

# BENTON COUNTY STORMWATER PROGRAM

## -Litter and Trash Control-

### Litter: A BIG problem

A 2009 study by Keep America Beautiful Inc. estimated that 51 billion pieces of litter are released on U.S. roads annually. This means that **each mile of roadway in the U.S. sees 6,791 items littered every year!** So while that one piece of trash may not seem like a lot in the moment, it sure adds up to a large impact over time. Nearly \$11 billion dollars are spent every year cleaning up items that could have easily been disposed of properly.

When people litter, they often don't think about where the item ends up, or who will have to pick it up later. This trash is usually cleaned up by environmental or road workers, volunteers, or concerned citizens. In many cases, these pieces of trash can make their way into our rivers and streams, and ultimately the ocean.

### What's your legacy?

Many litter-prone items are used for a very short time, but can be around for generations after we are gone. For example, a plastic bag is used for an average of 12 minutes, but can take 500-1,000 years to degrade! All isn't well after 1,000 years however. Items like this break down into tiny pieces— known as microplastics – which ultimately end up in the food chain and the health impacts of these compounds for humans and the environment are only now being recognized. That one little piece of trash may not seem like a lot, but it sure adds up. *And besides...nobody likes a litterbug!*

### What can you do?

- Don't litter. Always dispose of your trash properly.
- Use reusable or biodegradable items when possible to reduce plastic waste.
- Talk to your friends and family about litter prevention
- Volunteer for an Adopt-A-Road program or other litter cleanup event.
- Make it a goal to pick up one piece of trash whenever you go for a walk, or help with a neighborhood cleanup.



## Learn More!

Marys River Watershed Council  
Luckiamute Watershed Council  
Mid-coast Watershed Council  
Long Tom Watershed Council

<https://www.mrwc.org/>  
<https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/>  
<http://www.midcoastwatersheds.org/>  
<https://www.longtom.org/>



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