



Phase II Stormwater Program

Summer 2015

Urban Stormwater Runoff

Urbanization increases the variety and amount of pollutants carried into our nation's waters. In urban and sub-urban areas, much of the land surface is covered by buildings, pavement and compacted landscapes with impaired drainage. These surfaces do not allow rain and snow melt to soak into the ground which greatly increases the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff. In addition to these habitat-destroying impacts, pollutants from urban runoff include:

- Sediment
- Oil, grease and toxic chemicals from motor vehicles
- Pesticides and nutrients from lawns and gardens
- Viruses, bacteria and nutrients from pet waste and failing septic systems
- Road salts
- Heavy metals from roof shingles, motor vehicles and other sources
- Thermal pollution from dark impervious surfaces such as streets and rooftops

These pollutants can harm fish and wildlife populations, kill native vegetation, foul drinking water, and make recreational areas unsafe and unpleasant.

Did You Know.....

Because of impervious surfaces such as pavement and rooftops, a typical city block generates 9 times more runoff than a woodland area of the same size?



What Homeowners Can Do

To decrease polluted runoff from paved surfaces, households can develop alternatives to areas traditionally covered by impervious surfaces. Porous pavement materials are available for driveways and sidewalks, and native vegetation and mulch can replace high maintenance grass lawns. Homeowners can use fertilizers sparingly and sweep driveways, sidewalks and roads instead of using a hose. Instead of disposing of yard waste, they can use the materials to start a compost pile. And homeowners can learn to use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) to reduce dependence on harmful pesticides.

In addition, households can prevent polluted runoff by picking up after pets and using, storing and disposing of chemicals properly. Drivers should check their cars for leaks and recycle their motor oil and antifreeze when these fluids are changed. Drivers can also avoid impacts from car wash runoff (e.g., detergents, grime, etc.) by using car wash facilities that do not generate runoff. Households served by septic systems should have them professionally inspected and pumped every three to five years. They should also practice water conservation measures to extend the life of their septic systems.