

## Maintaining Your Vehicle Improves Water Quality

Benjamin Currens, UKY Cooperative Extension

Poor vehicle maintenance practices can release pollutants. Leaking fluids such as anti-freeze, motor oil, transmission fluid, and fuel, or solvents used during maintenance, heavy metals from brake pad dust, or battery acid from batteries can be transported to local streams in runoff during rain events.

Regularly inspect your vehicle for leaks. Having to add fluids regularly, or finding stains and puddles under your vehicle are signs that you have a leak. If your vehicle needs repair, select reputable mechanics for vehicle service and ask them if they properly dispose of fluids. If you will be performing your own vehicle maintenance, the following can help prevent stream pollution.

- Perform all maintenance over a concrete, asphalt, or other impervious surface to prevent leaks from soaking into the ground.

- Maintenance in the street should be avoided, if possible, particularly if storm drains are nearby.

- Use funnels and drip pans when adding or draining fluids to reduce spillage.

- If spills do occur immediately clean them up using rags or better yet an absorbent such as cat litter or dry sweep. Do not wash or rinse the spilled fluid away.

New and used fluids should be stored properly in a leakproof container such as the manufacturers' fluid container and placed in a secondary container (i.e. 5-gallon bucket) to catch leaks. Do not place stored fluids near floor drains or sumps. Used fluids should be disposed of at appropriate household hazardous waste drop-off locations. Many communities offer this service. Check with your local stormwater permit coordinator or County Cooperative Extension Service office for location, date, and time.

If storing used motor parts, these should be drained of fluids and may need to be placed in a container. Auto parts should not be cleaned in sinks or tubs connected to sanitary sewer. Sewage treatment facilities do not remove these pollutants.