



Russian River Watershed Association

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

RRWA Environmental Column – May 2013 Pool and Spa Maintenance

Summer will soon be upon us. Though spring cleaning gets us all ready for the summer season, pool and spa owners face a special set of cleaning and maintenance tasks. Improper discharge of pool/spa water and the chemicals in it into streets or storm drains can have an impact on streams and rivers. The following steps can help keep your pool or spa clean and functioning for recreational use without harming the environment:

- Clean filters and empty out the skimmers of debris.
- Remove vegetative debris and get those pumps going.
- Check to see if the disinfection system is working properly.
- Run the system for one turn-over cycle of the pool or spa water and then get your test kit out to ensure that the chlorine is at the proper level and the pH is between 7 and 8. Adjust accordingly to achieve proper water balance so that the water is neither too corrosive nor too scaly for the pipes, pool or spa surface material and equipment.
- For pools, check the decking, coping, and diving board. Ensure that all equipment is clean, orderly and that there are no leaks from the recirculation system piping or equipment.
- Never drain pool or spa water into streets or storm drains. Not only does it impact streams and rivers, violators are subject to fines per California Fish & Game code 5650.

There are times when a certain amount of the pool water needs to be drained to get the pool chemistry up to par. If you are connected to city sewer, use the sewer cleanout or indoor drain such as a sink or bathtub.

If you are connected to a septic system, do not drain pool or spa water into it. This could cause damage and potentially cause the septic system to fail. To drain the water properly, ensure that the water is not cloudy, pH is neutralized, and the chlorine or other disinfectant residual is below 0.1 milligrams/liter. Discharge the pool or spa water onto vegetated ground and ensure that it is contained within your property boundary. Use sandbags or berms if necessary to ensure that the water soaks into the planted area.

Do not discharge onto the leach-lines or other areas that have been saturated or have had recent fertilizer application and allow sufficient area to prevent ponding. The backwash from filters must be discharged to a sanitary sewer or vegetated area within your property.

Street drainage and storm drains lead into streams, rivers, and other waterways without treatment. Chlorine, algacides, water conditioners are toxic to aquatic life such as fish. Diatomaceous earth and

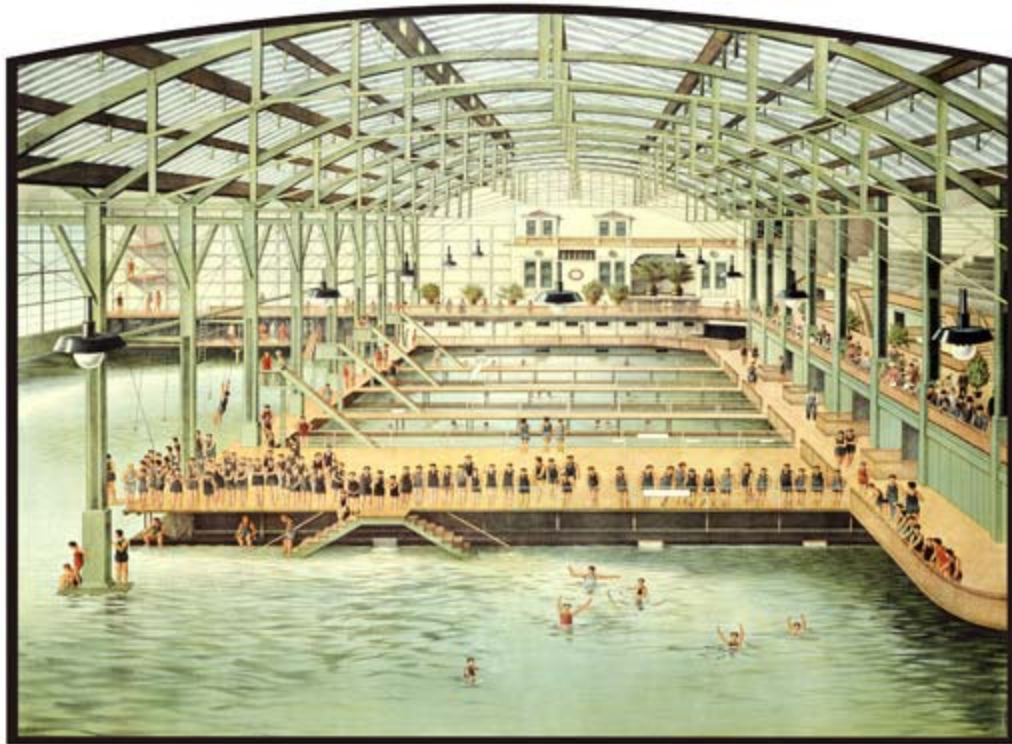


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other filter media from backwash water can fill in the spaces in the stream bed gravel, preventing oxygen from reaching fish eggs and young fish.

In addition to residential pool maintenance, public swimming pools and commercial recreational facilities such as spray grounds and water parks should be properly maintained to ensure public safety and to help protect the environment. For more information on proper pool and spa maintenance, please visit Sonoma County's Department of Health Services website: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/services/pool.asp> or Mendocino County's Environmental Health Division's website: <http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us/hhsa/chs/eh/index.htm>.



This article was authored by Terry Macute, Water Specialist for the Sonoma County Department of Health Services on behalf of RRWA. RRWA (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.