

# What is stormwater and how does it impact me?

Stormwater is generated from water that falls from the sky, including rain, hail, and snow.

In a natural, undeveloped landscape, most stormwater soaks into the ground to be stored or filtered before it reaches natural waterways. In a city, most stormwater falls onto impervious surfaces (surfaces that do not absorb water) such as roads, driveways, sidewalks, rooftops, or parking lots, and it is not soaked up by the ground. This water flows across these surfaces as runoff.

Most stormwater flows from private property to a stormwater inlet in the street where it enters a pipe and is carried to the nearest waterway. The network of stormwater pipes is completely separate from the sanitary sewer system. Unlike the sanitary sewer system, which conveys wastewater to a treatment facility, the stormwater system conveys *untreated* runoff directly to our waterways.

## **Stormwater Quality – Keep it Clean!**

As runoff flows across the ground, it picks up pollutants that you can see (debris, dirt, and grease) and others that can't be seen (fertilizers and detergents). There is a lot you can do to help keep our waterways clean.

For example:

- Use a commercial car wash to minimize the amount of dirty, soapy water flowing into the stormwater system.
- Check your vehicles and equipment for leaks and spills.
- Clean up spilled fluids with an absorbent material and don't rinse the spills into a nearby storm drain.
- Recycle used oil and other fluids; do not dump these chemicals down the storm drain.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly.
- Sweep up yard debris instead of hosing down areas.
- Don't overwater your lawn.



Used with permission of City of Wilmington, NC Stormwater Services: Heal Our Waterways

Whatever you keep out of the storm drain, you keep out of our streams. More ideas can be found at [https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/solution\\_to\\_pollution.pdf](https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/solution_to_pollution.pdf)

### ***Runoff Volume – Reducing Impacts on Yourself and Others***

Stormwater runoff can cause problems for you or your neighbors if not appropriately handled. Altering drainage patterns or increasing the impervious surface area on your property can create stormwater problems, including localized flooding. Increased runoff can also cause erosion and sedimentation (when solids in water settle) by sweeping away and displacing soil. Reducing or minimizing the amount of paved area and increasing the amount of vegetated area in your yard can help increase infiltration and reduce runoff.

