

How To Prevent Stormwater Pollution

What is stormwater?

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow that does not soak into the ground. It flows from rooftops, over paved areas, bare soil, and sloped lawns. As it flows, stormwater runoff collects and transports soil, animal waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizers, toxic metals, oil and grease, debris and other potential pollutants. In general, untreated stormwater is unsafe.

What is the problem?

Rain and snowmelt wash pollutants from streets, construction sites, and land into storm sewers. Eventually, the storm sewers empty the polluted stormwater directly into streams and rivers without prior purification or treatment.

Polluted stormwater degrades our lakes, rivers, wetlands and other waterways. Untreated stormwater discharging to the ground can contaminate aquifers that are used for drinking water. Nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen can cause the overgrowth of algae, resulting in oxygen depletion in waterways. Toxic substances from motor vehicles and careless application of pesticides and fertilizers threaten water quality and can kill fish and other aquatic life. Bacteria from animal wastes and improper connections to storm sewer systems can make lakes and waterways unsafe for wading, swimming and fish consumption. Eroded soil is a pollutant as well. It clouds the waterway and interferes with the habitat offish and plant life.



People really can make a difference when it comes to reducing stormwater runoff and the problems and costs that go with it. Because we all contribute to the problem, we all can be a part of the solution. It starts with paying attention to stormwater; at home, at work and in our communities.

Tips to prevent stormwater pollution:

- Pick up animal waste.
- Look for ways to keep runoff out of the stormwater system so it can soak into the ground.
- Compost or mulch leaves and yard debris.
- Plant rain gardens, use rain barrels.
- Remove litter from streets, sidewalks, and storm drains adjacent to your property.
- Sweep debris from driveways and parking lots rather than hosing debris into storm drains.
- Water the lawn, not the sidewalk and driveway.
- Reduce paved surfaces.
- Do not drain swimming pools into storm drains or road ditches.
- Reduce winter salt application.
- Triple rinse and recycle empty pesticide and fertilizer containers.
- Reconsider using toxic asphalt sealers, seal cracks only.
- Avoid using chemicals near waterways or storm drains.
- Dispose of automotive fluids appropriately. Fix vehicle fluid leaks immediately.
- Clean up spills immediately and properly dispose of cleanup materials.
- Avoid spraying pesticides/fertilizers in windy conditions or when rain is in the forecast.
- Cover and contain topsoil and mulch during installation.
- Reduce fertilizers, turf builders and pesticides on your lawn and garden. Use small amounts of slow-release fertilizer and environment-friendly products.