



## Dickinson Bayou pet waste and water quality

### What does dog poo have to do with my bayou?

Pet waste is one of *many* sources of water pollution, and something most of us can easily address as we go about daily routine.

Rain water washes poop left on the ground into our storm drains which connect to creeks and bayous where the poo decomposes. During decomposition, this waste using up precious oxygen needed by fish and other creatures to stay alive and healthy.



One of the problems Dickinson Bayou faces is low levels of oxygen in the water. With warm temperatures and high levels of other pollutants (especially nitrogen and phosphorus) the decomposition of poop and other waste can cause a drop in oxygen that is harmful to fish and other aquatic organisms.

### What can I do about dog poo?



#### BAG IT

Pick up dog waste using a plastic bag and deposit it into a trash can.

Reuse plastic shopping bags or purchase biodegradable bags at a pet store.



#### FLUSH IT

Pick up dog waste, deposit it into the toilet and flush it away. Do NOT flush bags!



#### BURY IT

Pick up dog waste, dig a hole about 6 inches deep. Place waste into hole and cover. Be sure to do this well away from gardens growing eatable plants!

In fact, Dickinson Bayou does not suffer from permanent low oxygen levels but from periodic and drastic drops. Dickinson Bayou is also considered impaired for high levels of bacteria in the water by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Pet waste is one likely source of bacteria in the bayou.

## Health Risks of Pet Waste

Pet waste may contain bacteria, viruses and parasites that are harmful to humans.

Some diseases caused by pet waste include:

*Campylobacteriosis* – bacterial infection that causes diarrhea in humans (carried by dogs and cats)

*Cryptosporidium* – parasitic infection that causes diarrhea and abdominal distress (carried by dogs and cats)



*Toxocariasis* – Common round worms that can infect humans and cause temporary vision loss, rash, fever or cough (carried by dogs)

*Toxoplasmosis* – parasite especially harmful to pregnant woman as it can cause birth defects if the woman becomes infected (carried by cats)



## Pet Waste Ordinances

Many communities have chosen to adopt pet waste ordinances to keep poop out of waterways and off of shoes. These “pooper scooper” laws typically require pet owners to clean up after their pets when they are on public property such as parks. This is especially important for parks located on a bayou and for dog parks. A well worded ordinance should also encourage proper pet waste disposal at home.