

FACT SHEET: What is Stormwater? Why is it a Concern?

▶ What is Stormwater?

Dictionary.com defines stormwater as “an abnormal amount of surface water due to heavy rain or a snowstorm.” Stormwater that does not soak into the ground, aka runoff, originates from impermeable sources such as sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, roads, and rooftops.

▶ Why is Stormwater a Concern?

As stormwater runoff flows over land, it picks up pollutants and debris such as spilled fuel, oils, greases, antifreeze, grass clippings, litter, animal waste, fertilizer, and pesticides. Runoff carries these pollutants into our local creeks, streams, and other waterways used for swimming, recreation, or as a source for drinking water. Polluted stormwater harms plants, fish, animals, and even people.

The amount or volume of stormwater runoff can also create flooding problems. The more stormwater that does not soak into the ground, the more that enters a waterway, creating the potential for flooding.

▶ What is MS4?

MS4 stands for Municipal Separate Stormwater Systems. MS4 includes curbs, gutters, ditches, naturally occurring and manmade channels, pipes, tunnels, catch basins, and storm drains owned and maintained by a municipality. The United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection require municipalities to develop and implement practices that “can be used to protect water quality, enhance water availability, and reduce flooding potential through effective stormwater management.”

▶ What Can You Do?

We can all make a difference by taking simple steps to reduce stormwater pollution and to minimize the amount of stormwater runoff from our property. Some “Best Management Practices” that landowners can follow include:

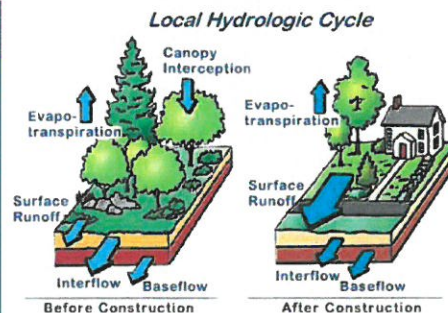
- Installing permeable pavement to allow stormwater to soak into the ground
- Directing stormwater from impervious areas to areas where stormwater can soak into the ground
- Collecting rainwater in a rain barrel for irrigation and other household uses
- Installing rain gardens, which are small garden areas designed to catch and absorb stormwater runoff
- Planting trees
- Disconnecting downspouts from storm drains
- Keeping storm drains free of debris and never dumping anything down a storm drain or MS4
- Disposing of trash and yard waste properly
- Cleaning up pet waste and disposing of it in the trash



BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

- ▶ Ensures proper drainage of surface runoff
- ▶ Conserves water resources
- ▶ Reduces flooding damage
- ▶ Avoids damage to infrastructure (private properties, streets, utilities)
- ▶ Increases property value
- ▶ Protects wetlands and aquatic ecosystems
- ▶ Improves quality of recreational waters
- ▶ Improves quality of drinking water

FACT: The water cycle—or hydrologic cycle—is a continuous cycle where water evaporates, travels into the air, becomes part of a cloud, falls down to earth as precipitation, and then evaporates again. Development that increases runoff alters the natural hydrologic cycle.



WE CAN HELP!

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