Protecting Washington's waters from stormwater pollution

Stormwater runoff is damaging salmon habitat. It's the Number 1 water pollution problem in the urban areas of our state, and it causes and contributes to flooding.

Chances are pretty good you've seen stormwater runoff. It's the water from rain or snow that runs off yards, roofs and roadways. As gravity pulls it downhill into low spots, ditches and storm drains, the water picks up soil, chemicals and other pollutants and carries them into our lakes, rivers and marine waters.

Our waters and salmon, as well as other fish and wildlife species, aren't the only things at risk. Stormwater problems also affect the health and safety of people. As we develop land to accommodate Washington's growing population, our state's stormwater problem grows too. The good news is we can do something about it—all of us.

In Washington, the State Department of Ecology, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and local governments all work together to regulate stormwater. The key to solving the problem isn't really in the rules and permits, it's in people—how we live on the land and the everyday choices each of us make.

WASHINGTON *waters*
OURS TO PROTECT

WHEN IT RAINS IT DRAINS

City of Buckley Stormwater Management & Public Guidance Brochure

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BUCKLEY

Protecting Our Waters From Stormwater Pollution Through Personal Action

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Washington Waters — Ours to Protect

Stormwater Runoff

Stormwater runoff is unfiltered water that reaches streams, lakes, sounds, and oceans by means of flowing across impervious surfaces. These surfaces include roads, parking lots, driveways, and roofs. This brochure will help you understand the impact that stormwater runoff has on all of us.

What's the problem?

When land is left in its natural state, the majority of rainfall soaks into forests and meadows, flows slowly underground, is filtered by natural processes, and eventually feeds streams, lakes, underground aquifers and Puget Sound.

The natural process of water soaking into the earth is destroyed when we cover the land with buildings, roads and parking lots. The existing meadows and forests are replaced with roofs, concrete and asphalt, all of which do not allow rain to penetrate the earth. Instead, the fallen rain quickly runs directly into storm drains, ditches and streams, all without the benefit of filtration.

To add to this problem, the water that is running directly into the streams is often picking up pollutants along the way. These pollutants can include motor oils and gasoline that leak from vehicles, fertilizers and pesticides from lawns and gardens, and anything else that will float or dissolve in water.

Pollution by this means is called non-point pollution, and is a huge problem. In fact, non-point pollution accounts for over half of the pollution reaching our creeks, streams and Puget Sound. The closure of many local beaches to shellfish harvesting and diminishing fish populations are signs of pollution problems in Puget Sound.

These problems clearly indicate the need for programs that address the control of non-point source pollution.

People really can make a difference when it comes to reducing stormwater runoff and the problems and costs that go with it. Because we all contribute to the problem, we all can be a part of the solution. It starts with paying attention to stormwater — at home, at work and in our communities.

We can reduce the amount of runoff.

Reduce the amount of paved or hard surface areas. Consider permeable paving for that new patio or driveway. Look for ways to keep runoff out of the stormwater system so it can soak into the ground. Plant rain gardens. Use rain barrels. Wash your car on the lawn or at a commercial car wash that recycles water. (This helps prevent runoff pollution too!)

We can create cleaner runoff.

Reduce fertilizers, turf builders and pesticides on your lawn and garden. Use small amounts of slow-release fertilizer and environment-friendly products for problem areas. Reduce pollution from roads, driveways and parking lots.

Wear and tear on roads, tires and brakes leaves a lot of pollutants behind. Fix vehicle fluid leaks immediately, and consider alternatives to driving solo. Reduce bacterial pollution from animal waste. Scoop pet waste and put it in your garbage. Cover and control animal manure on small farms. Maintain your septic system. This will keep it from failing and causing pollution.

We can work together.

Get involved with community stormwater projects such as marking storm drains, maintaining neighborhood green spaces, and establishing pesticide aware neighborhoods.

Participate in your local watershed management group and in land use, stormwater and development planning with your city or county. Support smart development practices that maximize the natural vegetation.

Helpful websites

Puget Sound Partnership
www.psp.wa.gov/our_work/stormwater.htm

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
cfpub1.epa.gov/npdes/home.cfm?program_id=6

Washington Department of Ecology
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/index.html

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