



Down the Drain with Stormwater

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What is stormwater?

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow that does not immediately soak into the ground. Stormwater runs off land and hard surfaces such as streets, parking lots, and rooftops, and picks up pollutants, such as fertilizers, dirt, pesticides, and oil and grease. Eventually, stormwater soaks into the ground or enters rivers, lakes, and streams, bringing pollutants with it.

What is a storm drain?

A storm drain is a drain (usually a grate) along the side of a road or in a parking lot that funnels water from a street, parking lot, or other hard surface into a stormwater pipe. Stormwater pipes channel stormwater to nearby bodies of water, such as rivers and lakes, or to ground water.

Why do we care about stormwater?

In Idaho, stormwater is channeled to rivers, streams, or lakes, or underground to ground water (it is also channeled to the ocean in coastal areas of the U.S.). It is *not* cleaned at a wastewater treatment plant. This means all of the pollutants carried by stormwater are also channeled to these water bodies. If you pour something down a storm drain or in a gutter, it is just as though you poured it directly into your favorite swimming hole or fishing spot, or even into the source of your drinking water.

What can I do to prevent stormwater pollution?

- Never pour anything other than pure water into a gutter or down a storm drain.
- Only use as much pesticide and fertilizer as necessary (read package instructions). Extra product (and your money!) goes down storm drains.
- Position sprinklers so you only water your lawn (not the driveway, sidewalk, etc.), and only use as much water as necessary. Extra goes down storm drains and takes pollutants with it.
- Use a commercial car wash. Commercial car washes recycle their water and some also treat it before it is sent down storm drains. If you do wash your car at home, use a bucket or a nozzle that you can turn off so the hose isn't running the entire time and wash your car on the lawn so the extra water soaks into the ground. Use cleaners sparingly.
- Pick up after your pet. Pet waste on the ground adds bacteria and nutrients to the stormwater, and eventually to local water bodies.
- Recycle, trade, or properly dispose of household products that contain chemicals. Do not pour them onto the ground or into gutters or storm drains.
- Participate in a program to educate your neighbors about stormwater pollution by marking storm drains with special "Dump No Waste" markers. Contact your local city public works department or the Department of Environmental Quality (208/373-0502) for more information on marking programs.

For more information and additional tips for preventing stormwater pollution, visit:

After the Storm: A Citizen's Guide to Understanding Stormwater

www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/after_the_storm.pdf

Make Your Home the Solution to Stormwater Pollution

www.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/solution_to_pollution.pdf

Stormwater in Idaho: An Overview

www.deq.idaho.gov/water/prog_issues/storm_water/overview.cfm

