

## Reaching Critical Mass

### By Laura Tyler

Most of us are environmentally conscious. We recycle, leave no foot print when we camp, take our own bags to the grocery store and purchase environmentally friendly products. We work at respecting our earth and preserving our planet for future generations.

On top of that we are critically aware of large scale contamination and things such as the effect of oil spills on our water quality. The good news is that more and more people are following the tenets of environmental awareness every day. And grand scale corporations are being held accountable for contaminating our environment.

But there is one pollutant that seems to slip under the radar for most people. And this pollutant is multiplying at an alarming rate. Water quality is highly affected by this product as snow melts and our waterways increase flow with spring runoff. Our parks and trails are increasingly polluted as this product is leached into the ground. This toxic material seeps into the ground releasing dangerous pathogens which our waste water systems are not designed to filter.

Our parks and recreational waterways are becoming increasingly contaminated. One gram of this contaminant contains 23 million bacteria. Campylobacteriosis, Toxocarisis and Cysticercosis as well as Salmonellosis, Coccidia E.coli, Giardia, and Parvo virus are among the diseases and viruses that can be caused by this toxic waste.

There are studies by both the EPA and the CDC supporting this information. According to the EPA this contaminant is as toxic to the environment as chemical and oil spills. This contaminant is the #3 cause of water pollution.

Guess what folks? It's dog poop! Every person who thinks that dog feces breaks down into a good fertilizer is misinformed. We all grew up thinking this, but science is telling us a different story now. We can control this pollutant by simply bagging up our dogs waste and depositing it in a trash can. This is our only way to contain the spread of contamination to OUR earth.

When I first started research for this article, one of the questions I asked friend and National Park Ranger Kathy Krisko is; exactly when and why did the National Park Service prohibit dogs on the trails in National Parks? And what caused this? She told me that pet waste is only part of the issue but it all adds up.

Ranger Krisko shared this information: "I know that in the NPS, loose dogs were considered to be as much an issue as the dog poop – because they chase wildlife, frighten other people who are hiking, misbehave around horses and other dogs, and get bitten by snakes, coyotes, and other animals and require rescue. We used to have a 'Dog Card' that said: "Keep your dog on a leash: 1) for the safety of your dog 2) for the safety of other people 3) for the safety of wildlife 4) because it's the law!"

Bottom line; we can do something about this. Leaving dog poop on the ground is NOT recycling. It's a pollutant and it's damaging our environment. We live in such a great dog friendly environment. More and more people have dogs and that's wonderful. The down side is that those people who do not clean up after their dogs is also multiplying. We've got to take a stand here. Let's make our community the cleanest dog town in the USA.

This article suggestion came from one of our readers! Thank you! Your feedback and suggestions are appreciated! *Laura Tyler is a certified professional dog trainer with 25+ years of experience and has earned associate certification through the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. She owns Total Teamwork Training LLC here in Northwest Colorado.* [www.totalteamworktraining.com](http://www.totalteamworktraining.com)