

Remember, only Rain in the Drain!



Stormwater runoff entering Lake Michigan

Stormwater enters our waterways unfiltered and untreated.

Storm water runoff is all the water that runs off hard surfaces during rainstorms. This water does not seep into the ground during storms; instead it runs straight into streams, rivers, and lakes. Storm sewer drains are installed to carry excess runoff away from the areas where we live. Storm sewers do not carry excess runoff to the sewage treatment plant, as many people believe. The collected runoff is released directly into our waterways untreated.

There are many reasons why stormwater runoff can be harmful. Stormwater should ideally be absorbed into soil and detoxified by natural processes, including microbial

breakdown. In natural systems, rain-water is absorbed by the soil or plants on the ground. However, when soil surfaces are covered with impermeable materials like pavement and housing, the stormwater flows along these surfaces, picking up trash, harmful chemicals and sediment along the way and finally dumping them directly into our lakes and streams untreated. This is known as non point pollution. EPA experts believe that the biggest form of pollution today is non point source. Many of the pollutants in our water comes from our everyday activities. This pollution is caused by all of us. Excessive nutrients released into our lakes and streams promotes unsightly and harmful algae growth. Sediments and garbage can ruin the aesthetic and recreational value of our waterways. Many of our communities rely on Lake Michigan for drinking water; these contaminants must be filtered from the water at great public expense. These same pollutants can also leak into groundwater, harming another important drinking water source in our region.

The actions we take (or don't take) during each day can contribute to the harmful contamination and degradation of our waterways. Fortunately, there are many small steps that everyone can take that will contribute to a better environment for us to live in.

Do your Part to Protect our Water Resources

- Dispose of unwanted household cleaners, chemicals and oil properly- take them to your local hazardous waste center or collection day.
- Take good care of your car- regular checkups will detect any leaks. Take the car to the carwash (most carwashes have water treatment systems) or wash it on your lawn.
- Pick up after your pets! It's not only considerate, but also keeps harmful bacteria out of the water supply. Dispose of the waste in the toilet or trash.
- Lawn care: select a low-P lawn fertilizer and use *only the amount recommended by the manufacturer*. Avoid application of lawn care products before heavy rains- you're wasting money *and* contributing to water pollution!
- Go Native! Consider using native plants in your landscape: once established, their care needs are minimal. Mulching around your plants keeps weeds down and reduces watering needs. You'll end up saving money on fertilizers, water and pesticides AND keep those chemicals out of our water supply, too.
- Install a rain barrel: collect the runoff from your roof and use it to water the lawn and garden during dry spells. One inch of rainfall on 1000 square feet of roof equals 623 gallons of water!
- Put the hose away and pick up a broom! Sweep excess lawn care products, grass clippings and dirt back onto the lawn, rather than washing them into the storm sewer (and our water resources)!

Provided by the Municipal Stormwater Community Partnership

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