



Phase II Stormwater Program

Winter 2018

Protecting Our Waterways this Winter!

Winter is certainly here, and with it comes road salts, piles of snow and uninvited house guests (the furry kind). These seasonal sights may impact water quality, and our goal is to keep winter wonderful by preventing pollution from reaching our waterways.



Just like rain, snow melt can carry pollutants into storm drains and streams. Think of all the dark colored snow that accumulates along roadways; once it melts, that dirty water, full of petroleum products and other contaminants will find its way to our storm water drainage system and streams where it can harm wildlife and pollute our drinking water resources. For example, salt used to prevent ice on driveways, roads and sidewalks can easily wash into freshwater streams and destroy aquatic ecosystems.



We all know that pests like rodents and insects love to hide out in our homes for warmth over the winter, but using pesticides or insecticides can harm our watershed. If used outdoors or disposed of improperly, these chemicals can be washed into our streams by storm water. Once in our waterways, these chemicals have the same effects on aquatic organisms that they do on the pests in our homes. These pesticides and excess salts also reduce the quality of the water we use for drinking and recreation.



We can do our part by making smart decisions to protect our streams from unnecessary stormwater pollution. The following are a few tips that can help keep our water clean and protect the environment:

- Dispose of shoveled snow in vegetated areas and never dump it into streets or streams. The more water can be absorbed by plants or sink into the ground, the less water will run off, carrying pollutants into streams. A rain garden or other planted area is the perfect place for shoveled snow.
- Use safe and effective alternatives to salt for ice, and follow the application rate on the label. Safety is of utmost importance, but salt is damaging to plants, animals, concrete and water quality. Instead of focusing on melting the snow on your driveway or sidewalks, use sand to help gain traction or use a salt free de-icer. Remember, the sooner you shovel, the better, as less ice will form and less de-icer can be used.
- Research and use natural and non-toxic alternatives to chemical pesticides, and reduce indoor and outdoor chemical use. Boric acid is a low-toxicity mineral that is highly effective over time, and bait boxes are another great alternative. There are also many herbal pest deterrents; for example, mint deters spiders, mice and other small rodents.

Have a safe and happy winter, and thank you for keeping the health of the watershed in mind. Your efforts can make a difference in preventing pollution from reaching our waterways!