

What is Storm Water Runoff?

One of the most significant, yet unrecognized groups of water contaminants is storm water pollutants. When it rains, storm water runs over yards, streets, roads, highways, parking lots, parks, and playgrounds, carrying with it everything in its path, including debris and pollutants. Eventually, the water will travel to a stream, either over land or via a storm drain. Storm drains are frequently located alongside streets and parking lots. Unlike sanitary sewers that divert water to a treatment plant directly from your home, storm drains lead directly to surrounding lakes and rivers without any type of treatment. All the debris and pollutants that were picked up by storm water runoff, end up in your lakes and streams!

Where Does the Pollution Come From?

Most contaminants are made up of common items used by residents, businesses and visitors, such as fertilizers, car oils and greases, yard clippings, soil, and pet wastes. Below are some tips you can follow to help keep pollution from entering lakes and streams via storm water runoff.

Tips to Keep Your Rivers, Lakes and Streams Clean

1. Never dump anything down a storm drain!
2. Use an oil pan when changing oil to keep fluids off the pavement. Check local body shops and quick lubes to find a place to appropriately dispose of used oil.
3. Dispose of pet wastes in a trash can.
4. Leave grass clippings on your lawn as an alternate nutrient to fertilizer. If a fertilizer is necessary, choose a slow-release product and test your soil to find out how much fertilizer your lawn actually needs.
5. Wash your car on your lawn so excess water, chemicals, and dirt is filtered through the lawn.
6. Keep household hazardous wastes, such as harsh cleaners, paint, car fluids, and batteries from entering lakes and streams by disposing at a household hazardous waste center. Try using environmentally-safe alternatives or recipes with non-hazardous ingredients.
7. Use a broom rather than a hose to clean up grass clippings and dirt.
8. Keep a trash bag in your car... and use it!

For more information about MDOT's Storm Water Management Plan, check out www.mdot.state.mi.us/stormwater.