



### CELS 101 students launch effort to curb storm drain pollution

Among the 101 students who were on the storm drain marking program on the URI campus were (l-r) Maude Edwards, Matt Gelbien and Justin Coughtlin.

(story starts below photo at left)

The semester has just started but already a group of CELS students have found themselves doing things never described in the promotional material supplied to incoming URI freshmen.

As part of the URI 101 Feinstein Enriching America Program, the students spent two days recently marking storm drains with signs warning people not to dump harmful materials down them.

On Sept. 17, the students marked storm drains on the Kingston Campus and three days later they did likewise to storm drains in Narragansett.

The project is part of the RI Stormwater Solutions campaign involving URI, the state departments of transportation and environmental management plus other partners which have been engaged to raise awareness about stormwater pollution.

"Our recent survey found that many Rhode Islanders, including the URI volunteers, think that water entering storm drains leads to a water treatment plant," said Vanessa Venturini, the storm drain marking coordinator at URI Cooperative Extension and a recent CELS grad.

runs off our roofs, lawns and streets. Litter, motor oil, bacteria from pet waste, excess fertilizers and pesticides, and leaves and grass clippings are just some of the waste materials rainwater collects as it heads towards storm drains, said Venturini. This stormwater closes swimming beaches and fishing grounds, threatens water resources, harms natural areas, and contributes to flooding. Pollutants carried by rainwater also play a part in fish kills like the recent menhaden die-offs in coves and inlets around Narragansett Bay.

According to Venturini, people unknowingly contribute to water pollution every day. "Luckily,

And while they were in Narragansett, they joined scores of others picking up litter as part of the International Coastal cleanup.

The signs cautioned people: "Don't Dump, Drains to Coast." Pointing out that storm drains empty into bodies of water.

"Unfortunately, that's usually not the case." URI students were surprised to learn that most storm drains connect directly to our local rivers, lakes, ponds and eventually Narragansett Bay.

Every time it rains, water collects remnants of everyday activities as it

there are many ways to reduce the amount of pollution that reaches our waterways."

### Simple steps that help prevent stormwater pollution include:

- Don't dump, wash, or rake anything into the path of a storm drain.
- Sweep spilled fertilizers and grass clippings off sidewalks and driveways and back onto the lawn.
- Divert rooftop runoff to a rain barrel or onto the lawn rather than a driveway.
- Collected water can even be used for watering plants.
- Never put hazardous household wastes down storm drains, indoor drains, or the trash.
- Wash your vehicle at a designated car wash or on grass not in the driveway.
- Collect pet waste and throw it in the trash.



Theresa Murphy shows one of the signs that were attached to storm drains on the URI campus.

For more information on how to reduce water pollution visit [www.RIStormwaterSolutions.org](http://www.RIStormwaterSolutions.org) or contact Vanessa Venturini at [VVenturini@mail.uri.edu](mailto:VVenturini@mail.uri.edu) to volunteer for future storm drain marking events.

