

Coastal storm water rules are a hot topic of discussion throughout Carteret County. Regardless of your personal opinion of this subject, we should all agree that it's in our best interests to be good stewards of the environment and do everything we can to keep our beautiful area as pristine as possible. I want to take this opportunity to provide a few reminders on actions we should all take to be good environmentalists ... and good neighbors.

**Pet waste:** Clean up after your pets using a scooper or plastic bag, seal the bag and place it in the trash. A Town Ordinance requires this. Dispose of litter box waste properly, not by dumping it in the nearest ditch or down your toilet.

**Yard waste:** Do not blow or sweep yard waste into a street, storm drain or ditch where it can cause algae blooms, oxygen depletion or clogs that cause flooding. Our Public Works Department picks up bagged yard waste every Wednesday, free of charge.

**Cooking oil and grease:** Do not pour oil or grease down household drains where they will clog sewer pipes. Repairing these clogs is expensive and that cost is passed on to our water and sewer customers. Instead, put the oil and grease in a container, seal it and place it in the trash.

**Auto fluids:** Do not pour used fluids down storm drains or allow them to leak onto pavement. Recycle these fluids along with used batteries. This guidance also applies to household hazardous waste such as paint and cleaners containing harmful chemicals.

**Litter:** Not only is it unsightly, litter can clog storm drains and ditches. Always put litter and cigarette butts in the trash. Cigarette filters contain a form of plastic that takes many years to break down in the environment. All of you who throw your butts out the car window are doing much more harm than you think. Most importantly, recycle discarded items that are meant to be recycled.

I want to emphasize that last point. We don't do enough recycling in our community. Not only is recycling the right thing to do for environmental reasons, but it directly impacts the financial health of our town. We are charged a fee for every pound of trash that is picked up and crosses the landfill scales. But we're not charged that fee for recycled material. The more we recycle, the lower the amount we pay in fees that have to be passed on to you.

Please excuse me if I'm "preaching to the choir," but many of us are not doing the right things to protect our fragile environment. If we all just take the few extra minutes necessary to do the things I've mentioned here, it will go a long, long way towards improving our quality of life.