May is Kentucky Water Awareness Month
Source: Ashley Osborne, extension associate for environmental and natural resource issues

Are you water aware?

Do you know how your home and garden water use impacts the water around you? May is Kentucky Water Awareness Month, and that’s a good time to think about how what we do affects the health of waterways in Kentucky and beyond.

Kentucky has more than 90,000 miles of rivers and streams. Each stream eventually meets the Mississippi River, either directly or via the Ohio River. That means everything we put into the water can potentially reach as far as the Gulf of Mexico.

A waterway is not only affected by what is flowing into it, but also by what is happening on the land surrounding it. Failing septic systems, illegal dumping, urban development and improper agricultural practices can negatively impact a stream.

When rain falls, it picks a wide range of pollutants. In urban environments, that could include oil, gas, fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste and more.

We can all be more aware around the house and in our gardens. Here are some simple things you can do to make a positive impact on Kentucky’s rivers and streams:

- Keep your vehicle in good working condition.
- Pick up after your pet.
- Seed or mulch bare-soil areas to prevent erosion.
- Install a rain barrel.
- Plant a rain garden.
- Never dump anything down a storm drain or sinkhole.
- Sparingly use pesticides and fertilizers.
- Properly dispose of trash.
- Don’t dispose of hazardous waste in sinks or toilets.

For more information, contact the Leslie County Cooperative Extension Service or Ray Wilson at 672-2154.