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Campaign To Keep Pesticides From VC Watershed

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A new public service campaign kicks off next week to educate Ventura County residents on how they can keep dangerous residential pesticides out of the Ventura County watershed. "Our goal is to change people's habits and for residents to better understand what happens when yard pollutants are washed into neighborhood gutters and storm drains," says Arne Anselm, Ventura County Watershed Protection District, Water Quality Monitoring Manager. The public service campaign is sponsored by "Community for a Clean Watershed," a program established two years ago by the Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program, a coalition of storm water quality management agencies in 10 cities and unincorporated areas of Ventura County. A watershed includes all of the natural terrain and neighborhoods surrounding major bodies of water. Water from these areas in Ventura County, whether from rain runoff or from a resident's sprinkler system, finds its way into the Ventura and Santa Clara Rivers, Malibu and Calleguas Creeks, and bays and estuaries until it eventually empties into the sea. "When pesticides reach our creeks and streams, wildlife is affected. If we aren't sensible in our use of pesticides it's not too big a leap to see that the negative impact will eventually reach our county's population," says Anselm. Anselm says residents can take simple precautions to ensure water remains clean. Read the labels and follow directions carefully when using insecticides, herbicides and fertilizers, he cautions. Use less-toxic products such as biological pesticides, oil sprays and insecticidal soaps. Avoid using copper sulfate root killing products. "A key contributor to storm water pollution is the overuse of pesticides and fertilizers in our gardens," says Anselm. "Ant spray and snail bait are two of the biggest culprits. Use these and other chemicals sparingly and never use them around water and drains. Don't use chemicals in your garden if rain is predicted within 24 hours. Remember, products that are designed to kill ants and snails in your garden continue to kill creatures living in or near our waterways." Other tips include the following. Save money and the environment by being careful that garden chemicals are only applied where needed, and not on areas like driveways and sidewalks. Never sweep anything, including leaves and grass clippings, into the street. To prevent chemicals from washing off your yard or garden from excessive lawn or garden watering, use sprinklers on timers and water only as needed. Keep chemicals in sealed containers and protected from the elements in a garage or shed. If garden chemicals spill, they should not be hosed down into the gutter, he says. Instead, sweep, or if liquid, absorb them with sawdust or kitty litter and dispose of any large absorbed spills at a local hazardous waste collection event or facility. The countywide stormwater program analyzes local rivers six times a year for chemical content. "Ventura County's watershed is in fairly good shape, but not without its problems. Small problems can grow into big ones if residents don't take precautions now," says Anselm. The month-long campaign, created by the Agency in Camarillo, will include radio, television, print, online and outdoor public service announcements. For more watershed pollution prevention tips, go to www.cleanwatershed.org.

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