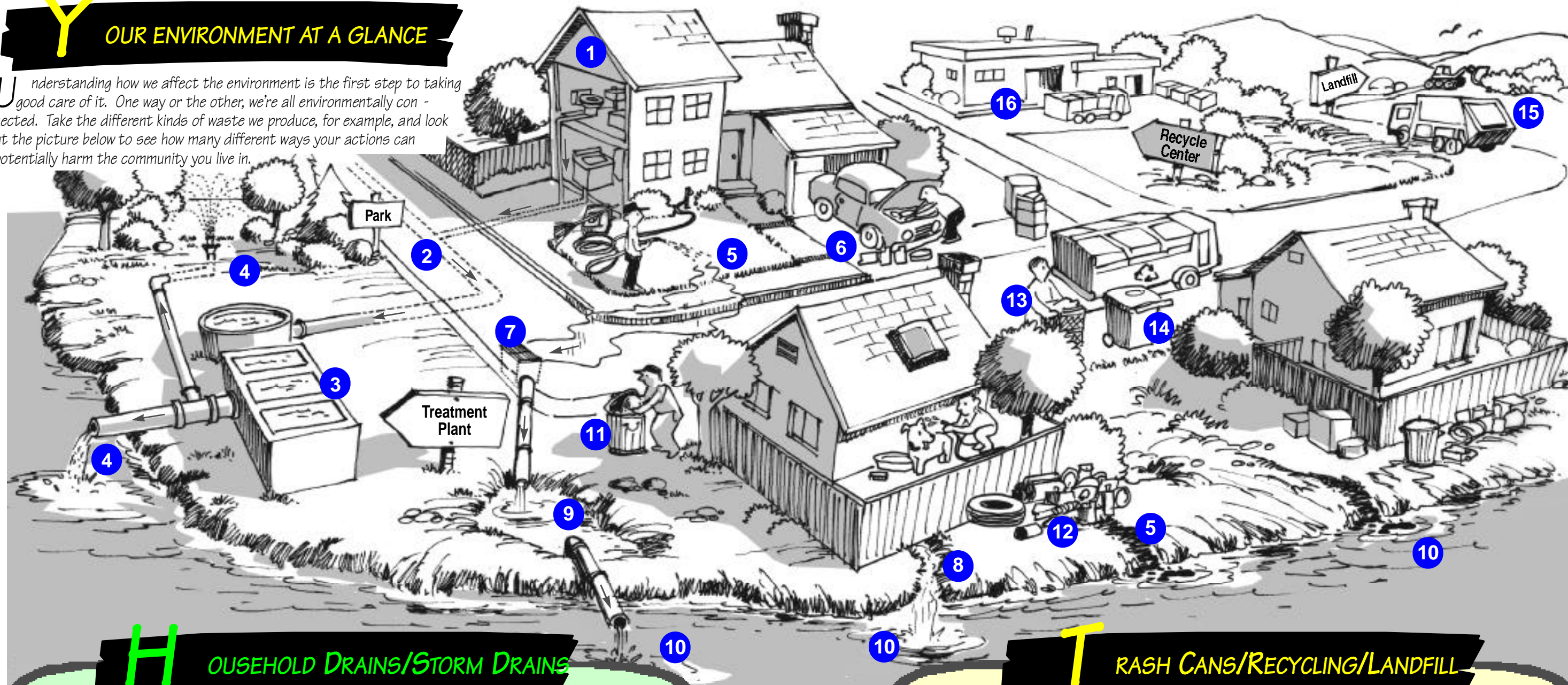


Y OUR ENVIRONMENT AT A GLANCE

Understanding how we affect the environment is the first step to taking good care of it. One way or the other, we're all environmentally connected. Take the different kinds of waste we produce, for example, and look at the picture below to see how many different ways your actions can potentially harm the community you live in.



H OUSEHOLD DRAINS/STORM DRAINS

In our households (1) we dump “wastewater” down toilets, sink drains, and showers. From there it goes into sewer pipes (2) which transport it to a local wastewater treatment plant (3) where the dirty water is scientifically cleaned and (4) released safely back into the environment. Outside the home, water flows from yards (5) and driveways (6) into street drains (7) and ditches (8); from there it flows directly into local creeks (9), rivers and other bodies of water (10)—without treatment.

Potential Problems:

- Pesticides, used motor oil, and other household hazardous wastes were never meant to be poured or rinsed down sinks, tubs, toilets, or outside storm drains. Most wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove toxic chemicals from wastewater. These untreated hazardous wastes at the plant interfere with the treatment process by killing bacteria needed to break down sewer and septic tank wastes. And since they are not removed during treatment, they also end up in the Bay.
- And hazardous wastes washed into street (storm) drains flow directly into local creeks which in turn flow into the Bay.
- Groundwater used for drinking or irrigation can be contaminated when waste products are poured onto or seep into the ground.

T RASH CANS/RECYCLING/LANDFILL

Every day the average American throws away 5-6 pounds of waste (11). Some of that garbage is household hazardous waste (12) like pesticides, old paint, and used motor oil. Today most families separate their garbage from valuable recyclables (13) such as paper, glass, aluminum, plastic, and green waste (14). The garbage ends up in a landfill (15) while the recyclables are processed at a materials recovery facility (16) and the green waste is used for compost or agricultural cover material.

Potential Problems:

- Garbage collectors have been injured by hazardous household products found in the trash they pick up. Items such as pool chemicals can splash in their eyes and cause burning or blindness. Reactive products can result in fumes that send workers to the hospital. Landfill or transfer station workers face the same potential injuries when the trash reaches them.
- Landfills are difficult to build, and so they need to last. Every inch of space in the landfill needs to be conserved as much as possible. Many of the materials buried in landfills are nonbiodegradable, which means they won't decompose for centuries.
- Pesticides dumped on weeds or buried in a hole in the ground can sink into the soil and cause both the soil and groundwater to be contaminated.