



# Russian River Watershed Association

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707)833-2553 • [www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.org)

## RRWA Environmental Column – September 2013 Paint Your Home but Protect Your Waterways

Fresh paint creates instant visual impact in your home – on a piece of furniture, in a room, or on the whole house. But sprucing up our living rooms can spoil other creatures' living environments if we're not careful. Improperly handled paints, solvents, and paint stripping residues can make their way to gutters and storm drains. From there, they go directly into our creeks, where the chemicals and metals from our home improvements threaten wildlife habitats and pollute recreational and drinking water sources too. Fortunately, it's easy to be a responsible do-it-yourselfer and steward of the environment by following these guidelines.

### **START SMART ON YOUR PAINTING PROJECT**

**Whenever possible, purchase latex or other water-based paints rather than oil-based products.** Latex paint is easier to work with than oil-based paint and also cleans up easily with soap and water. Oil-based paints on the other hand are flammable, contain solvents that can contaminate water, and require paint thinner or other solvents to clean up.

**Measure your project and buy only as much paint as you need.** Typically, a gallon of paint will cover approximately 120 square feet. If you purchase the right amount, you'll avoid the task of storing, disposing, or finding someone to take your unused paint. You may just save some money in the process if you buy only what you need!

**Secure paint cans in your truck so they don't accidentally spill or fall out.** Keep some rags or towels on hand in case of spills while transporting your paint.

### **PREPARE AND PROTECT, CLEAN AND KEEP CONTAINED**

**Avoid painting outside when it is raining or going to rain.** Yes, it's summer, but a shower or two can happen in September.

**Use tarps and dropcloths where you mix paint and in the project area.** When removing old paint, use a tarp to collect dust and scrapings. Also use a tarp to catch drips where you mix your paint. If possible, mix paint indoors or in a covered area.

**Don't clean brushes or painting equipment outside, and never pour paint or rinse water into the street gutter or outside drains.** To clean brushes and rollers covered with water-based paint, simply wash them in your sink or bathtub. If you are using oil-based paints, rinse brushes with thinner, and keep the used thinner contained. The used thinner and any waste must be disposed of at a household toxics facility. Oil-based paints, thinners, turpentine, mineral spirits, stains and varnishes should never be poured down any drain, inside or outside.



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## SHARE, STORE OR RECYCLE LEFTOVER PAINT

**Find ways to use up your extra paint, or give it to someone who can.** Add an extra coat of paint to a wall, or mix leftover latex paint together to use as a base coat for another project. Ask friends and neighbors if they could use your extra paint; they may have a project just waiting for it! You might also donate the paint to a community organization or local theater for their use.

**Keep leftover paint for touch-ups.** Cover the paint can opening with plastic wrap, secure the lid tightly, and store the can upside down to keep the paint fresh. If it is a small enough amount, transfer the paint to a smaller container and store together with a brush or roller in an inside cabinet for easy access.

**Store paint cans and buckets away from potential contact with stormwater.** Don't store your paint and supplies where it can get rained on, leak or spill, and eventually get into the storm drain system and into our waterways.

**Recycle your paint.** PaintCare, a paint stewardship non-profit program sponsored by the paint and coatings industry was established in California in 2012 to manage the reuse, recycling and proper disposal of unused architectural paint. Visit the PaintCare website at [www.paintcare.org](http://www.paintcare.org) for program guidelines for residents and businesses, and to find retail sites in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties that will take paint for recycling. The website also has a painting calculator to help you start with the right amount of paint and reduce waste.

## DISPOSING OF PAINT CANS AND UNUSABLE PAINT

In Sonoma County, empty, dried-out metal or plastic paint cans should be recycled curbside in your blue single-stream recycling cart. In Mendocino County, empty, dried out paint cans should be disposed of in the trash.

If you must dispose of unusable paint products including stains, latex and oil-based paint, your local hazardous waste programs have several drop-off or pick-up options. For Sonoma County residents, visit [www.recyclenow.org](http://www.recyclenow.org) for the Community Toxics Collections or Toxics Rover Pick-Up Service schedules, or for how to bring your materials to the Household Toxics Facility on Meacham Road. Options are also available for businesses. In Mendocino County, visit [www.mendorecycle.org](http://www.mendorecycle.org) for the HazMobile collection schedule.

*This article was authored by Eydie Tacata, Management Analyst for the City of Rohnert Park, 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.*