



Phase II Storm Water Program

Winter 2022

Where Does Our Litter Go?

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), marine debris is any persistent solid material manufactured or processed disposed of or abandoned into, intentionally or unintentionally, the marine environment or the Great Lakes (NOAA, 2021). How does this waste get there? It is collected by storm water runoff from land. Some may think that waste thrown on the side of the road or right beside trash cans winds up getting picked up, but it is gathered by storm water runoff and ends up in our waterbodies. Not only is household garbage an issue, leaves and other solid materials like grass clippings are a problem too. This waste discharge is pretty serious. So serious, in fact, that the EPA has labeled it an, "illicit discharge." An illicit discharge is defined by the EPA as any discharge into a storm drain system not entirely made up of storm water (EPA, 2021).

Why does all of this matter? A lot of problems come from land and marine debris. For instance, high quantities of marine debris can reduce populations of aquatic life. Lowering the aquatic life populations can increase problems in the marine food chain. This can mean loss of jobs and hobbies. It can also decrease the populations of land and air creatures that rely on the marine ecosystem for food.

There is a negative cascading effect that can be prevented if we pick up and properly dispose of waste.



What you can do to reduce pollution

- **Find a local recycle center and recycle your plastics, paper products, and other household recyclables.**
- **Reduce the amount of trash you produce.**
- **Responsibly recycle your electronics and hazardous waste.**
- **Find a way to use your leaves and other landscape debris. Mulch is a good use for these items. If you don't need it, someone else might!**

References:

NOAA. "What Is Marine Debris?: OR&R's Marine Debris Program." NOS OR&R Marine Debris Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 21 Dec. 2021, [marinedebris.noaa.gov/discover-marine-debris/what-marine-debris](https://www.marinedebris.noaa.gov/discover-marine-debris/what-marine-debris).

EPA. "National Menu of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Stormwater-Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination." *EPA*, Environmental Protection Agency, 15 Nov. 2021, www.epa.gov/npdes/national-menu-best-management-practices-bmps-stormwater-illicit-discharge-detection-and-elimination.