



# RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

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## RRWA Environmental Column – September 2010

### WITH YOUR HELP, STREET SWEEPERS KEEP STREETS AND WATERWAYS CLEAN

Being a Public Works manager, the sound of the street sweeper is music to my ears. The street sweeper is our first line of defense in preventing debris from entering the storm drain system and ultimately entering our creeks and the Russian River.

#### What does a street sweeper collect?

The street sweeper collects all loose material from our streets and gutters. This material may include trash, leaves, dust, nails and screws, oils, particles from brake pads and brake shoes, and debris from worn out asphalt pavement. Street sweepers are also used to collect and remove broken glass and other debris from traffic accidents. In addition, the street sweeper may be used to collect material left behind after an accidental spill. Without a street sweeper, this unwanted material will find its way into the storm drain system when the rainy season comes, and ultimately end up in the receiving creek or river. A tremendous amount of debris is kept from out of our waterways by street sweepers. In Ukiah alone, street sweepers collect and dispose of approximately 800 tons of debris a year!



Photo: City of Ukiah

#### How does a street sweeper operate?

The street sweeper is basically a motorized vacuum cleaner. A separate engine powers the gutter brooms which rotate and pull debris from the curb and pavement for easy removal by the vacuum unit. This separate engine powers the high power vacuum unit pulling the loose debris from the streets. As the sweeping and vacuuming process takes place, water is applied to minimize the amount of dust created by the process. Occasionally a tree branch will become lodged in the vacuum unit and cause a trail of debris to follow the street sweeper. The operator will stop and manually clear the tree branch from the unit.

#### What can you do?

As a citizen and good neighbor, it is important for all of us to do our part. You can help by moving your vehicle(s) from the street before street sweeping day. Please contact your local Department of Public Works to learn the schedule for street sweeping in your neighborhood. Also, do not sweep leaves or place lawn cuttings or other debris onto the street. In most areas within the Russian River Watershed, ordinances prohibit depositing debris on the sidewalk, in the gutter, or on the street. Please use your green bin for all leaves and yard waste. If you observe broken glass or other debris on the street, please notify your Department of Public Works. If you are driving, use caution when overtaking a street sweeper on its route.

Please remember the street sweeper is our friend. It is doing its part to keep our streets clean and to prevent unwanted debris from entering our creeks and streams, and ultimately the Russian River.

*This article was authored by Rick Seanor, City of Ukiah Deputy Director of Public Works, on behalf of RRWA. RRWA ([www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.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.*