

A Citizens Guide to Reducing Stormwater Pollution



What is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater runoff occurs when rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent stormwater from naturally soaking into the ground.

Why is pollution of stormwater a problem?

Stormwater can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants and flow into storm sewer systems which flow into lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands and other water bodies. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into water bodies we use for swimming, fishing, and drinking supply.



The effects of pollution

Polluted stormwater runoff can have many adverse effects on creeks, rivers, lakes and water supplies as well as plants, fish, animals, and people.



- Household hazardous wastes like insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil, and other auto fluids can poison aquatic life and pollute the drinking water supply.
- Sediment from unfinished or disturbed yards can help transport pollutants into water bodies. Naturally occurring phosphorous found in soils is a nutrient pollutant. Sediment also can destroy aquatic habitats by clouding the water, making it difficult or impossible for aquatic plants to grow.
- Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they sink to the bottom and decompose in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels.
- Bacteria and other pathogens can wash into swimming areas and create health hazards, often making closures necessary at Cherry Creek and Chatfield Basins.
- Debris - plastic bags, six-pack rings, bottles, and cigarette butts - washed into water bodies can choke, suffocate, or disable aquatic life like ducks, fish, turtles, and birds.

Stormwater Pollution Solutions

Many routine activities conducted at your home, can have significant negative impacts on our creeks, rivers, lakes, and water supply. Through simple measures at home, you can help protect our natural resources.

Lawn care

Excess fertilizers and pesticides applied to lawns and gardens wash off and pollute streams. In addition, yard clippings and leaves can wash into storm drains and contribute nutrients and organic matter to streams.



- Don't overwater your lawn. Use waterwise gardening techniques. Perform regular irrigation system checks.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly, and only in recommended amounts. Use organic mulch or safer pest controls whenever possible. Sweep up excessive fertilizer from sidewalks and streets.
- Compost or mulch yard waste.
- Cover piles of dirt or mulch being used in landscape projects.
- Sweep leaves, grass, and other debris into the trash, and avoid washing these materials into the street or storm drain.

Residential Landscaping

Erosion from single family residential lots individually may not pose a very significant risk; however, numerous residential lots, as found in most subdivisions, can cause excessive amounts of sediment and debris to be carried into the storm drainage system.



- Do not place piles of soil, mulch, rock, or other landscaping materials in the street or on sidewalks.
- Cover or provide sedimentation controls on landscaping material stockpiles.
- Sweep up work areas prior to storm events to prevent materials being washed into the storm drainage system.

Household Hazardous Waste

Many commonly used household products can be hazardous to our environment, as well as people or their pets, if they are improperly disposed.



- Always use and store the product according to the instructions.
- Keep chemicals in the original container or properly labeled.
- Take old or excessive product to your local Household Hazardous Waste Roundup.
- Buy only what you intend to use. If you have some leftover, check and see if anyone you know can use it before bringing it to the Household Hazardous Waste Roundup.

Auto Care

Washing your car and degreasing auto parts at home can send detergents, oils, and other automotive fluids through the storm drainage system. Dumping automotive fluids such as oils, gasoline, and coolants into storm drains or onto the ground has the same effect as dumping them directly into streams, rivers and lakes.



- Use commercial car washes that treat or recycle their wastewater, or wash your car in your yard so the water infiltrates into the ground.
- Have routine maintenance performed on your automobile to prevent leaks. When leaks are found, have them repaired immediately. Properly clean up fluids that have leaked.
- Properly dispose of automotive fluids. Utilize Household Hazardous Waste Roundups for fluid disposal.
- Utilize commercial oil change companies and auto parts stores who will accept your used motor oil.

Pet waste

Pet waste can be a major source of bacteria and excess nutrients in local waters.

- When walking your pet, properly pick up and dispose of waste. Leaving pet waste on the ground increases health risks by allowing harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local waterbodies.

