

know where
it goes

take simple
steps to reduce
STORMWATER POLLUTION



No Filters, No Treatment: The Reality of Rain in [Town Name]

If you've ever dodged the rain, falling in sheets from the roof above you, only to have to wade through a giant puddle as you get to your car, then you've encountered stormwater. Most of us probably have noticed stormwater flowing down the street during rainstorms. But have you ever given thought to where that water winds up or what is actually in the water? The reality might surprise you.

In [name of town] most stormwater heads either directly to [name of major local water body], or it gets there through storm drains. While many people assume that storm drains lead to some type of treatment facility, that is almost never the case, and it definitely doesn't happen in [name of town]. Whatever enters local storm drains enters [name of major local water body].

The first obvious question is, Why is that a problem? The problem is that stormwater is polluted water. When rain hits the pavement, it picks up and mixes with what's there. That includes everything from bacteria in dog waste that someone didn't scoop to oil leaking from a car. It includes the fertilizer that your neighbor spilled on the sidewalk and the soap that he used to wash his car in the driveway. It also includes the countless cigarette butts in the streets and sand from wintertime snow removal.

There are many sources of contamination for stormwater, leading to various consequences for local waters. Most notably, highly polluted stormwater runoff can contribute to closures of swimming beaches and shellfishing grounds and can contaminate drinking water sources.

The second, perhaps more important question is, What can we do about it? Polluted stormwater is the result of local land-use policies and our everyday personal actions. We might feel that there's not much we can do about the former, but there's certainly a lot we can do about our daily practices. And it doesn't require big changes.

The rule of thumb that can make a huge difference with respect to stormwater is to keep as much water as possible off paved surfaces and to keep the water that does run off, as clean as possible. For example, if you own a home, divert your rain gutters onto the lawn instead of the driveway or sidewalk. If you spill fertilizers, pesticides, or grass clippings on the pavement, sweep them back onto the lawn. If you walk your dog along the street, pick up the waste.

And never, ever put anything down a storm drain or in the path of a storm drain. Because now you know, stormwater isn't just the inconvenient puddle that always manages to be right in front of your car door. It's a major source of water pollution, and it's headed directly to [name of local water body].

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