

Stormwater Management

Stormwater is something that everyone is familiar with. Whether it is rain, snow, sleet, hail, or ice – we’ve seen it all. Stormwater contributes to the growth of plants and animals (including humans), and sometimes causes flooding problems. But that’s not all it does.

Stormwater also carries pollutants to waterways. Where do the pollutants come from? They come from the air and from activities related to humans and other animals.

Pollutants that accumulate or spill onto hard surfaces like roads, sidewalks, driveways, and rooftops can have a big impact on local waterways. WHY? Because the stormwater that washes the pollutants off the surfaces usually moves quickly into streams. When stormwater flows into roadside grates, it usually goes into ponds or streams – not to a wastewater treatment plant. The kinds of pollutants contained in stormwater include nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen that feed your lawn and feed algae in ponds and lakes – particularly Lake Ontario. The stormwater can also contain salt from winter road maintenance and bacteria from pet manure.

What’s being done to stop stormwater runoff pollution? There are a lot of activities ongoing to control pollution from stormwater runoff.

Did you know that the way you care for your lawn can impact stormwater pollution? To learn how, see: [How does your lawn affect Lake Ontario?](#) To learn what you can do about it, see: [Fertilizers and Pesticides: Options for Lawn and Garden Use](#).

Natural or man-made wetlands have natural cleansing powers. When stormwater makes contact with wetland vegetation, many of the pollutants are processed by bacteria on the vegetation. Local officials are encouraging the creation of man-made wetlands to improve stormwater quality. One area where there is a concerted effort to encourage this is in the Irondequoit Creek Watershed. To learn more about it, check out this document on our website: [Irondequoit Creek Watershed Collaborative Recommendations for Comprehensive Stormwater Management](#). Also in this watershed, a special wetlands project on Irondequoit Creek is enhancing the ability of an existing natural wetland to cleanse stormwater. To learn more about this effort, check out the: [Irondequoit Bay Wetlands Project](#) or a publication from our partner, the U.S. Geological Survey entitled [Effects of a Cattail Wetland on Water Quality of Irondequoit Creek near Rochester, NY](#). There is also a citizen program to monitor existing wetlands. To find out more about this, click on the following link: [Community Water Watch Wetlands Manual](#). Or, if you just want to learn more about the benefits of wetlands, click on the following link: [Wetlands for Citizens and Land Use Decision Makers](#).

Because pollutants in stormwater are currently a significant cause of water pollution problems in Monroe County and across the nation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has issued regulations aimed at reducing the amount of pollutants contained in stormwater runoff. In 2003, these “Phase II” regulations will affect the way that local governments manage their stormwater management systems. To learn more about the federal regulations, go to the following USEPA web site

www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater. New York State will be administering these new regulations for the federal government. To learn about work they are doing to address stormwater, visit their web site at www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/mainpage.htm. Municipalities in Monroe County have already started to get ready to implement the new stormwater regulations. A Stormwater Coalition has been formed to begin planning ways to coordinate new and existing activities that reduce stormwater runoff pollution. To learn more about the Coalition, check out the [Stormwater Coalition fact sheet](#) and the [Stormwater Coalition Intermunicipal Agreement](#). For further information on the Stormwater Coalition, contact mpeet@mc.rochester.lib.ny.us. Every effort will be made to get back to you within a week.

Winter road deicing activities can also have an impact on stormwater quality. Efforts are under way in Monroe County to analyze existing road deicing procedures and identify any ways in which public safety needs can still be met by using less deicing material or using products that have the least impact on water quality. To learn more about what is going on, go to the [Road Deicing](#) section of this website.