



## What is Stormwater?

Stormwater is rain that falls on roofs, lawns or paved areas, like driveways and roads, and is carried away by a system of stormwater pipes or culverts and ditches. As it flows over the land surface, stormwater picks up or is contaminated by debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants. This **untreated** water is discharged into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing and drinking water.

## Why should I care?

Contaminated or polluted stormwater can lead to significant water quality problems. • Sediment clouds the water—making it difficult for aquatic plants to grow and destroying aquatic habitats. • Excess nutrients cause algae blooms. Oxygen levels are depleted when the algae die and decompose. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't live when oxygen levels decrease. • Bacteria and other pathogens (commonly found in fecal waste) discharged in swimming areas create health hazards and cause beach closings. • Debris washed into the water can choke, suffocate or disable aquatic life (ducks, fish, turtles and birds). • Household hazardous wastes (insecticides, pesticides, paint, and auto fluids) can poison aquatic life. • Polluted stormwater often affects drinking water sources—human health is at risk and water treatment costs rise.

## Additional Ways You Can Help Prevent Stormwater Pollution

- **Lawn and Garden Maintenance**

- Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly. • Select native plants and grasses that are drought tolerant and pest resistant. • Compost or recycle yard waste. • Cover piles of dirt and mulch to prevent them from washing into drains. • Sweep up yard debris, rather than hosing down areas. • Plant grass or vegetation where soil is exposed.

- **Vehicle Maintenance and Repair**

- 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, culvert or ditch. • Check your car, boat, motorcycle, machinery and equipment for leaks and spills. • Clean up spilled fluids with an absorbent material like kitty litter or sand. • Recycle used oil and other automotive fluids at participating service stations. Don't dump these chemicals down the storm drain, in culverts or ditches, or dispose of them in your trash.

- **Hazardous Waste and Solvents - Pet Waste Management - Swimming Pool and Spa Care - Septic System Maintenance - Cigarette Butts and Other Trash**

- Use hazardous substances (paints, solvents cleaners) in the smallest amounts possible. • Store substances properly. • Clean water based painting supplies over soil. • Filter and reuse paint thinner. • Dispose of excess paints during household hazardous waste collection programs. • Clean up spills immediately. • Dispose of solvent waste by following the instructions printed on the label. • When walking your pet, pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. • Flushing pet waste is the best disposal method. • Do not dispose of pet waste near storm drains, culverts, ditches or waterbodies. • Drain your pool only when the test kit does not detect chlorine levels. • Whenever possible, drain your pool or spa into the sanitary sewer system. • Properly store pool and spa chemicals to prevent leaks and spills, preferably in a covered area. • Have your system inspected by a professional every three years. • Pump your tank as necessary (every three to five years). • Care for the septic leach field by not driving or parking vehicles on it. • Plant only grass over and near the leach field to avoid damage from roots. • Don't dispose of household hazardous waste in sinks or toilets. • Put your cigarette butts and other litter in garbage bins. • If there is no garbage bin handy, hold onto your litter until you find one. • Pitch in and help clean up littered areas. • Sweep up and properly dispose of construction debris like concrete and mortar.