Swimming Pool Maintenance for Water Quality Protection

An average swimming pool holds 19,000 gallons of water that may contain chlorine, biocides, algaecides, and other chemicals. When swimming pool water is drained for cleaning or maintenance, these chemicals can be toxic to plants and animals in nearby lakes, streams, and wetlands. The following recommendations are designed to protect local water resources while maintaining your backyard swimming pool this summer.

- Before draining the pool, use a test kit to check the water quality. Allow the pool water to sit for several days after the last addition of chlorine or bromine or wait until the levels are below 0.1 mg/l. The pH of the water must be between 6.5 and 8.5 before it is discharged.

- Do not discharge the pool water into the environment if algaecides such as copper or silver have recently been used. These chemicals can harm algae and rooted plants in nearby waterbodies.

- The pool water should not appear murky. Allow time for suspended particles to settle before water is discharged. The settled material at the bottom of the pool should not be discharged to the environment.

- Never discharge pool water onto paved surfaces, directly into the storm sewer system, or in areas where it can flow directly to rivers, lakes, streams, or wetlands. Direct the pool discharge over a vegetated land surface to promote soil infiltration and control the flow rate to minimize erosion. Avoid draining the pool during or after a rainstorm when the ground is saturated.

- When the swimming pool filter system is cleaned, dispose of the sludge as solid waste and prevent leaching of the material into the environment.

- Store all swimming pool chemicals in a tight container to prevent leaks and spills and avoid exposure to stormwater.

Additional information about swimming pool maintenance is available at the following website: http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/index.cfm
Also check with your municipal office for local restrictions or guidelines.