

## WHAT IS STORMWATER?

Stormwater is water that comes from precipitation, including rain, ice, and snow melt. It either soaks into exposed soil or remains on top of impervious surfaces, like pavement or rooftops. Stormwater will eventually evaporate from level surfaces, but most often it flows as runoff to a storm drain or a nearby water body.

## WHAT IS STORMWATER POLLUTION?

When stormwater flows along streets and gutters and across different surfaces, it can pick up pollutants along the way. Since the stormwater system is not connected to the sewer system and does not filter water or debris, any pollutant that flows into the storm drain ends up in our waterways. This runoff can cause stream impairment, flooding, pollution, fish and wildlife habitat loss, soil erosion, and reduced groundwater levels. Stormwater discharges directly to our creeks, bays, and rivers and is not treated in any way to remove pollutants. It is very important that we all do our part to protect our waterways.



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## STORMWATER POLLUTION PREVENTION





## WHAT IS A STORM DRAIN SYSTEM?

A storm drain system is a network of catch basins, inlets, drains, pipes, swales, ditches, channels, creeks, and streams that carry stormwater from streets, sidewalks, gutters, private and public properties, and other surfaces to local creeks and rivers.

## IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE STORM DRAIN AND SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM?

The storm drain system should never be confused with the sanitary sewer system. While the storm drain system conveys stormwater from neighborhoods and streets to creeks and rivers via catch basins and pipes, the sanitary sewer system carries wastewater from toilets, sinks, and washing machines to the wastewater treatment plant to be treated before being released into the environment. The purpose of the storm drain system is to remove excess rainwater and groundwater from the streets to prevent flooding. Storm drains are very easy to identify (see image below).



## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

You can help prevent stormwater pollution by practicing these seven good habits:

- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly. When necessary, use these chemicals in the recommended amounts. Avoid application if the forecast calls for rain because the chemicals will be washed into nearby waterways.
- Use native plants in your landscaping to reduce the need for watering during dry periods. Native plants and grasses that are drought and pest resistant require less water, fertilizer, and pesticides.
- Don't overwater your lawn. Water during the cool times of the day, and don't let water run into storm drains.



- Use a commercial car wash or wash your car on a lawn or other unpaved surface to minimize the amount of dirty, soapy water flowing into the storm drain and eventually into your local waterbody.



- Recycle used oil and other automotive fluids at participating service stations. Don't dump these chemicals down the storm drain or dispose of them in your trash.
- Purchase and use nontoxic, biodegradable, recycled, and recyclable products whenever possible.
- When walking your pet, remember to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method. Leaving pet waste on the ground increases public health risks by allowing harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local waterbodies.