

Residing responsibly in Sedona

The unparalleled beauty of the red rock formations and the crisp, clear and calming waters of Oak Creek draw visitors and residents to recreate and enjoy the serenity while marveling at the magnificent scenery. Oak Creek is designated an Outstanding Arizona Water by the Arizona Water Quality Control Council, and the area around Sedona is home to both the Coconino National Forest and two Arizona State Parks. Residents of Sedona, you have an obligation to do your share to help preserve the integrity of Oak Creek and provide visitors and guests the same beauty that drew you to make Sedona your home; think of it as being stewards of this spectacular piece of Arizona.

Residents can reside responsibly and provide Oak Creek relief from impact due to their living in the vicinity of this wonderous body of water.

Sewer and Septic:

As residents in Sedona and the surrounding county areas, every home and business must dispose of waste. This is accomplished through either a septic system or connection to the City of Sedona sewer system. Residents on septic should be aware of their individual system, and make repairs immediately should any issues arise. Residents on sewer also need to be aware and report issues to either the City of Sedona Wastewater Department if the problem is on city property or rights-of-way, or, if issue is on private property, to a licensed plumbing professional to make repairs. Human waste is a source of E. coli, and Oak Creek is listed as impaired due to E. coli. Attention to these issues and prompt resolution can minimize impacts to Oak Creek by residents.

Trash:

Just as with wastewater, all residences and businesses generate trash. As a responsible resident, you should maintain a service to pick up trash periodically and keep properties free and clear of trash. Trash can make its way to Oak Creek during rain events through drainages, arroyos and stormwater conveyances.

Pet Waste:

Residents with pets need to clean up after their animals. This includes both while walking your dog or on your own property. Pet feces contains E. coli, and as with human waste, must be cleaned up and properly disposed of to minimize contamination of Oak Creek. Like trash, pet waste can wash downstream through drainages, arroyos and other stormwater conveyances to Oak Creek.

Landscaping:

Whether you have a yard of grass, natural soil and native vegetation, or landscape rock, residents need to exercise caution while landscaping. Sprays, such as pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides/weed killers, and fertilizers, negatively impact Oak Creek, although in different ways. As with trash and pet waste, these chemicals/materials reach Oak Creek via drainages, arroyos and stormwater conveyances. Insecticides and pesticides can be very toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms; herbicides and weed killers can be toxic to all organisms, both plant and animal, and fertilizers can create algal blooms which can choke the creek of oxygen leading to fish die off.

If a resident chooses to use any of these chemicals, it is prudent to use the minimum necessary and always adhere to manufacturer's directions for use and application.

Other Household Activities:

Washing cars and performing automotive maintenance are other activities residents may perform at their home. As with the previous examples, wash water from cars; automotive fluids such as oils and greases, gasoline, and coolant; and solvents such as brake cleaner can all make their way to Oak Creek via drainages, arroyos and stormwater conveyances. While wash water and soap may not be toxic, it may carry road grime/oils/greases that were removed during the washing process. Most chemicals associated with auto repair are also hazardous to the environment. Spills of oil and gasoline should be promptly cleaned up, and oil leaks from vehicles should be promptly repaired and cleaned up.

Using water to wash your driveway, sidewalk, or patio can also result in impact to Oak Creek. Any chemicals or other materials detrimental to Oak Creek washed from these surfaces like oil on a driveway from a leaking vehicle, can make its way to Oak Creek. A better solution is to use a broom or other mechanical cleaning of the surfaces to prevent runoff.

Bottom Line:

Residents should always remind themselves that any activity they perform at home can impact Oak Creek. Think your activities through, and utilize non-hazardous chemicals, use minimum amounts necessary to perform the task, clean up spills promptly, follow manufacturer directions, and remember to keep up on septic maintenance requirements and promptly address any problems. Please see the Storms and Stormwater webpage (www.sedonaaz.gov/your-government/departments/public-works/storms-and-stormwater) or contact Michael Righi, Associate Engineer at MRighi@SedonaAZ.gov or (928) 203-5088 if you have any questions.