

# Citizens Guide to Stormwater

## Understanding Stormwater and Its Impacts

### WHAT IS STORMWATER POLLUTION?

Stormwater picks up and carries numerous pollutants into our waterways, known commonly as stormwater pollutants. These pollutants may include, but are not limited to: antifreeze, grease, oil, and heavy metals from cars; fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals from gardens, homes and businesses, and bacteria from pet wastes and failing septic systems.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND STORMWATER AND ITS IMPACTS?

In short, stormwater is important because it can lead to pollution, erosion, flooding and many other environmental and health issues if not properly understood and maintained.

For this reason, we must keep it clean so we can enjoy clean water to drink, for recreation, to use, to support habitat for wildlife, and to allow aquatic life to survive. As we go through our daily life we sometimes overlook all the ways we contaminate our waters. Being conscious of the decisions we make is the first step to clean water.

**The quality of our waters depends on your actions. We can work together to protect our local waterways and keep stormwater clean!**



## WHEN IT RAINS-IT DRAINS!

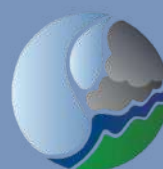
Rain and melting snow create runoff as they move across landscapes to lakes, streams, rivers, and other waterways. In natural areas, this water typically soaks into the ground like a sponge due to soil and natural coverage. However, in urban areas, most stormwater falls onto surfaces such as streets, sidewalks, parking lots, roofs, and carries pesticides, fertilizers, oils, metals, salt, bacteria, litter, yard waste, sediment, and other materials found on these surfaces down storm drains and directly into our local waterways. Unlike wastewater, water that enters the stormwater system is not treated before it empties into nearby bodies of water.

The stormwater system consists of storm drains, gutters, and catch basins which are separate from the sewer system that goes to a treatment facility. Because stormwater goes directly to the waterways, it is important to be informed about stormwater management issues and join with the local municipalities to solve stormwater problems.

Report Spills or Stormwater Pollution to (Name and Phone Number) of (Municipal Name)

For more information, visit:

<https://regionalstormwater.org/report-pollution/>



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## Citizen Tips for Reducing Stormwater Pollution

### CHECK STORM DRAINS OFTEN

Locate the storm drains around your home and check them often. You can remove debris, leaves and trash in order to prevent a blockage causing flooding or litter ending up in the storm drainage system. Always keep yard waste out of storm drains and dispose of it properly for municipal pick up. For major blockage, report as stormwater pollution to contact on bottom of page.



### IMPLEMENT NATURAL AREAS OR GARDENS AROUND YOUR PROPERTY

Specifically-designed areas planted with native plants can provide natural places for rainwater to collect and soak into the ground, which could prevent flooding. In addition, rain from rooftops or paved areas can be diverted into these areas rather than into the storm drain, limiting stormwater runoff.

### PICK UP AFTER YOUR PETS

Bacteria, parasites and diseases from pet waste can be easily picked up by stormwater and washed into storm drains, ending up in our waterways without being treated. This poses public health concerns and impacts areas of recreation. Cleaning up after your pet results in cleaner areas of recreation and safer waterways for all!



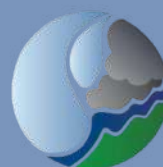
### WASH YOUR CAR AT A CARWASH FACILITY

When you wash a car a home, all of the dirt, grime, and grease from your car washes down the driveway into the nearest sewer drain. This run off contains chemicals & soaps, which are harmful to aquatic life. However, dirty water from commercial car washes goes to the sanitary system & is treated posing no harm.

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### LIMIT PESTICIDE AND FERTILIZER USE

One of the many pollutants that make their way into storm drain systems are pesticides, which include insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides. If this pollution enters our water ways it can cause contaminated drinking water, injury to aquatic species, and restrictions on swimming, fishing and other recreational uses. If you utilize these chemicals, use sparingly or find natural alternatives.



### TAKE UNWANTED HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS TO A RECYCLE CENTER

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) are chemicals used in homes that are toxic, flammable, corrosive and/or explosive such as motor oil, cleaners, nail polish, etc. Never dump these wastes down a storm drain, sink or toilet! A gallon of HHW can pollute millions of gallons of water. To inquire with your municipality about Full Service Recycle Centers which accept HHW, use contact information below.

### PROTECT OUR STREAMS BY REDUCING MUDDY SEDIMENTS

Sediment is the number one source of pollution in NC waterways and is made up of soil particles that have been detached from the land by erosion. Consequently, the source of sediment can be from bare soil from construction sites or farm fields, poorly maintained dirt and gravel roads, or degrading stream banks. If you suspect a sediment build up near storm drains or in waterways, report pollution to the municipal contact below.



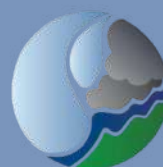
### REDUCE LITTER AND KEEP STREAMS CLEAN TO IMPROVE OUR WATER QUALITY

Small amounts of litter around your home and neighborhood contribute to a big water quality problem. For this reason, it is important to always put trash where it goes. Plus, you can be an active volunteer by joining your local municipality or county agency in street or stream clean up events! For more information about possible stream clean up, contact your municipality below.

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