

The Lowdown on Litter and Pet Waste

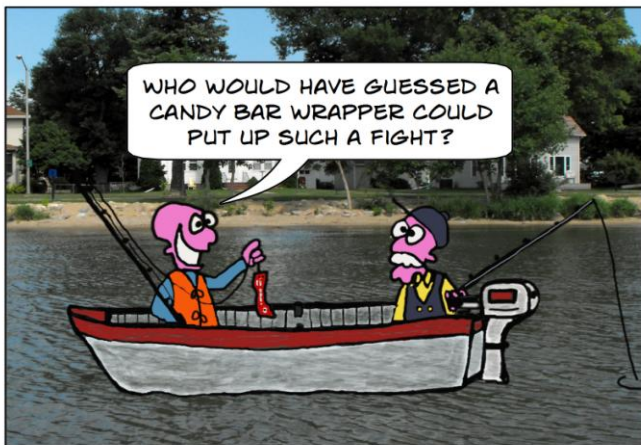
Every Litter Bit Hurts

In May 2008, members of Lake Okabena Improvement Association and several Worthington churches gathered to clean up Lake Okabena's public shoreline and Whiskey Ditch. Teams of workers picked up 1000 pounds of trash in two hours.

Most of this litter was not thrown directly into the water by careless boaters or left on the beach by swimmers. It was more likely blown there from yards, streets and uncovered trash and recycling containers by Worthington's famous winds. A portion of the litter was likely thrown or blown into the street and carried some distance to the lake by the City's storm water system.

Litter is mostly an aesthetic concern: it is ugly. Trash in the City's storm water system, however, can be a bigger problem. Here are a few reasons:

- 1) Trash may plug storm sewer catch basins and pipes reducing flow and contributing to street flooding.
- 2) As organic trash decays, nutrients are released polluting the lakes and streams that the storm sewers drain into.
- 3) Litter carried to lakes and streams can harm fish and wildlife habitat.



Everyone already knows they should not litter. The best way to keep trash out of streets, storm sewers, lakes and streams is to put it into covered containers that will not blow over.



Don't Curb Your Dog

At one time, curbing your dog meant encouraging it to use the street gutter as a toilet. This was discovered later to be a bad idea, since efficient urban storm sewers carried the waste to the nearest river, lake or stream during the next rainstorm. Today, people are encouraged to bag their pet's poop.

Pet waste contains bacteria and nutrients that can degrade water quality. The best way to avoid water pollution is to remove pet waste from hard surfaces