



# Where Does It Come From, Where Does It Go?

Fall & Winter 2008



## It's Not Just Rain?

Have you ever noticed water flowing down the street when it rains? Have you ever wondered where the water flows to? Have you thought about what's *in* the water?

When it rains onto a forest or a field, some of that rain is absorbed by the ground, replenishing groundwater that is used by many for drinking water. Some of the rain is taken up by plants, and some of it simply evaporates. But very little of the rain flows over the ground.

In a more developed setting, such as our cities and towns, rain falls onto pavement, or other surfaces such as roofs, sidewalks, parking lots, and driveways that don't allow the water to be absorbed by the ground. The water that you see flowing down the street is called stormwater runoff,

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*Stormdrains lead directly to local waters. No filters. No treatment. Pollutants that enter stormdrains wind up in the water we drink, fish, and swim.*

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## Why Is It A Problem?

When stormwater hits the pavement, it picks up and mixes with what's there. That might include:

- oil, grease, and automotive fluids;
- fertilizer and pesticides from gardens and homes;
- bacteria from pet waste and improperly maintained septic systems;
- soil from poor construction site management;
- sand from wintertime snow removal;
- soap from car washing;
- debris and litter.

Many people assume that stormwater flows down stormdrains and then to a treatment facility. *Unfortunately, that is almost never the case.* Stormwater either flows directly into local waters or down stormdrains, which channel it into local water bodies. **The polluted runoff closes swimming beaches and fishing grounds, threatens water resources, harms natural areas, and contributes to flooding.**



The following list offers simple suggestions as to how you can control stormwater impacts on your own property:

## Yard Care

1. Never dump, wash, or rake anything into the path of a stormdrain.
2. Sweep spilled fertilizers, grass clippings, and soil off sidewalks and driveways and back onto the lawn. Sweep, don't hose, the driveway.
3. Water wisely: the lawn is usually happy with 1 inch per week, and that includes rainwater!
4. Divert rooftop runoff to a rain barrel or onto the lawn rather than a driveway. Collected water can even be used for watering plants.
5. Reduce the amount of fertilizers and pesticides that you apply to your lawn. You'll save money, too!

## Home Care

6. Never put hazardous household wastes (paint, paint thinner, oven cleaners, etc.) down stormdrains, indoor drains, or the trash. Call the Eco Depot at 942-1430 x 241.
7. If you have a septic system, have it inspected every year, and have it pumped at least every three to five years.

## Auto Care

8. If you change your own motor oil, recycle the used oil.
9. Wash your vehicle at a designated car wash or on grass—not in the driveway.

## Pet Care

10. Scoop your dog's poop. Then throw it in the trash.

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*Polluted stormwater is the result of local land-use policies and our everyday personal actions. However, because our personal choices have such an impact, there are many opportunities to do something about the problem!*

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## The Two To Live By

Lists can be daunting. So we've come up with the following re to use as a rule-of-thumb:

- **Keep as much water as possible off of paved surfaces.**
- **Keep the water that does run off, as clean as possible.**

## For more information:

Visit the website: [www.RIStormwaterSolutions.org](http://www.RIStormwaterSolutions.org)

