

Star

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Metro

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Reviving our rivers

Our waterways have been suffering from effects of pollution and apathy but it is still not too late to conserve them with the help of these 10 tips. >2&3

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Top 10 ways to save our rivers

Small changes in everyday habits can make a big difference in conserving waterways

By **WONG PEK MEI** and **NOEL FOO**
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TO MARK World Rivers Day tomorrow, *StarMetro* gives attention to our waterways to remind us of their importance as well as the many threats confronting them. It is easy to forget how important the rivers are to us as we get caught up with our everyday life. With the help of the Global Environment Centre (GEC) and Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID), we compiled a list of how you can help in conserving our rivers. It does not take much to contribute positively to our rivers.



1. Get to know your river basin

The river basin is the land surrounding a river and all water over the said area feeds into that river. Activities at the upstream affect downstream neighbours regardless of municipal boundaries and jurisdictions. Environmental authorities and activists hope that people will change their habits and stop pollution once they understand that any liquid poured on the ground or into the drains will go into the river downstream. In an interview conducted a few years ago, GEC found that less than 30% of people in Kuala Lumpur knew that the drain in front of their house led to the river. Basically, if we pour curry into our kitchen sink and the sink connects to the drain, it goes to the river.



2. Organise "My Drains Day" to keep our drains free from rubbish

Our drains are only meant to channel rainwater to rivers and reduce flood risk. Polluting and clogging our drains with rubbish will not only pollute our main source of drinking water but will create a potential breeding ground for pests. Activities such as drain clean-ups, drain stenciling and pollution mapping can be organised to educate our community on the importance of having clean drains and instil care for our drains. For details, visit www.riverranger.my

3. Adopting zero-waste lifestyle

Despite the existence of environmental laws to protect our rivers, garbage and other forms of waste are found in our waterways. According to DID, an estimated 50 to 60 tonnes of waste end up in the river system daily in Klang Valley alone.

By adopting a zero-waste lifestyle that consists of "Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Compost and Close the Loop (4R2C)", we can limit our trash output and save tonnes of solid waste from ending up in landfills and rivers. For more information, visit www.gec.org.my



4. Support river-related activities in community

Apply for a grant or make donation to the National River Care Fund – Small Grant Programme, which is an initiative established by GEC to support local communities, community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations to pursue their own river conservation initiatives. There are also other activities such as the W.A.T.E.R Project, which is a collaborative effort between GAB Foundation and GEC.



5. Be a community river scientist

Organise a trip out to your local river to assess its health via physical, chemical and biological monitoring. Upload your results to www.riverranger.my website. The information will be of great use to environmental conservation NGOs like GEC to protect rivers in Malaysia.



6. Upcycle used cooking oil and trap grease

Turning your used cooking oil into soap or candles or even biodiesel will help to reduce water pollution as well as enhance the river aquatic biodiversity. Direct discharge of sullage water especially fat, oil and grease from houses and restaurants into the drain leads to blockage in the collection pipes and sewer lines, causing overflows on streets and properties. Overflows will contaminate ponds, streams and rivers. Installing a grease trap helps to remove fats and oils before the liquid enters the municipal waste system. Regular cleaning will ensure your grease trap works at the optimum level. Contact your local authority to find how you can contact waste oil collectors.



7. Be your river's guardian

Be alert about the changes around your river. Monitor and report problems or illegal activities happening at your river. Report incidents of illegal dumping and any other pollution to Public Complaints Bureau (PCB), OneJPS Facebook, OneJPS Twitter, 1MOCC, pro@water.gov.my and 15888 mysms (MyGOV Mobile).

<p>TURN OFF THE TAP WHILE BRUSHING YOUR TEETH Use a cup instead, saves ≈ 2,000l of water per year.</p>	<p>TAKE A 5-MINUTE SHOWER INSTEAD OF 8 MINUTES Cut down the number of showers and turn it off when using soap and shampoo, saves ≈ 1,100l of water per year.</p>	<p>TAKE A TWO-BASIN APPROACH WHEN WASHING DISHES Use one for soaking and scrubbing dirty dishes (with dish soap) and one for rinsing. Saves ≈ 4,000l of water per year.</p>
<p>CHECK AND REPAIR YOUR LEAKING TAPS OR SHOWERHEADS A drop per second could add up to tens of liters in no time.</p>	<p>REPORT PIPE BREAKS / LEAKS / DAMAGES and water thefts at once. This threatens our fire protection, putting water quality at risk, raises the possibility of increased water bills and the need for water use restrictions.</p>	<p>ALL DRAINS LEAD TO RIVERS WITHOUT ANY PRIOR TREATMENT So make sure nothing else except rainwater is going into your drains.</p>

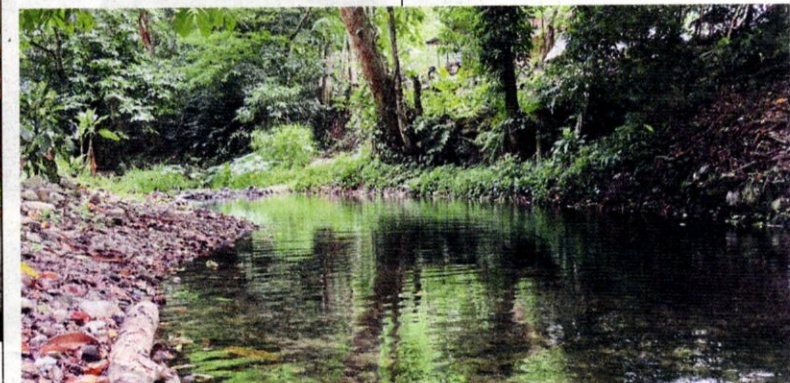


9. Adopt your local river

Neighbourhoods can adopt a river via their residents association or under an environment committee to protect and care for the health of our watersheds and the living organisms in them. The adoption can also be part of corporate sustainability responsibility programmes organised together with the local communities with the support of local government agencies.

8. Save water

Ninety percent of our water supply comes from rivers. Using water more efficiently will mean more is left in the rivers. Malaysians use 47 litres more than the United Nations' recommended water usage of 165 litres per day. Adopting water-saving practices in your daily lifestyle will have a positive impact on our raw water availability in the long run. See graphic.



10. Support the River of Life (RoL) initiatives

The River of Life (RoL) aims to transform Sungai Kelang into a vibrant and liveable waterfront with high economic value. The Federal Government has allocated RM4bil to clean up Sungai Kelang and its tributaries under the 10-year RoL project, which began in 2013. Those interested to support RoL can do so by participating in the River of Life Public Outreach Programme (RoLPoP) initiated by DID. For more information on RoL, visit www.myrol.my

Images and information courtesy of Global Environment Centre (GEC) and Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID)