

City Talk: May 10, 2022
Michael Righi, assistant engineer
Public Works Department

Spring in Sedona – a time of work and play

Spring is a wonderful time of year to get out and enjoy that perfect weather by recreating on the many trails that Sedona has to offer and also do that yard clean up you've been meaning to do. This article will go over responsible recreation in the days leading up to summer and also give information on preparing for the upcoming monsoon and fire seasons.

We encourage you to follow these suggestions while recreating in and around the red rocks and Oak Creek:

- Stay on established trails and roads: hiking off trail can result in damage to the ecosystem and disturbances that break up and wash away soils with future rain events, increasing the turbidity (murky red water) of Oak Creek.
- Remove and properly dispose of all trash and waste, including food scraps: we all enjoy snacks on the trails and sometimes even a full picnic. Unfortunately, improper disposal of these wastes draws in wildlife, and therefore their feces, resulting in additional loading of the creek with E. coli.
- Clean up after our four-legged friends: our dogs are wonderful companions while recreating, but E. coli is present in their feces. Please clean up after your pet's "number two" to prevent additional E. coli from entering the creek.

Adding to the recreation experiences in Sedona, the city has been working on a network of shared use paths to help get us out and about. The Sedona Trails & Pathways System (ST&PS) has not only installed pathways for hiking, biking and dog walking, but additional pet waste stations have been installed. New shared use paths include stretches along Thunder Mountain Road/Sanborn Road, Soldiers Pass Road and Dry Creek Road; more are either beginning construction or planned, such as Chapel Road and an extension of the existing path on Dry Creek Road. In recent years, the number of pet waste stations owned and operated by the city has grown from 13 stations to 20 currently, and the collections have ranged from over 3,500 pounds (2018) to just over 5,000 pounds (2021). This year alone, we are at 1,900 pounds in four months! These stations are critical to helping reduce the level of E. coli that enters our watershed, and eventually Oak Creek.

Residents are also preparing for both fire season and monsoon season. Fire season preparations include removing dead/dying trees and brush around properties to create defensible space as well as removing fire fuels. Brush and trees are to be disposed of properly and not be left in drainages on your property. To assist homeowners in proper disposal of brush and trees, the city recently provided curbside yard waste collections and drop off points for residents. The city plans on offering this program every year so put it on your calendar to watch for this announcement on when your neighborhood will be serviced next spring.

Monsoon preparations include making sure any arroyos, drainages and washes around properties are clear and no trash or debris is present that could both result in blocked culverts downstream or pollution of Oak Creek. It is a common misconception that washes and drainages on private property belong to the city but if on private property they are just that – private property. It is the owner's responsibility to maintain these to assure free-flow during rain events and to reduce debris from reaching Oak Creek.

In order to prevent drainage issues during a monsoon, the city will proactively be performing pre-monsoon inspections of washes and drainages. This program helps determine if there's a drainage problem in both city rights of way and on private property. If you receive a request from the city to perform an inspection, please answer promptly. While we are only trying to be helpful, you may choose to permit the city to enter your property or not - the choice is yours. If you do not receive a request, understand that there are multiple washes and drainages throughout the city and not all can be inspected every year. Please be mindful, whether or not an inspection is performed, to keep drainages on your property free-flowing and trash free.

All of us, whether residents or visitors, can do our part to reduce Oak Creek pollution and keep our slice of heaven beautiful for future generations. For additional information, please visit the Public Works Department webpage at www.sedonaaz.gov/publicworks.