) for more information.

The goals of the **CWMP** are to:

- Reduce stormwater impacts from impervious areas
- Preserve, maintain, and improve wildlife habitat
- Preserve, maintain and improve water quality
- Improve the quality of recreational opportunities on open space

The **CWMP** plan uses two distinct approaches:

- The first is to identify watershed restoration needs and opportunities and to begin the design of restoration projects. This phase includes reviewing previous watershed studies by Howard County and performing intensive investigations to assess watershed conditions including stream buffers; stream erosion, opportunities for reforestation and opportunities for stormwater retrofits
- The second approach is to involve residents and property owners in watershed stewardship and to provide opportunities for watershed education. Every person who lives or works in Columbia can act to protect Columbia watersheds. This phase includes the development of communication tools such as [www.columbiawatershed.org](http://www.columbiawatershed.org) and organizing watershed stewardship events such tree planting and stream cleanups.

## What Can You Do To Protect and Restore Columbia Watersheds?

- **Reduce your use of lawn fertilizers & pesticides.** Excess fertilizers and pesticides wash into storm drains and then into Columbia's streams and lakes. Go to [www.baywise.umd.edu](http://www.baywise.umd.edu) for more information.
- **Clean up after your pets.** Don't allow harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into storm drains and into Columbia's streams and lakes. Pick up your pet's waste and dispose of it properly. Flushing is the best disposal method.
- **Disconnect your downspouts.** Downspouts which connect directly into a storm drain or flow onto a hard surface reduces infiltration into the ground. Divert your downspouts to your lawn or to a rain garden so it can infiltrate on your property. Go to [www.rainscapes.org](http://www.rainscapes.org) for more information.
- **Plant trees.** Trees protect your watershed by reducing stormwater runoff from your property. They also provide habitat and many other benefits.
- **Recycle rainwater.** A "rain barrel" is a container that collects and stores rainwater from downspouts and rooftops for future use watering lawns and gardens. Rain barrels can be painted and should be maintained in good condition. Contact your Village for approval.
- **Wash your car at a car wash.** Commercial car washes must treat the soapy water so that it has less impact on water quality.
- **Keep lawn clippings and leaves out of storm drains.** Although these are organic materials, yard clippings and leaves contribute excess nutrients to Columbia's streams and lakes, which can lead to algae blooms.