



## CLEAN WATER IS UP TO YOU

By Carol Hillestad for the Brodhead Watershed Association

### What's the Big Deal About Water Anyway?

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Clean water, yada yada. Why do we worry about water anyway? It's everywhere. It comes out of the sky! It comes out of the ground!

Here, in the watershed of the Brodhead Creek, it's true that water is abundant. We have more miles of creeks and streams in Pennsylvania than another other state except Alaska.

And thanks to local vigilance, of all the creeks in Pennsylvania, ours are the cleanest and most pristine. By far.

When there's so much of it, it's hard to remember that water is a highly delicate resource. It doesn't take much to impair it, or to pollute it. And with every acre of woods that's clearcut, not to mention every new load of winter road salt, drinking water in our area is at risk.



Healthy creeks flow clean and clear. Soil erosion and land disturbance can harm creeks large and small and put water plants, fish and micro invertebrates at risk.

If you paid attention after the heavy rains this past December, you saw creek water running brown. Some people may shrug it off, thinking "that's natural" or "it'll clear up." They're missing an important truth: that much muddy sediment is definitely not "normal."

Some cloudiness is natural — heavy rain means more friction between the fast-flowing water and the creek bed and banks. That stirs up particles of soil and organic matter from the bottom of the creek itself.

But when the water looks like milk chocolate, that's not natural. Brown water means heavy erosion from creek banks that have been mowed and stripped of vegetation killing the natural net of roots that keeps the bank in place. Brown water means stormwater runoff is pouring from rooftops, miles of strip malls and paved parking lots, from overflowing detention basins and swales, and from expanses of once-forested, now-denuded land. Treating winter roads with salt adds another contaminant to oil, gas, and road debris.

All the water that ever existed on planet Earth is here now, naturally recycled and reused, endlessly, down the eons, since water first formed. Older than the hills, it is a gift from the past that we owe to the future.

You can help. If you see something that doesn't seem right in a stream, go to [www.brodheadwatershed.org](http://www.brodheadwatershed.org) and click on Who to Call When You See a Problem in a Stream.

*For humans, fish, and every living thing, Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quality and quantity throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member today. <https://www.brodheadwatershed.org>.*