Make Your Home the Solution to Stormwater Pollution

Produced by the
Stormwater Coalition of Monroe County

When it rains, stormwater flows over driveways, lawns, sidewalks, roads, and parking lots on its way to the nearest entrance into the storm sewer system. Along the way, stormwater picks up soil, chemicals, and other pollutants. In most cases, the stormwater system discharges this polluted runoff to the nearest stream, river, or lake with little or no treatment. According the United States Environmental Protection Agency, polluted stormwater runoff is the nation's greatest threat to clean water.

By practicing healthy household habits, homeowners can prevent pesticides, pet waste, grass clippings, detergents, and automotive fluids from polluting stormwater. Adopt these healthy household habits and help protect our streams, bays, and lakes. And remember to share these ideas with your friends and neighbors.

Garage and Driveway:

- 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.

- Check your car for leaks. Make repairs as soon as possible. Clean up spilled fluids with an absorbent material like kitty litter or sand. Do not rinse the spills into a nearby storm drain. Remember to properly dispose of the absorbent material.

- Recycle used oil and other automotive fluids at service stations. Don't dump these chemicals down the storm drain or dispose of them in your trash.

- Use de-icing salts sparingly as excessive quantities of these materials can damage stream habitat.

Lawn and Garden:

- Save money and protect water quality by using pesticides and fertilizers very sparingly and only as needed. Test the soil in your yard to determine whether it is necessary to apply a fertilizer. Avoid application if the forecast calls for rain to insure that chemicals are not washed into the nearest stormwater inlet and ultimately to your local stream. Properly dispose of household hazardous wastes such as fertilizers and pesticides by making an appointment with the Monroe County Household Hazardous Waste Facility at 753-7600.

- Reduce the amount of paved area on your property in order to reduce the quantity of stormwater runoff and associated pollution.

- Use native plants in your landscape. Many native plants are attractive as well as drought and pest resistant.

- Direct downspouts towards lawn/landscape areas and away from paved areas in order to

reduce stormwater runoff.

- Compost and recycle yard waste.
- Don't over water your lawn. Water during the cool times of the day and don't let water run off into the storm drain.
- For additional information about lawn care practices that protect water quality, contact Cornell Cooperative Extension of Monroe County's "Great Lawns/Great Lakes" program at 461-1000 or visit www.cce.cornell.edu.

Home Repair and Improvement:

- Before beginning an outdoor project, locate the nearest storm drains and protect them from debris and other materials.
- Use hazardous substances like paints, solvents, and cleaners in the smallest amounts possible and follow the directions on the label. Store substances properly to avoid leaks and spills.
- Whenever possible use nontoxic, biodegradable, recycled, and recyclable products.

- Clean paint brushes in a sink, not outdoors. Filter and reuse paint thinner when using oil-based paints. Properly dispose of excess paints and other hazardous wastes at the Monroe County Household Hazardous Waste Facility. To make an appointment, call 753-7600.

Pet Care:

- Remember to clean up pet waste and dispose of it properly by flushing it down the toilet or placing it in the trash. Leaving pet waste on the ground allows harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and contaminate your local stream, bay, or lake. Excessive bacteria levels can result in beach closings and other problems.

Swimming Pool:

- Drain your swimming pool only when a test kit does not detect chlorine. This generally takes about 24 hours. Pool water should be directed to a level, highly vegetated section of your lawn so that it can infiltrate into the ground rather than contribute to stormwater pollution. Pool chemicals should be stored in a covered area to prevent stormwater pollution.

Septic System Maintenance:

- If you have a septic system, proper maintenance is very important in order to protect human health and water quality. Have your septic tank pumped out every two to three years by a Department of Environmental Conservation permitted waste hauler.
- Do not drive vehicles over the septic system drainfield. Plant only grass over the drainfield to avoid damage from roots.
- Do not flush household chemicals like paint, pesticides, oil, and antifreeze that can destroy the biological treatment taking place in the system.

Become involved:

- There are many opportunities for the public to become involved in conserving our water resources including stream monitoring, storm drain stenciling, litter clean ups, and tree planting. Contact the Water Education Collaborative at the Rochester Museum & Science Center at www.h2ohero.org or at 753-5441.

For stormwater information contact:

- Todd Stevenson, 753-5472
- www.theStormwaterCoalition.org