

## **Responsible Recreation: Sedona Trails and Day Use Areas**

The City of Sedona, and the surrounding national forest and state parks, is unmatched in spectacular red-rock scenery and numerous trails and day-use areas. And with the recent events locally and world-wide, people are itching to get out and recreate more than ever. However, with this recreation comes responsibility.

The City of Sedona utilizes a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). This means that stormwater from roads, private property and residences, businesses and parking lots, and trails/day-use areas flows to Oak Creek untreated; any trash, litter and fecal waste (both pet and human) find their way to our treasured Oak Creek, which is rated as an Outstanding Arizona Water (OAW). Unfortunately, Oak Creek is listed as Not-Attaining (category 4A) for E. coli levels in the 2016 Clean Water Act Assessment. E. coli is a bacterium found in the intestines of humans and other animals that can cause severe sickness if ingested due to tainted food or water.

### **Trash and Litter:**

While it seems obvious to collect your trash, such as plastic water bottles, aluminum cans, and other food packaging, food scraps are often viewed as benign. It may seem inconvenient to pack out these food scraps, such as an apple core or banana peel; these wastes, unfortunately, can increase impairment to Oak Creek as wildlife are attracted to the food waste. While the wildlife is feeding on these food wastes, they may defecate, resulting in an increased amount of wildlife feces in the immediate vicinity of Oak Creek, increasing the E. coli loading of Oak Creek. By properly disposing trash, such as food containers, wrappers, and food scraps and other waste, in proper receptacles, you help prevent wildlife from being attracted to the areas immediate to Oak Creek to feed and deposit their fecal waste.

### **Social Trails:**

Social trails refer to trails which are not authorized by the landowner, whether that is the US Forest Service, State of Arizona or City of Sedona. Hiking in an unfamiliar area, many of these trails become well defined and mistaken by hikers for the actual trail, resulting in more damage. These social trails may be dangerous due to unstable ground, rock ledges, or other hazards; social trails may impact sensitive areas, which are areas of habitat for plants, animals, or microbes that are sensitive to encroachments, and may result in irreparable harm to the species impacted. These trails also result in increased stormwater pollution issues from increased erosion. E. coli levels rise when water in Oak Creek is more turbid/cloudy due to increased sediment in the water.

### **Unauthorized and Illegal Parking:**

These areas, whether in city right-of-way or private property or not, are not only unsightly and dangerous for both pedestrians and other drivers, but may result in increased erosion and sediment loading of Oak Creek, which increases E. coli levels by increasing turbidity of Oak Creek during storm events. You may also be ticketed or have your vehicle towed.

### **Pet waste:**

Naturally, those of us that have dogs love to take them with us while recreating, since they are part of the family. However, there are impacts that our companions can make that need to be minimized. First, as human feces contain E. coli, so does dog feces. Therefore, it is important to clean up after your pet in

order to minimize impacts to Oak Creek. Additionally, picking up your pet's waste leaves the area pristine for others to enjoy. No one wants to step in pet waste recreating around Sedona, whether hiking a local trail or swimming in Oak Creek! Pet Waste Stations are provided by the City of Sedona, the National Forest and Oak Creek Watershed Council. There are also private pet waste stations, such as those located on resort properties or in HOAs, installed throughout the vicinity of Oak Creek, Oak Creek Canyon, and Sedona as a whole; please utilize these to make a difference in Oak Creek.

**Leave No Trace:**

While recreating, the best policy is to practice Leave No Trace Ethics, basically preserving the area as you found it. Whether properly disposing of all trash from your recreation, picking up after your pet, and minimizing your footprint (literally) on the land, you can make a difference in Oak Creek and surrounding areas. You can also take this one step forward and improve the area immensely by packing out more than you pack in, by picking up trash and leaving the area better than you found it!

More information may be found at the following websites:

Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics: [www.LNT.org](http://www.LNT.org)

Sedona Cares Pledge: [www.visitsedona.com/sustainable-tourism-plan/sedona-cares-pledge](http://www.visitsedona.com/sustainable-tourism-plan/sedona-cares-pledge)

Oak Creek Watershed Council: [www.oakcreekwatershed.org](http://www.oakcreekwatershed.org)

City of Sedona Storms and Stormwater webpage:

[www.sedonaaz.gov/your-government/departments/public-works/storms-and-stormwater](http://www.sedonaaz.gov/your-government/departments/public-works/storms-and-stormwater)