

## Public Education and Outreach

### WHAT IS STORMWATER?

Stormwater is water that originates during precipitation events and snow/ice melt. Stormwater can soak into the soil (infiltrate), be held on the surface and evaporate, or runoff and end up in nearby streams, rivers, or other water bodies (surface water). Every gutter in your neighborhood drains through to an inlet then into the storm sewer system that then empties to streams, ditches, lakes and ponds in your neighborhood. These water bodies are drinking water supplies, recreational areas and the homes for wildlife. In developed environments, unmanaged stormwater can create two major issues: one related to the volume and timing of runoff water (flooding) and the other related to potential contaminants that the water is carrying (water pollution).



## WHY SHOULD I CARE?

There has been a huge leap in the environmental regulations and cleanup projects associated with factory and mine pollution, increasing the level of protection surrounding the natural environment. But there is still a lot of pollution reaching the river. How is it getting there? Pollutants reach the river thru the underground storm sewer system when it rains. Most of Westminster's ground is covered by buildings, roads and parking lots. Simply put, there is not enough unpaved soil to soak up the rainwater. Rainwater will flow from our roofs, driveways, and roads into the storm sewer drains. This drainage system is designed to prevent our streets and homes from flooding.

Westminster has identified six items that impact surface water quality: trash, total suspended solids, flow volume, nutrients, fertilizers and pesticides.

- Trash.
- Total Suspended Solids - TSS includes all solids present in a water sample including metals, minerals and sediment.
- Flow volume - Increased volume erodes a waterway's habitat.
- Nutrients - The term "nutrients" encompasses many elements found to be essential to our environment. When looking at water quality, there are two main nutrients that in large quantities are pollutants. These two nutrients are nitrogen and phosphorus. Nitrogen and phosphorus increase the growth of algae in waterways, decreasing the amount of oxygen in the water. These two nutrients may also release ammonia-ammonia is toxic to fish and other aquatic life.
- Fertilizers - Fertilizers often contain nitrogen and phosphorus (the nutrients most often found to be pollutants to surface water bodies).
- Pesticides - Pesticides that enter surface waterbodies ultimately impact the environment by killing beneficial insects and small animals like frogs and minnows that are essential to an effective ecosystem.



## WHAT CAN I DO?

There are many simple things you can do to help increase the quality of water in Westminster:

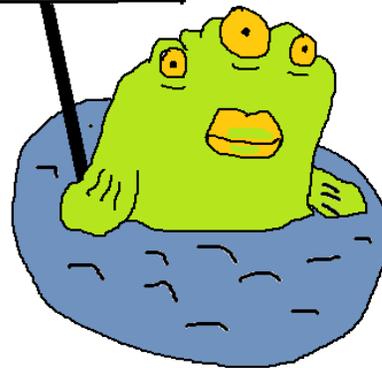
- Wash your car at a commercial car wash.
- Pick up pet waste.
- Decrease the amount of bare area in your yard by planting native plants.
- Store products in their originally labeled containers.
- Keep your vehicle well maintained to stop leaks before they happen.
- Use kitty litter, sawdust, or dirt to soak up a spill and put it in the trash. **DO NOT** wash the spill to the gutter.

- Raise your lawn mower's blade to the highest level to provide shade to your grasses roots and lower the amount of water required.
- Avoid over-watering your grass.
- Use alternatives to pesticides and fertilizers.
- Properly dispose of your household hazardous waste.
- After household painting projects, wash brushes and equipment in your sink or shower- do not wash to the gutter.



ONLY RAIN IN  
THE STORM DRAIN  
....PLEASE

  
WESTMINSTER



No  
Dumping



## WAIT.....WHERE DOES WATER FROM MY HOUSE GO?

It is important to understand that there are two separate underground collection systems in Westminster: sanitary sewer and storm sewer drains. While the sanitary sewer system conveys household wastewater into a sewage treatment plant, the storm drain system conveys rainwater runoff discharging directly into our local ponds and rivers. Unfortunately, the storm sewer system also picks up urban pollution found on its way, affecting the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, and our potential drinking water source. By using simple good housekeeping practices around your work and home, residents, business owners and farmers can help minimize non-point source pollution.

