

## 10 Things You Can Do to Prevent Stormwater Runoff Pollution!

- Use fertilizers sparingly and sweep up driveways, sidewalks, and gutters.
- Never dump anything down storm drains or in streams.
- Vegetate bare spots in your yard.
- Compost your yard waste.
- Use least toxic pesticides, follow labels, and learn how to prevent pest problems.
- Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces; consider starting a rain garden, using rain barrels to capture stormwater.
- Take your car to the car wash instead of washing it in the driveway.
- Check your car for leaks and recycle your motor oil.
- Pick up after your pet.
- Have your septic tank pumped and system inspected regularly.



Education is essential to changing people's behavior. Signs and markers near storm drains warn residents that pollutants entering the drains will be carried untreated into a local water body.

The Wood County Land Conservation and the City of Wisconsin Rapids has teamed up for a stormwater stenciling service learning project with area youth. We facilitate school and youth groups in understanding the importance of water quality right in their back yard and what they can do to help. The students hit the streets and stencil hundreds of storm drains throughout the city. They also hang information regarding the project and its importance to water quality on every door in the project area to increase awareness city-wide.

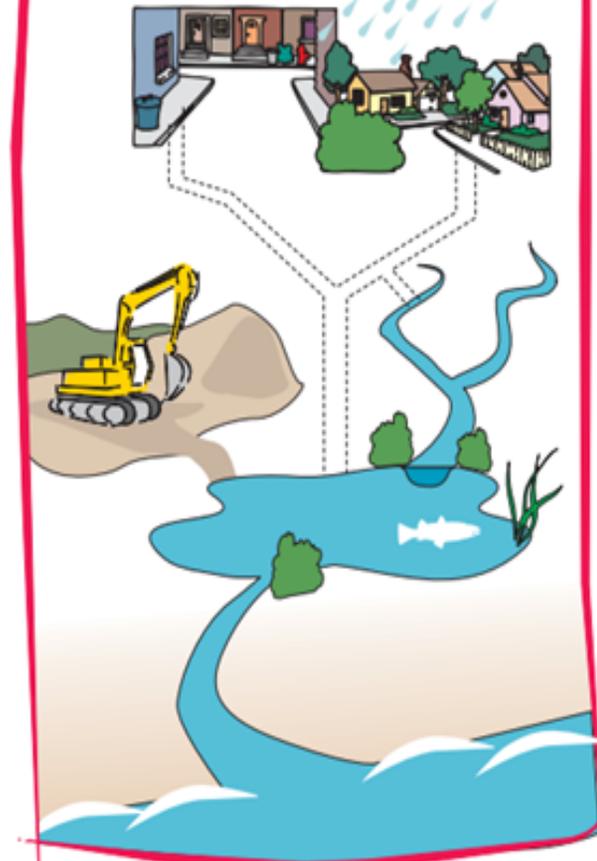


Interested in participating in this volunteer event contact:  
Wood County Land Conservation  
Department  
(715) 421-8475  
landcons@co.wood.wi.us

## URBAN RUNOFF

### When It Rains, It Drains

Understanding Storm Water  
and How It Can Affect  
Your Money, Safety, Health,  
and the Environment



## What is Stormwater?

Stormwater is 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.

Recycle or properly dispose of household products that contain chemicals, such as insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, and used motor oil and other auto fluids. Don't pour them onto the ground or into storm drains.

Contact UW Extension about Clean Sweep! A voluntary, state/county program for the legal, safe, and convenient disposal of hazardous wastes from homes, farms, and businesses.



## Why is Stormwater "Good Rain Gone Wrong?"

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 that storm water carries along the way empty into our waters, because storm water does not get treated!

# STORM WATER POLLUTION SOLUTIONS

**Lawn Care:** Excess fertilizers and pesticides applied to lawns and gardens wash off and pollute streams. In addition yard clippings and leaves can wash into storm drains and contribute nutrients and organic matter to streams.



- Don't overwater your lawn. Consider using a soaker hose instead of a sprinkler.
- Compost or mulch yard waste. Don't leave it in the street or sweep it into storm drains or streams.
- Cover piles of dirt or mulch being used in landscaping projects.
- Be careful when using fertilizers near sidewalks, driveways and streets to prevent it being washed into the storm sewer system.

**Septic Systems:** Leaking and poorly maintained septic systems release nutrients and pathogens that can be picked up by stormwater and discharged into nearby waterbodies. Pathogens can cause public health problems.

- The state requires you to have your tank serviced once every 3 years.

\*Contact Wood County Planning and Zoning at (715)-421-8466 for further questions.

- Don't dispose of household hazardous waste in sinks or toilets.



**Auto Care:** Washing your car and degreasing auto parts at home can send detergents and other contaminants through the storm sewer system. Dumping automotive fluids into storm drains has the same result as dumping the materials directly into a waterbody that you drink.

- Use a commercial car wash that treats or recycles its wastewater, or wash your car on your yard so the water infiltrates into the ground.
- Repair leaks and dispose of used auto fluids and batteries at designated drop-off or recycling locations.



**Pet Waste:** Pet waste can be a major source of bacteria and excess nutrients in local waters.

- When walking your pet, remember to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method. Leaving pet waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local waterbodies.



## Residential Landscaping

**Permeable Pavement**— Traditional concrete and asphalt don't allow water to soak into the ground. Instead these surfaces rely on storm drains to divert unwanted water. Permeable pavement systems allow rain and snowmelt to soak through, decreasing storm water runoff.

**Rain Barrels**— You can collect rain water from rooftops in mosquito-proof containers. The water can be used later on lawn or garden areas.



**Rain Gardens and Grassy Swales**— Specially designed areas planted with native plants can provide natural places for rain-

water to collect and soak into the ground. Rain from rooftop areas or paved areas can be diverted into these areas rather than into storm drains.



**Vegetated Filter Strips**— Filter strips are areas of native grass or plants created along

roadways or streams. They trap the pollutants stormwater picks up as it flows across driveways and streets.

