



Get In On The Action

BY JEAN MACKAY, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES



As part of a company-wide environmental initiative, WCI employees take part in numerous community outreach projects, including the Collier County Waterways Clean-up in Florida.

If clean water—for drinking, irrigation, recreation, and wildlife—is important to you, you can count yourself among the millions of people who rank water quality and conservation as a top environmental priority. Better still, you can count yourself among the thousands of Audubon International program members who are committed to doing something about it.

What's to be done? Everything from personal action to watershed-based planning. Here are a few key ways to make a difference. Additional suggestions can be found at <http://www.auduboninternational.org/e-Source/>

- **Explore your watershed.** Find out where your drinking water comes from and where storm water runoff goes. Take a driving tour of your watershed, or canoe or kayak a local stream or river. For a wealth of information on water quality, monitoring activities in your watershed, and organizations near you, check out EPA's Surf Your Watershed Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/surf/>. Support local watershed groups and consider getting involved in water quality monitoring.
- **Keep it green.** Look at a map of your town and identify natural resources, open space, agricultural areas, and land features that make your area unique. Work with local citizen groups, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to protect what's most valuable and carefully plan future development. Keep your own property green, too. Add native trees and shrubs to your landscape to provide habitat for wildlife and showcase the unique plants of your region.
- **Fix the big drains.** Almost every community and property has them—fixable problems that strain water resources. Whether it's aging infrastructure at a municipal sewage treatment plant, a faulty irrigation system that wastes water, or a leaky faucet, focus your attention on the things you can do that will have the greatest positive impact.
- **Plan smarter, drive less.** Cars are a major culprit of pollution and environmental degradation. Oil, gas, and other fluid leaks are all prime sources of water pollution, as is stormwater runoff from paved roads and parking lots. Auto exhaust contributes to atmospheric deposition of toxics into waterways. And environmental impacts associated with the oil industry are monumental. Clustering commercial development,

revitalizing downtowns, creating walkable communities, and developing reliable public transportation systems are effective ways to reduce reliance on automobiles, while also enhancing a sense of community. On an individual level, regular car maintenance, choosing energy efficient vehicles, and reducing the amount of driving you do are all part of the solution to this pressing problem.

Focus on your own home. Fix that leaky faucet or toilet. Dispose of paint and household chemicals only at your community's hazardous waste collection days and facilities. Don't pour them down the drain. Reduce the amount of water, fertilizer, and pesticides you use on your own lawn and landscaping. Educate yourself about non-chemical ways to keep your lawn and gardens in good shape. Take Audubon International's Treasuring Home pledge and begin acting on it (<http://www.auduboninternational.org/homepledge/index.htm>).

Work with neighbors. If you are part of a neighborhood association or residential community, work with that organization to help you spread the word about what homeowners can do to protect the environment. Select one or two projects—mounting nest boxes, planting trees, developing landscape guidelines—to kick off your efforts. Better still, enroll in the ACSP for Neighborhoods pilot program and we'll help you get organized.

Extend your reach. Audubon International members have extensive experience in environmental management and education. Time and time again, we've seen amazing results when our members extend their reach beyond their own properties. Involvement with schools, watershed organizations, professional associations, and community groups are tried and true options for sharing what you know and getting others involved. If you're comfortable with what you've been able to do on your own property, why not identify a group or organization to reach out to? The more people get involved, the greater our impact can be.

e-Source

Visit our online information center for fact sheets on a variety of environmental topics:

www.auduboninternational.org/e-source

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