

Stormwater 101

What Is Stormwater?

It's the runoff from rainwater and snowmelt. Rooftops, parking lots, streets and other impervious surfaces prevent stormwater from soaking into the ground as it does in vegetated or wooded areas. In Springfield, 35% of the landscape is impervious. This means more runoff, moving very fast. As water flows over parking lots and streets, there is very little to slow it down. The increased speed of the water means that it can erode the streambank, and do more damage to our streams.

What You Can Do...

Anything we do on the landscape (in our yards, at our businesses, on our streets), can impact our waterways. Try these simple steps to help reduce stormwater pollution:

- **Fertilize responsibly.** Get a soil test first. Over-fertilizing increases chemicals in our streams and lakes and wastes money.
- **Recycle used motor oil.** The oil from one oil change can pollute 1 million gallons of fresh water. Most local retailers will recycle oil free of charge. Also, regularly inspect your vehicle for leaks.
- **Recycle household chemicals.** Keep these items out of the environment by taking them to the City of Springfield's Household Chemical Collection Center.
- **Reduce water runoff from your home.** Connect your downspouts to a rain barrel and use it to water your plants. Construct a rain garden to catch runoff and enhance your lawn.
- **Report pollution.** Things to watch for include dumping motor oil, chemicals, trash, or yardwaste, and dirt from construction sites.
- **Pick up after your pets.** Pet waste can pollute area waterways with bacteria and nutrients. Pick up your pet's waste when walking, at the park, and in your yard.
- **Recycle yard waste.** Compost it or take it to your local yard waste recycling facility. It is illegal to dispose of yardwaste in streets or storm drains.
- **Wash responsibly.** If washing your vehicle at home, do so in a grassy area to prevent runoff of the wash water. Commercial washing activities must comply with City regulations.

Why is Stormwater Management Important?

Good stormwater management is important to reduce flooding but also to protect our waterways from pollution. Stormwater carries all kinds of **pollution**, such as fertilizers and pesticides from yards, motor oil from leaking cars, bacteria from animal waste, and dirt from construction sites. Many people assume that stormwater goes to a water treatment plant. Not so! Stormwater drains directly to our rivers and lakes.

We often can see **litter** floating by in stormwater, but many other types of pollution we can't see. This nonpoint source pollution is a **bigger problem** than the factories and sewage treatment plants that we often think of as "polluters."

