

EWGCOG Local Government Briefings

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What's in the News...

In national news...

Aquatic Life Declines at Early Stages of Urban Development

The number of native fish and aquatic insects, especially those that are pollution sensitive, declines in urban and suburban streams at low levels of development — levels often considered protective for stream communities, according to a new study by the U.S. Geological Survey.

“When the area of driveways, parking lots, streets and other impervious cover reaches 10 percent of a watershed area, many types of pollution sensitive aquatic insects decline by as much as one third, compared to streams in undeveloped forested watersheds,” said Tom Cuffney, USGS biologist. “We learned that there is no ‘safezone,’ meaning that even minimal or early stages of development can negatively affect aquatic life in urban streams.”

As a watershed becomes developed, the amount of pavement, sidewalks and other types of urban land cover increases. During storms, water is rapidly transported over these urban surfaces to streams. The rapid rise and fall of stream flow and changes in temperature can be detrimental to fish and aquatic insects. Stormwater from urban development can also contain fertilizers and insecticides used along roads and on lawns, parks and golf courses.

The USGS study examined the effects of urbanization on algae, aquatic insects, fish, habitat and chemistry in urban streams in nine metropolitan areas across the country. Comparisons among the nine areas show that not all urban streams respond exactly the same, mostly because stream quality and aquatic health reflect a complex combination of land and chemical use, land and storm-water management, population density and watershed development, and natural features, such as soils, hydrology, and climate.

The full report and extended video podcasts are available at <http://water.usgs.gov/nawqa/urban>.

Online Resources...

Drive Less, Win Prizes

With the Denver region's ground-level ozone concentration currently out of compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency standards, Arvada, Colo., is aiming to improve its air quality by reducing the overall number of vehicle trips taken by residents. The city is working with the Denver-based nonprofit Regional Air Quality Council to launch Every Trip Counts, an online resource helping commuters recognize how much they commute and how they can reduce their carbon footprint. The site offers a worksheet for commuters to compare different transportation methods, interactive Google maps to track potential bike and bus routes and a tracking service to monitor attempts to reduce their carbon emissions. Commuters who reduce their number of weekly vehicle trips can win prizes. The Every Trip Counts Web site address is http://www.ozoneaware.org/everytripcounts/every_trip_counts.

Source: *Governing.com*
