

Let's Talk About Poop

By Brian M. McCaffrey, Stormwater Management Program Director, Village of Port Jefferson

No, really, let's talk about poop. Does your family own a dog? Do you know other people with a dog? Do you know that fewer than half of all dog owners pick up after their pets? What do you think happens to all of the waste that is not picked up? Exactly . . . after it rains, all of that poop flows down the street and into the storm drain. But are you aware that most of the Village's storm drains are connected to a storm sewer system which flows directly to Mill Creek, Port Jefferson Harbor, or Mt. Sinai Harbor; and not to a treatment plant?

You may ask yourself, "So the dog poop ends up in the Harbor. What's the big deal?" Well, just one gram of dog feces contains 23 million fecal coliform bacteria; nearly twice that of human waste. These disease-causing microorganisms, called pathogens, can cause mild distress to serious illnesses in humans who consume fish and shellfish from pathogen-impaired waterbodies or go swimming in those waters. Dog waste also adds nutrients to our waterways which promotes the growth of algae. Severe algae blooms can consume dissolved oxygen in the water, killing fish and other aquatic creatures.

So you see, pet owners can greatly improve water quality by picking up after their pets using a plastic bag and properly disposing of it in a trashcan.

While pet waste is a major contributor of pathogens in our waterways, they are not the only poop-related source. Read on to find out how you can make a difference to reduce pathogens in our Harbors!

- **Don't feed the geese!** Geese, swans, ducks, and other waterfowl present in large numbers contribute a heavy load of waste to our water. Help reduce their impacts by not feeding them or otherwise attracting them to our waterways. Besides being an environmental benefit, this action is healthier for the birds as well; the bread people typically feed them lacks the nutrients and roughage that waterfowl need in their diets.
- **Properly Pump Out your Boat!** Did you know that the Port Jefferson Harbor Complex, Mt. Sinai Harbor, and all of Long Island Sound are designated as No Discharge Zones (NDZ)? This means that overboard discharge of treated or untreated boat sewage is prohibited within any No Discharge Zone. Two pump-out facilities are located in Port Jefferson Harbor (one shore-side and one a pump-out boat), which can be contacted by phone or VHF radio, and are free-of-charge.

To learn more about the Village of Port Jefferson's Stormwater Management Program and how you can help prevent stormwater runoff pollution, please visit our website: <http://www.portjeff.com/village-information/environmental/stormwater-management/>

