

## **SPRINGTIME BRINGS MORE THAN FLOWERS WITH THOSE SHOWERS**

March brings our first taste of spring with warm southern breezes, spring showers and water everywhere. There are buds on the trees and spring flowers beginning to make an appearance. But there are also oily sheens in parking lots running off with the melting snow and washing into the storm drains, and the muddy water is flowing down the ditches and gutters. Spring is a good time to stop and ask, “What happens to all that melting snow and rainwater washing across the ground?” Most of it ends up in our lakes and streams, but along the way it goes through a few changes.

### **Storm Water is more than Just Water**

Storm water begins its journey to our lakes and rivers when it washes across the surface of the land. When snow melts and rain falls, water flows across streets, rooftops, lawns and farmland. The flowing water carries sand, salt, fertilizer, leaves, grass clippings, pesticides, oil, trash and many other pollutants. In developed areas, storm drains and ditches carry the large amounts of runoff water to lakes and streams.



Storm drain inlets located along the curbs and in parking lots collect the runoff, which flows untreated to nearby streams and lakes. A common misconception is that water running off streets goes into a sewage treatment plant. It does not! The polluted water flows directly into our lakes.

### **“What Can I Do?”**

The first step toward keeping our lakes and streams clean is to think about what we do at home. Each of us contributes to storm water pollution and each of us can help stop it. Here are some ways you can help:

- 9 Keep leaves and grass clippings out of the street.
- 9 Direct rainwater away from paved areas to lawns or gardens where it can soak in.
- 9 Get a soil test before applying fertilizer to your lawn. Don't pay for something you don't need. If you do use fertilizer, apply it according to directions and clean up any spills on paved surfaces.
- 9 Clean up pet waste – bury it or flush it down the toilet.
- 9 Compost your leaves and yard debris.
- 9 Keep cars tuned up and repair leaks, and walk or ride a bike whenever you can.
- 9 Wash your car on the lawn or at a car wash that sends its used water to the sewage treatment plant.
- 9 Prevent soil erosion.
- 9 Don't let anything but rain go down the storm drain or ditch.

Go to [www.myfairlakes.com](http://www.myfairlakes.com) for more ideas on how you can help our lakes and streams.

Adapted from Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission and other publications.