

Frequently Asked Questions

What is stormwater and why is it a problem?

When it rains, *impervious surfaces* such as roads, roof tops, parking lots and most driveways prevent water from being absorbed into the ground. The portion of water that is not absorbed into the ground is known as stormwater runoff. This flowing water picks up and transports pollutants like oil and grease, toxic metals, pet waste, litter, pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. These pollutants can flow into storm drains that empty directly into local lakes, estuaries, and creeks. Unlike household wastewater, stormwater is generally not treated. Therefore, the everyday pollutants found in stormwater have a direct impact on local water quality.

Doesn't stormwater go to a sewage treatment plant?

Some stormwater does go to the sewage treatment plant. However, some neighborhoods have separated sewer system. The runoff that enters a storm drain in these neighborhoods are connected by underground pipes that often convey stormwater directly to a nearby creek.

Who must comply with EPA's Phase II Stormwater Regulations?

All municipal separate storm sewer systems (*MS4s*) that are located in urbanized areas (as determined by the Census Bureau) must comply with Phase II Stormwater Regulations. The City of Norwalk must comply with EPA Phase II Regulations.

What is an MS4?

MS4 stands for "Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System." Parts of the City of Norwalk's sewer system are still combined, sanitary and storm, and these sewers are directed to our sewage treatment plant. In most of our neighborhoods, the sewers are "separated" into sanitary and storm. The storm sewers are directed to nearby creeks.

What is storm water?

Water that comes from a rain event or melting snow is known as storm water.

What is storm water runoff?

In urban areas, rain or snow that falls on hard surfaces such as roads, driveways, rooftops, and parking lots is not absorbed into the ground. This storm water runs off into storm drains that discharge into local rivers, streams, lakes, ponds or is directed to our sewage treatment plant. You can see these drains at street corners or along roadways.

Why is storm water a problem?

Storm water runoff picks up pollutants from hard surfaces and carries them to storm sewers that discharge into our local water bodies, without treatment. Excess storm water runoff can also contribute to flooding.

What are the most common pollutants found in storm water?

Pesticides, fertilizers, oil, grease, road salt, solvents, raw sewage, silt and other solid materials are often found in storm water.

How does polluted storm water affect our environment?

It can lead to fish kills, destruction of wildlife habitat, excessive siltation, loss of aesthetic value, impaired recreational areas, and contaminated drinking water resources.

Is this just a local problem?

No, storm water pollution is a problem nationwide.

What is the government doing about the storm water problem?

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognized that polluted storm water was a widespread problem and began working on a solution in the early 1990s. In 1999, the U.S. EPA established a new storm water program that requires urban communities to implement a plan to improve the quality of storm water entering our waterways and reduce the negative impacts to the environment.

What happens if my community does not apply for a storm water permit?

After March 10, 2003, any community in violation could be subject to enforcement action and/or fines.

What is a watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a specific stream, river, pond, lake, wetland, or ocean. Watersheds are vital to wildlife, humans, the environment, and our economy. Because all land is part of a watershed, everyone lives in a watershed. You and everyone in your watershed are part of the watershed community. What happens in your small watershed also affects the larger watershed downstream.

What kind of pollution is common in stormwater?

When stormwater runs over the land or soaks into the ground, it picks up pollutants and deposits them into streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and some underground sources of drinking water. These pollutants are known as non-point source pollutants because the pollution cannot be traced to one specific source. Non-point source pollution comes from a variety of sources and, therefore, is hard to control. Non-point source pollution is the leading cause of water quality problems in the nation and Ohio. It affects drinking water supplies, wildlife habitats, recreational areas, and fisheries.

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What is a NPDES permit?

NPDES stands for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. The NPDES Phase II program was established to govern construction projects that disturb one acre or more of ground. The NPDES also helps controls erosion and sediment runoff to protect the quality of water in the ground, streams, and lakes.