
“THE PUDDLE”

THE NORTH KINGSTOWN DEPARTMENT OF WATER SUPPLY NEWSLETTER

December 2007

Wastewater Management Update

As you may be aware, the Town of North Kingstown has switched our wastewater management tracking system to the newly available Rhode Island Wastewater Information System (RIWIS), a web-based program that allows us to be much more effective in tracking town-wide compliance. A number of homeowners have already received reminder postcards generated by the new system, and more will be on the way to the homeowners and businesses located in Wastewater Management District 2 this month. So, if you have had your system inspected or have had maintenance performed on it, please send us a copy or have your maintenance provider update the web system directly. For further information on the ordinance, our wastewater districting, or for a list of town-certified inspectors, check out the town website at www.northkingstown.org or call the department at 268-1521 or 268-1522.

Time to Prepare for the Cold Winter Months

With cold weather now finally upon us, here are some helpful hints to homeowners preparing for the chill of winter.

- 1) Turn off and drain in-ground sprinkler systems. An investment of a little time here can save you a huge repair bill in the spring.
- 2) Disconnect and drain all hoses from outside faucets.
- 3) Remove hose bib vacuum breakers from outside faucets.
- 4) If your home has a crawl space, invest in some heat tape. It uses a small amount of electricity, but can save you lots of money and aggravation by preventing piping freeze-up.
- 5) Cover foundation vents and windows with foam blocks, insulation, or thickly folded newspaper to prevent cold winds from entering and freezing your pipes.
- 6) If you can't isolate and drain all outside faucets (most homes have a dedicated shutoff for each outside faucet in the basement), then protect them with insulating blankets or covers.
- 7) Be sure you know where your main shut-off is located in the event of an emergency.
- 8) Don't forget about the swimming pool! Use environmentally friendly antifreeze products appropriately.



Where Does It Come From, Where Does It Go?

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It's Not Just Rain?

Have you ever noticed water flowing down the street when it rains? Have you ever wondered where the water flows to? Have you thought about what's *in* the water?

Stormdrains lead directly to local waters. No filters. No treatment. Pollutants that enter stormdrains wind up in the water we drink, fish, and swim.

When it rains onto a forest or a field, some of that rain is absorbed by the ground, replenishing groundwater that we use for our drinking water here in North Kingstown. Some of the rain is taken up by plants, and some of it simply evaporates. But very little of the rain flows over the ground.

In a more developed setting, such as our cities and towns, rain falls onto pavement, or other surfaces such as roofs, sidewalks, parking lots, and driveways that don't allow the water to be absorbed by the ground. The water that you see flowing down the street is called stormwater runoff, and it picks up many pollutants as it flows.

Why Is It A Problem?



When stormwater hits the pavement, it picks up and mixes with what's there. That might include:

- oil, grease, and automotive fluids;
- fertilizer and pesticides from gardens and homes;
- bacteria from pet waste and improperly maintained septic systems;
- soil from poor construction site management;
- sand from wintertime snow removal;
- soap from car washing;
- debris and litter.

Many people assume that stormwater flows down stormdrains and then to a treatment facility. *Unfortunately, that is almost never the case.* Stormwater either flows directly into local waters or down stormdrains, which channel it into local water bodies. This polluted stormwater threatens our swimming beaches and shellfishing areas. It's contributing to murky water and poor fish habitat in Wickford Harbor, and it is affecting the quality of stream life in the Hunt Potowomut River, including the last holdouts of native brook trout. Stormwater contributes to nuisance flooding and property damage. **Most importantly, every drop of rainwater that runs off pavement instead of seeping into the ground is water that is lost from our drinking water supplies.** Rainwater is a precious resource that we need to recharge our ground water supplies, not waste down stormdrains.

In the next *Puddle* we will have tips on simple actions you can take to reduce stormwater pollution from your property. Meanwhile, for more information about your drinking water visit the NK water website: www.northkingstown.org/waterdept