Friends of the Chicago River

Dedicated in its mission since 1979 to improve and protect the Chicago River system for people, plants, and animals.
THINK! Beyond the Banks

Medication Disposal
Advocate for the River
Appliances
Eco-Friendly Products
Conserve Water
Native Plants
Green Infrastructure
Pet Waste
Waste Disposal
Washing Responsibly

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Friends of the Chicago River
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chinagoriver.org/think
Presented by the WRIGLEY Company Foundation
Medication Disposal

The problem: Medicine alters water chemistry. Birth control pills have been known to affect fish reproduction.

The solution: Be smart with expired/unwanted medication. Don’t flush them down the toilet – contact your local hospital for proper disposal.
An Increase in Water Quality means...

Increase in Biodiversity: Fish

Biodiversity of Fish Species in the Chicago and Calumet River Systems Between 1974 and 2005
Appliances

The problem: Inefficient appliances waste money and energy. Washing incomplete loads wastes water.

The solution: Save loads of water, money and energy. Only run your dishwasher and laundry when you have full loads. Buy energy-star appliances.
Keeping excess water and detergents out of the river helps improve biodiversity.

**Biological + Diversity = Biodiversity**

What to watch for...
Diversity of life (biodiversity)
Diversity of river habitat
(logs, rocks, pools, riffles, plant life)
Conserve Water

The problem: Wasting water contributes to combined sewer overflows (CSO) and wastes water that can be used around the house.

The solution: Fix leaks, shorten your showers (especially during rain), disconnect your downspouts (and set up a rain barrel), and don’t over-water lawns.
Conserving water helps reduce flash flooding and reduces soil erosion.

What to watch for…
Is the river level too high?…
...or too low?
Is there flash flooding or are there signs of erosion?
Green Infrastructure

The problem: Impermeable surfaces in urban areas contributes greatly to flash-flooding and soil erosion.

Build a rain garden (with native plants), install wood decking instead of concrete, and use interlocking bricks and paver stones for walkways.
Green infrastructure reduces stormwater runoff, flooding and soil erosion.
Waste Disposal

The problem: Some products around your home contain sodium hypochlorite, phenol, cresol, ammonia and formaldehyde that can kill river plants and animals.

The solution: Always dispose of hazardous household products (paints, used oil, pesticides, grease, cleaners, etc.) correctly. Never put them down the drain!
Properly dispose of Household Hazardous Waste

- Prestone Antifreeze-Coolant
- Fertilizer
- Batteries
- Soda Can
- Pennzoil Motor Oil
- Road Salt
Washing Responsibly

The problem: Running water unnecessarily wastes our most precious resource and contributes to flooding.

The solution: Turn off the faucet when you don’t need it. You’ll save water while brushing your teeth, doing dishes, or washing your hands.
An Increase in Water Quality means...

Increase in Biodiversity: Birds

Bald Eagle
Black-crowned Night Heron
Sandhill Crane
Osprey
Pet Waste

The problem: Pet waste carries bacteria like *E. coli*, *salmonella* and *giardia* that can harm people and wildlife.

The solution: Pick up and properly dispose of pet waste even when you walk in the woods. This way bacteria doesn’t ends up in the river when it rains.
An Increase in Water Quality means...

Increase in Biodiversity: Mammals

- Red Fox
- Beaver
- Coyote
- Little Brown Bat
- River Otter
Native Plants

The problem: Non-native plants crowd out native species, decrease biodiversity, and have shallow root systems that don’t hold soil.

The solution: Plant a rain garden with native plants to absorb rain water and retain soil, keeping both out of the sewer system and the river.
Edgebrook Woods & Kickapoo Woods Demonstration Projects to restore the Chicago River
Eco-Friendly Products

The problem: Household cleaning products such as shampoo, dishwasher soap, and laundry soap can contain sulfates or phosphates which are harmful to fish if they get in the river.

The solution: Use environmentally-friendly cleaning products that don’t contain harmful chemicals.
Household cleaning products will alter river chemistry and kill river plants and animals.

What to watch for…
Physical changes: color, smell, and turbidity
Chemical changes: oxygen levels, nutrients, and pollutants
Biological changes: plants, animals (macros), and bacteria (coliforms)
Advocate for the River

The problem: If no one cares about the Chicago River, no one will ever work to improve the quality of the Chicago River.

The solution: Get involved... volunteer... start a discussion... become a member of Friends of the Chicago River.