

A FACT SHEET ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF

# TOBACCO LITTER



**TOBACCO LITTER** occurs when a cigarette butt or other tobacco product is improperly discarded. It is especially noticeable at busy roadway intersections, recreation areas, parking lots, and transition zones between smoking and non-smoking areas. This type of litter is toxic, harms wildlife, and pollutes our local waterways.

Studies show, only 10% of cigarette butts are properly disposed of and cigarette butts are the least likely item to be placed in a receptacle.

*iQ Research & Consulting, Keep America Beautiful Pocket Ashtray Study, January 2008.*



Free pocket ash receptacles are available upon request. Contact Keep Cobb Beautiful to request one at (770) 528-1135.

## IMPACTS TO YOU, LOCAL WATER QUALITY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

In Cobb County, our water comes from, and drains into, two watersheds: the Chattahoochee River and the Etowah River (Lake Allatoona). The condition of these two bodies of water is critical to the health of our community.

When anything is littered on the ground, it has the potential to reach our fresh water sources. During rain events, runoff carries litter, including cigarette butts, into the nearest stream, often through a storm drain. However, the pollution begins long before the cigarette butt reaches the stream. Once a cigarette filter becomes soaked with runoff water, the toxins held within spread into the water. This polluted water flows into the stream creating a toxic environment for fish, frogs, aquatic insects, salamanders, and anything else that may live in or use water.



Once in the environment, cigarette filters take ten to fifteen years to break down. Keep America Beautiful roadway cleanup data shows that 38% of all roadside litter is tobacco products, mainly cigarette butts. In 2011, a CDC study estimated that 292.8 billion cigarettes were consumed. If only 1% of the 292.8 billion cigarettes were littered, then approximately 334,300 cigarette butts would be tossed onto the ground per hour in the United States! Studies show the number is actually far greater than just 1%. Consider the cumulative impact of this problem.

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TOBACCO LITTER IMPACTS, SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT [WWW.COBBSTREAMS.ORG](http://WWW.COBBSTREAMS.ORG)**



## THE CONSEQUENCES



When tobacco products are littered, residents and businesses are forced to “pick up” the tab. Cigarette butt litter has to be cleaned up. This requires additional sidewalk and street sweeping, greenway and park maintenance, and increased maintenance of storm drains.

Recreation areas become less attractive. Tobacco litter represents nearly 32% of all litter in outdoor recreation areas. Cigarette butt litter on beaches and waterfronts, at ball fields and parks, picnic areas, and hiking trails decreases the appeal of these natural escapes.

This litter also creates fire hazards, impacts local wildlife, and eventually contributes to lost tourism and revenue. Community quality-of-life suffers. Focusing on small improvements, like reducing cigarette butt litter, creates safer and more economically vibrant communities.

*Results from the nation's largest litter study— KAB*

***KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL SURVEYS FOUND THAT SMOKERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO LITTER CIGARETTE BUTTS IN AREAS THAT ALREADY CONTAIN OTHER FORMS OF LITTER – SO DON'T LITTER ANYTHING!***

- **Never throw tobacco products on the ground, into bushes, out of a car window, or along already littered areas.**
- **Carry a pocket ashtray and use it.**
- **Request ash receptacles at your place of employment or at businesses you patronize.**
- **Encourage fellow smokers to use an ashtray.**

## DID YOU KNOW...

- ▶ Littering is a behavior that is easy to stop.
- ▶ For every littered cigarette butt, two gallons of water can become contaminated.
- ▶ 95% of all cigarette filters are made of cellulose acetate, a slow-degrading plastic that has a cotton-like appearance.
- ▶ Aside from roadways, the sites with the highest tobacco litter rates are hospitals and medical facilities, followed by recreation areas, bars and restaurants, and then retail locations and city centers.

### Ashtrays, cans, and receptacles...



**they are plentiful. Please use them!**

***BE RESPONSIBLE. OUR WORLD IS NOT AN ASHTRAY.***

**COBB COUNTY WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**  
770.528.1482 • [www.cobbstreams.org](http://www.cobbstreams.org)

