

Dear, New Resident

Welcome to your new home in the City of Prior Lake. The purpose of this letter is to introduce you to some of the natural resources within the City and inform you about how every resident can help protect these resources for the future.

To visit the wide array of natural features, just walk down some of the many miles of trails or visit one of the numerous parks the City maintains and you will find forests, wetlands, lakes, ponds and prairie. Major features of the Parks system include The Ponds and Thomas Ryan Memorial Parks on Mushtown Road. These two parks have active use baseball, softball and soccer fields for youth and adult activities. A mix of active and passive uses can be found at the City's gem, Lakefront Park. Lakefront Park, is located just north of downtown Prior Lake off of Main Avenue and includes a band shell, play structure, gazebo, tennis courts, skateboard park, swimming beach, as well as miles of walking trails winding through towering maple, basswood, oak and aspen trees. On the west side of the City a true natural park is found in Spring Lake Regional Park, still under development, this park will one day include nature trails, a dog park, and lake views of both Spring Lake and Upper Prior Lake. Each of these parks, as well as the many neighborhood parks, introduces us to the vast natural resources weaved into our City. Trails and parks invite us to enjoy our prairies, ponds, wetlands, lakes and forests and appreciate the wildlife they support.

Every resident is responsible for the health of our natural resources. The wildlife, plants, water and landscapes that make up this ecosystem is connected to the cityscape. Whether through our direct use of these natural resources, through the runoff from our yards and streets, or through wind; pollutants find ways into natural areas. The following will focus on the three ways pollutants enter the land, and suggest ways that you can help prevent this pollution.

Direct use:

A walk through parks, woodlands, or prairies can be a direct source of pollution. Aside from the obvious litter issue, if pet waste is not collected it can cause problems in wetlands, streams and lakes. In addition to containing potentially harmful bacteria, pet waste acts as a fertilizer. Just like fertilizer makes lawns green, so to does it make waters green. Over fertility of water causes algae to bloom making waters green and odorous.

Waterways:

Runoff from lawns and streets is a significant source of pollutants to natural water bodies. A key to preventing this type of pollution is at the source. The following is a list of pollutant sources and good practices to prevent exposure.

- Leaky automobiles: Well maintained cars do not drip oils or other fluids.
- Household hazardous waste: Be sure to dispose of household wastes at a recycling center, never down the drain.
- Fertilizer: Lawns in Prior Lake are often very high in fertility, a soil test should be done periodically to determine proper nutrient levels prior to adding fertilizer.

- Lawn clippings and leaves: Yard wastes should be hauled away or composted, never dumped in or near drains or waterways. Sweep clipping and leaves off of street after mowing and during the windy fall.
- Over irrigation: An oversaturated lawn causes more runoff and less soil stability. By leaving lawns 3 – 5 inches in height, good root growth is promoted, requiring less water. Watering lawns only in the mornings and evenings also prevents undue evaporation and overuse of water.

Wind:

Commercial areas of the City are large source of litter transported and scattered by wind. A walk around the perimeter of any parking lot can be a shocking experience, finding plastic bottles, newspaper advertisements, window advertisements, scattered near a parking lot lends itself to a community solution. Encourage shop owner to clean their parking lots and surrounding areas, and do your part to pick up miscellaneous wandering pieces of litter before the wind does. The same process holds true near our homes, trash collection and mail delivery can scatter debris such as plastic, paper and other packaging waste.

Wind, Water and Direct use are three ways pollutants enter the environment, by following some of the suggestions above, you too can do your part to help clean and prevent pollution.

If you have questions about any of the information in this letter feel free to contact the City.