

Defining BMPs

You may have seen the acronym, **BMP**, and wondered what it means. BMP stands for **Best Management Practices**, that is, activities that have a positive effect on keeping the environment clean and safe. Best management practices control pollutants to keep them from contaminating water supplies. Discover how you, your class and the whole community can implement BMP's in your daily lives:

BMPs in Your House

- Never dump hazardous household chemicals down the drain - that means no flushing, either. Take them to the Regional Collection Center in Bondurant or the Clean-up Crew Van when it is in your neighborhood. Examples of household hazardous materials (HHM) are fertilizer, silver polish, rat poison, rechargeable batteries, antifreeze, motor oil, paint, and oven cleaner.
- Reduce the amount of waste you put in your garbage by using more reusable materials. For example, use lunch boxes instead of lunch bags and plastic cups instead of paper or Styrofoam. Use plug-ins on electrical appliances whenever possible to reduce the number of used batteries ending up in the landfill.
- Recycle as many items as possible: newspapers, mixed paper, magazines, milk jugs, juice bottles, wrapping paper, metal cans, clear glass, cardboard, and greeting cards. When you place the recycle bin on the curb, set heavier materials on top to prevent materials from blowing around.
- Recycle used clothes or household items by taking them to Goodwill or the Salvation Army, or have a garage sale.
- Use environmentally-friendly cleaning materials instead of hazardous chemicals whenever possible. For example, mouse traps instead of rat poison, baking soda and water instead of scouring powder, a plunger instead of drain cleaner.

BMPs in Your Yard:

- Use less fertilizer. Get a soil test kit from a garden supply store to see how much fertilizer your lawn or garden really needs. People have a tendency to put on much more than is actually needed by plants.
- Rake leaves and put them in appropriate bags on the street for garbage haulers to transport to the Metro Waste Compost Center at the landfill. Loose leaves can easily get into storm sewers. Do not burn leaves; this causes unnecessary air pollution.
- Plant grass, trees, and shrubs. Their deep roots hold onto the soil to prevent it from blowing or washing away when it rains.
- After you mow, do not let loose grass get washed into storm sewers. Collect and bag grass clippings to send to the Compost Center at the landfill or your own backyard compost.

BMPs for Driveway, Sidewalks & Streets:

- Never dump anything down storm sewers; most lead right to our rivers.
- Sweep driveways and sidewalks instead of washing them with water - water washes oil, grass, and leaves into storm sewers.
- Keep cars in good repair so they do not leak oil or antifreeze. If they do leak, soak up oil with cat litter or other absorbent material, then throw it away.
- Encourage the building of a retention pond (wet pond) in your neighborhood. They are great at slowing water down so it has time to filter out pollutants. They also look nice and are good wildlife habitats.
- Clean up pet waste to prevent it from entering storm sewers.
- In winter, use sand instead of salt whenever possible.

BMPs at Recreation Areas:

- Take recyclable items home to be recycled.
- Make sure boats are not leaking gas or oil into the water.
- Volunteer to clean up parks.

BMPs Activities for Your Class:

1. Farmers often implement **BMPs** on their farms to cut down on water pollution. Have students research some of these methods - terraces, grass waterways, berms, contour plowing, wetland construction, prairie planting, and creation of riparian areas. Students could make models of the methods to show how they slow water flow and lessen the loss of topsoil into waterways.
2. Demonstrate for your class how cat litter can be used to soak up spills, like oil or antifreeze, then swept up and placed in the garage to keep it from washing into storm sewers.
3. Have each student pick a potential pollutant, like grass, fertilizer, leaves, oil, or dirt and draw a picture of how that pollutant can get into our water supplies.
4. Hold a classroom or school-wide Book Swap as a way of recycling old books. Or collect used books to donate to Goodwill, Salvation Army, or day care.
5. Have students create posters portraying **Do's** and **Don'ts** for protecting our environment. For example, **Do** rake leaves and put in bags and **Don't** burn leaves or let them wash into storm sewers. **Do** take hazardous household materials (HHM) to the Regional Collection Center. **Don't** pour HHM down the drain.
6. Have students act out harmful environmental practices and **BMPs** or ones they think of on their own. Have them perform for a class of younger students. As a variation, they could pantomime practices and have the audience guess how what they are doing is harmful or helpful to the environment.
7. Give students old magazines to cut pictures of objects out and mount on oaktag. Have them write on the back the **BMP** for use or proper disposal of that object. Then hold up cards one at a time for the class to determine the **BMP**.