

Stormwater Pollution

What is the issue?

Stormwater runoff occurs when rain or snow-melt runs over land, roads, roofs, parking lots and other hard surfaces. Some stormwater sinks into the land and replenishes groundwater. The runoff that doesn't sink into the ground flows untreated into storm sewers, creeks, streams or rivers.

Why is it an issue?

Along the way, the stormwater runoff accumulates oil, fertilizer, pet waste, herbicides, litter and eroding soil. The more impervious surfaces (roads, roofs, sidewalks, etc.), the more runoff occurs, and when more runoff occurs the increased stormwater frequently overwhelms streams and rivers, scours stream-banks and river bottoms and hurts or eliminates fish and other aquatic organisms.



City of Owatonna

540 West Hills Circle
Owatonna, MN 55060-4701

Public Education & Outreach



“Clean H₂Owatonna” is the City of Owatonna’s Stormwater Management initiative to improve the quality of our water resources and protect them from harmful pollutants.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) is a municipally owned utility system that includes ditches, curbs, gutters, storm sewers, and similar means of collecting or conveying runoff that do not connect with a wastewater collection system or treatment plant.

The MS4s program is designed to reduce the amount of sediment and pollution that enters surface and ground water from storm sewer systems to the maximum extent practicable. Stormwater discharges associated with MS4s are regulated through the use of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits.

MS4s outside of urbanized areas that have been designated by the MPCA for permit coverage under Minn. R. ch 7090 are required to obtain a NPDES/SDS stormwater permit. MS4s designated by rule are cities and townships with a population of at least 10,000; and cities and townships with a population of at least 5,000 and discharging or the potential to discharge to valuable or polluted waters. These designated MS4s are required to obtain permit coverage by February 15, 2007.

How can you help

There are several ways that the public can help manage the water runoff:

Be a watershed watchdog.

If you see a potential stormwater problem, such as clogged storm drains, trash in the gutter, pollutants washing into or discharging from storm sewers, or uncontrolled erosion from construction sites, contact your local municipal or county public works department.

Be a Pooper Scooper--Pick Up After Your Pets.

You can flush pet waste down the toilet, bury it 4-6 inches deep in the yard or dispose in a specially designed composter. Do not put it in your vegetable garden or compost that will be used for your garden.

Keep leaves and grass clippings out of the street, gutter, drainages ditches and storm drains.

Use leaves and/or grass clippings as mulch, or add it to a compost pile. Clippings and leaves can also be tilled directly into gardens or flowerbeds. If you live in a city or village, check your community's website to find out when the next leaf, brush and grass clipping pick up is.

Don't overfeed your lawn.

Test your soil before buying and applying

fertilizer to your lawn. Most lawns don't need phosphorus, so don't pay for something you don't need. If soil tests show that your lawn does need fertilizer, apply according to manufacturer's instructions. Don't "double the dose".



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540 West Hills Circle
Owatonna, MN 55060-4701

Phone: 507-774-7300

Fax: 507-444-4351

E-mail: stormwater@ci.owatonna.mn.us
Web: www.ci.owatonna.mn.us/stormwater