



Stormwater

When it Rains. It Drains.

Did you know?

Through the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program, your community is mandated by the Federal Government to manage stormwater runoff in order to reduce the potential for pollution to enter the streams and waterways in and around your community?

What is Stormwater?

Stormwater is the water from precipitation that flows across the ground and pavement when it rains or when snow and ice melt. The water seeps into the ground or drains into what we call storm sewers. These are the drains you see at street corners or at low points on the sides of streets. Collectively, the draining water is called stormwater runoff.

Stormwater Pollution – “Good Rain Gone Bad?”

Stormwater becomes a problem when it picks up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants as it flows or when it causes flooding and erosion of stream banks. Stormwater travels through a system of pipes and roadside ditches that make up storm sewer systems. It eventually flows directly to a lake, river, stream, wetland, or coastal water. All of the pollutants storm water carries along the way empty into our waters, too, because stormwater does not get treated!

Contributors to Stormwater Pollution

Pet Wastes – When not properly disposed of or left on the ground, pet waste can get carried away by stormwater, contributing harmful bacteria, parasites, and viruses to our water.

Vehicle Fluids – During everyday use, toxic fluids from vehicles (oil, grease, gasoline, antifreeze, etc.) drip onto paved areas where stormwater runoff can then carry them through our storm drains and into our water.

Fertilizers/Pesticides – If not used properly, fertilizers and pesticides, for lawn and garden care, can wreak havoc on our watershed by introducing harmful chemicals into waterways.

Construction Waste – During construction, if proper precautions are not taken, the chemicals and materials used can wash into the storm sewer system when it rains causing erosion and the spread of toxic chemicals.

Restoring Rain’s Reputation: What Everyone Can Do To Help

Rain by nature is important for replenishing drinking water supplies, recreation, and healthy wildlife habitats. It only becomes a problem when pollutants from our activities like pet waste, vehicle fluids, fertilizers and pesticides, and construction waste, are left on the ground for rain to wash away. Here are some of the most important ways to prevent stormwater pollution:

1. Pick up after pets and dispose of their waste properly. No matter where pets make a mess – in a backyard or at the park – stormwater runoff can carry pet waste from the land, to the storm sewer system, and into a stream.
2. Properly dispose of hazardous substances such as used oil, cleaning supplies and paint – never pour them down any part of the storm sewer system and report anyone who does.
3. Use fertilizers and pesticides properly and efficiently to prevent excess runoff. Install rain barrels or rain gardens, that capture stormwater and keep it on site instead of letting it drain away into the storm sewer system.
4. Report poorly managed construction sites where stormwater carries soil and other pollutants away from the site. Construction vehicles tracking debris and chemicals into the street can also increase stormwater pollution and should be reported.