

Please Don't Feed the Storm Drain!



We've all seen trash in our waterways following a storm. Other contaminants, not so easily seen, enter our waters in much the same way. When rain falls or snow melts, the water soaks in to the ground or flows over the land, picking up and carrying pollutants to our waterways. The sediments and dissolved materials carried to our waterways can directly affect the quality of water. While some of these contaminants are natural like sediment from erosion, many are man-made pollutants and include:

- Excess fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides from residential areas and agriculture lands;
- Oil, grease, and other toxic chemicals from urban runoff;
- Motor oil, car batteries, and home chemical containers that have been improperly disposed of;
- Sediment from improperly managed construction sites, crop and forest lands, and eroding stream banks; and
- Bacteria and nutrients from pet waste, livestock and faulty septic systems.

All the seen and unseen contaminants that enter our waters from these diverse sources make up what is called nonpoint source pollution. Unlike pollution that can be traced to a single source, with nonpoint source pollution there is not factory, no single pipe, no single point that can be identified, monitored, and regulated. Instead, nonpoint source pollution is caused by millions of individual actions, and for this reason is difficult to control. Because we all contribute to the problem, it is everyone's responsibility.

What can you do?

- Properly dispose of household chemicals.
- Choose non-toxic chemicals for your lawn and garden.
- Compost grass clippings and leaves.
- Sweep (do not wash) fertilizer and soil off driveways and walkways.
- Never allow pet waste to wash into storm drains.
- Repair oil leaks from motor vehicles immediately.
- Recycle used oil and oil filters.
- Do not hose spilled brake fluid, oil, grease and antifreeze into the street.
- Never throw litter in streets or down storm drains.
- Inspect septic systems every year and pump out every two to five years.

Small changes in one's behavior may seem insignificant, but when multiplied by the entire community, it adds up. Do your share to keep our waters clean. For more information on reducing nonpoint source pollution, call 1-800-CLEANUP, or check out www.cleanup.org.

