What is a watershed?
A watershed is the land area that drains into a river, lake or other body of water. Ridgelines form the boundaries of watersheds.

The Eagle River originates at its headwaters on Tennessee pass and flows 77 miles before its confluence with the Colorado River in Dotsero. All along those 77 miles, the Eagle River is fed by smaller creeks and streams, called tributaries, including Black Gore Creek, Gore Creek, Homestake Creek, Brush Creek, Lake Creek, and Gypsum Creek. Each of these tributaries has its own smaller watershed, and all together they form the Eagle River watershed.

What is a riparian zone?
A riparian zone is an ecologically diverse bank area of a river that filters pollutants and prevents erosion; it is the interface between land and water.

A riparian zone offers many benefits: overhanging vegetation provides habitat for animals; shades the river, keeping water cooler and thus better for fish populations; and decreases the impacts of flooding by effectively absorbing excess water; the root structures of plants stabilize the river bank; and the soil and plants filter pollutants that would otherwise harm the water and its inhabitants.

Pollution in our waterways
After heavy rains and during snow melt, we see abnormally high levels of surface water. As it moves across the ground, this water, called stormwater runoff, can pick up pollutants and carry them directly to our rivers and streams. Runoff into our waterways can include contaminants such as sediment (like traction sand and eroded soil), nutrients (like nitrogen and phosphorous from agricultural sources), toxic substances (from lawn care practices), and pathogens (including E. coli bacteria from pet waste). This is called nonpoint source pollution because it is coming from many diffuse sources.
Can you spot a healthy riparian zone?

Good

Bad

Worse

There are simple things you can do to protect your watershed!

Respect setbacks
Some communities have mandatory setbacks that provide a buffer against development, thereby protecting riparian zones. Do not build or develop in this area.

Watch automotive waste
Do not dump motor oil, anti-freeze, cleaners, battery acid or other automotive fluids on the ground or down storm drains; recycle or dispose of it according to the packaging instructions. In the event of a spill, absorb the fluid with cat litter or sawdust and then dispose of all materials in a waste container.

Use commercial carwashes
Instead of allowing the soaps and products to drain into nearby waterways, use a commercial service that drains the water to a treatment plant.

Lawn & garden care
Use natural fertilizers like compost and bone meal. Avoid pesticides by using organic options or insecticidal soap instead. You can also try pest-resistant plants or xeriscaping.

If you live near a stream, encourage native growth instead of a manicured lawn. Do not remove natural debris as it provides habitat and food for fish and insect populations and also prevents bank erosion.

Pick up after pets
Pet waste that is dumped or washed into the river can increase the riverine content of bacteria and nutrients like phosphorous. Instead, put it in a proper waste receptacle or flush it down the toilet!

Choose non-polluting soaps for household cleaning

Report dumping & questionable activities
Call the Eagle County Department of Environmental Health at (970) 328-8755 to report suspicious behavior.

Volunteer!
The ERWC is always looking for volunteers to help with restoration, conservation, and reconstruction projects. Email outreach@erwc.org or call to

Eagle River Watershed Council
PO Box 5740
330 Broadway St. Unit D
Eagle, CO 81631
www.erwc.org // (970) 827-5406

Advocates for our rivers

The Eagle River Watershed Council advocates for the health and conservation of the Upper Colorado and Eagle River basins through research, education, and projects. The Council strives to protect and enhance the high-quality natural, scenic and economic values that our rivers and tributaries provide to the citizens, visitors and wildlife of the Eagle River and Colorado River watersheds located.