

A RESIDENT'S GUIDE TO CLEAN WATER

Developed by the City of Ann Arbor • Spring 2010

Stormwater is runoff from rain or snowmelt that flows off streets, rooftops, and lawns into storm drains. From storm drains, runoff flows directly into streams, lakes and rivers. Unlike wastewater, which is treated at a wastewater treatment plant, stormwater receives **no treatment** before being discharged to surface waters. In Ann Arbor, all stormwater (and any pollutants carried by stormwater) are discharged into the Huron River and its tributaries.



Why be concerned about stormwater?

Both the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff can negatively impact the local water resources we depend on for drinking water, recreation, and habitat for other species.

Quantity: Once land is urbanized, very little water is able to infiltrate into the ground, and instead, is rapidly conveyed via storm drains or surface runoff to the nearest water resource. Increased runoff can cause flooding, erosion and property damage. This results in significant changes in stream flow and wetland hydrology, which can cause stream bank erosion and loss of aquatic habitat.

Quality: Stormwater runoff picks up anything in its path and delivers it directly to streams and rivers. Pollutants including oil, yard waste, fertilizers, litter, and sediment can create stormwater of poor quality which can harm our waters. Stormwater generated by the initial half-inch rain tends to carry the most pollution as it washes fertilizers, automotive fluids, animal waste, deicers, and dirt from the land surface and into the storm drains.



Do your part to keep the Huron River system HEALTHY!

Keep storm drains for rainwater only - Dumping waste into storm drains, ditches, or waterways contaminates drinking water supplies, recreational areas, and wildlife habitat. Plus, it is illegal! If you see illegal dumping, report it right away. You will help prevent further water contamination and reduce potential cleanup costs. **Call the MDNRE Pollution Emergency Alert System at 1-800-292-4706 to report illegal dumping. For hazardous or flammable spills, call 911 immediately. You may also report any dumping, spills, or construction site runoff into the stormwater system to city officials using the Citizen Request System (<http://www2.a2gov.org/A2CSR/CSRRequest.aspx>). Choose "spills of material in street, drain, or creek" from the dropdown menu in step 2.**



Wash your car on the lawn - Washing your car on the lawn keeps dirty water off the pavement and out of the storm drain. Your lawn will soak up the water and your grass will break down the soap, absorbing any phosphate it contains. Better yet, consider a commercial car wash. Commercial car wash facilities are required by law to send their wastewater to a treatment plant.

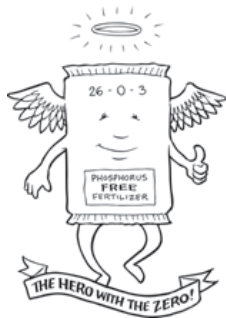
Keep your car well maintained - Keeping your car well-maintained prevents oil, antifreeze, and other polluting fluids from leaking. If you do your own car maintenance, never dump motor oil, antifreeze, or any other chemicals down the storm drain. Instead, recycle your spent automotive fluids. If you spill motor oil or other fluids, don't hose the spill into the gutter or ditch. Spread kitty litter to absorb the spill, then sweep it up and put it in the trash.

Clean up after your pet - Picking up pet waste keeps the yard clean and the neighbors happy! It also protects local waterways. Pet waste left on the ground washes into creeks, rivers, and lakes through the storm drains. Bacteria in pet feces compromise water quality, reduce recreational opportunities, and contaminate drinking water supplies. Take a minute to pick up after your dog and dispose of pet waste properly.

Clean paint brushes in the sink - Cleaning of brushes used with **water-based paint (latex)** should be done in the sink, not outdoors. If you have a small amount of paint left in the can, dry it out with cat litter, "oil-dry" or other absorbent, securely reattach the lid, and place the sealed can in your refuse cart.

Dispose of hazardous products properly - Household products that are labeled as poisonous, hazardous, flammable, explosive, or caustic - such as pesticides, solvents, and oil-based paints - should never be emptied into the sink or storm drains, poured on the ground, or placed in the trash where they will be landfilled and potentially end up leaking into our groundwater. Dispose of these materials responsibly, share leftover materials with others to use up as directed on the label, and consider purchasing less toxic materials in the future.

- Limited quantities of used motor oil, motor oil filters, and household rechargeable batteries are accepted outside the curbside-collected recycling bins and at the Drop-Off Station.
- Take leftover, unwanted toxic products in their original container to the free Washtenaw County's Home Toxics Center - Location: 705 N. Zeeb Road, near Jackson Road, Phone: (734) 222-3950



Use phosphorus-free lawn fertilizer - Choosing phosphorus-free fertilizer, the kind with "0" as its middle number, keeps excess phosphorus out of our waterways. Phosphorus is naturally abundant in the soils of southeast Michigan. Excess phosphorus promotes rapid and severe algae growth that kills fish and beneficial plants. Phosphorus-free products are readily available at local retailers. In Ann Arbor, an ordinance prohibits the use of fertilizers containing phosphorus unless a need is demonstrated through a soil test.

Compost grass clippings and leaves - Grass clippings and leaves can clog storm sewers and can add excess nutrients to our waters. Compost your leaves and grass clippings, and use the compost to enrich and condition your soil. Alternatively, put your compostables to the curb for collection.

Consider rain gardens, rain barrels, and other BMPs to capture stormwater on your property - Capturing stormwater at the source keeps it out of the storm drain system and allows it to be used on site for irrigation or to infiltrate slowly into the ground. There are many options for stormwater best management practices (BMPs) that are both practical and attractive. Some BMPs may also qualify you for a stormwater rate credit.



Want more information?
Check out www.a2gov.org/storm