



RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707) 833-2553 • www.rwatershed.org

RRWA Environmental Column – November 2010

Can the Grease -Protecting Your Environment and Your Water

It's that time of year again, when many families will be settling down to a home cooked Holiday dinner. The Russian River Watershed Association (RRWA) would like to remind residents to properly dispose of fats, oils, grease and food scraps. So don't pour grease down the drain and let the Holiday Grinch spoil your holiday fun. Use this simple guide to keep your holidays safe, healthy, and happy.

Grease from roasting or cooking meats in a warm liquid form may not appear harmful. As the liquid cools, the fats and grease congeal and become stuck within the sanitary sewer – the pipes that serve your home and the larger collection lines that serve the community. Over time, the fat and grease can build up and block sewer pipelines, sometimes cause raw sewage to overflow into homes, yards, streets, parks and rivers creating health risks and negative impacts to the environment.

Pouring fats, oils and grease and food scrapes down the drain may seem like an easy solution to a messy problem, but it can lead to a nastier problem. Pouring cooking oil and other greases down the sink (or toilet) may result in a clogged drain and a holiday visit from the plumber - costing you time, money, and a lot of inconvenience. Don't risk getting clogged. Instead use one of the following options to dispose of these drain-clogging culprits.

- For best results, pour excess grease into a container with a tight-fitting lid for storing. Use a scraper or spatula to remove all the grease from the pan. Freeze it and throw the hardened oil away on trash day.
- Use a paper towel to wipe up small amounts of cooking oil, such as meat drippings. Throw the paper towels in the trash.
- Place food scrapes in appropriate waste containers or compost piles rather than into the drain or garbage disposal.

Caution: *hot grease can cause burns. Allow grease to cool slightly before disposing.*

Most cities in the Russian River watershed have helpful tools to reduce grease and oil disposal to the sanitary sewer. For example, the City of Ukiah has a "Can the Grease Program." Contact your sewer utility for information about their "de-greasing" tools.

You can also turn some waste oils into a new resource – biodiesel fuel. Used vegetable oil can be deposited at several collection centers and local restaurants in the watershed for biodiesel processing; see the RRWA web link at <http://www.rwatershed.org/FOG/index.html> for information about the collection location nearest to you.

This article was authored by Lauren McPhaul, Water and Sewer Project Coordinator for the City of Ukiah Public Works Department on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (www.rwatershed.org) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement.



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