



Consistent Stormwater Messages

Updated 2017

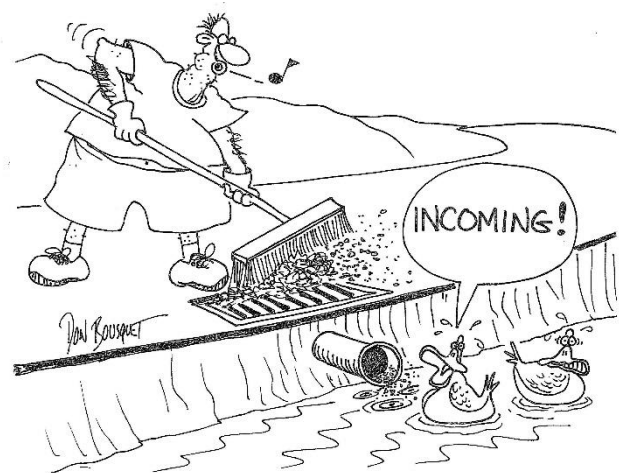
There are so many publications about topics related to stormwater pollution and prevention that we wanted to try to condense all the best messages into one document. If you use your own stormwater materials, please check to make sure that your messages don't contradict these. If you're developing new stormwater materials, we hope this is a handy reference.

General Education

- Stormwater runoff is polluted.
- When it rains, water landing on driveways, roofs, roads and other surfaces picks up pollutants and carries it directly to wetlands, streams, ponds and the Bay without treatment.
- Water entering storm drains is not treated – it all goes directly to nearby wetlands, streams, ponds and eventually the Bay without treatment.
- Stormwater pollution is responsible for beach/shellfish closures and threatens drinking water supplies.
- Rainwater seeping into the ground is naturally filtered and recycled to groundwater to replenish drinking water supplies and keep streams flowing between storms.

Storm Drains

- Storm drains carry water away without any treatment – any stormwater, fertilizer, leaves and trash entering a storm drain flows directly to nearby wetlands, streams, ponds and eventually coastal waters without treatment.
- Never dump, wash, or rake anything into the path of storm drains.



Home Care

- Don't dump household hazardous waste (which includes paint, paint thinner, drain and oven cleaners, and other products with warning labels) down storm drains, on the ground, or down household drains.
- Bring leftover household chemicals to the Eco-Depot. Contact the RI Resource Recovery Corporation to schedule a drop-off appointment or to find out when there will be a hazardous waste pick-up in your area.
- If you have a septic system, have it inspected regularly (about every 2 years) and have regular pump-outs (about every 3-5 years, depending on use) to ensure that your system does not fail. If you have a cesspool or failing system, it should be inspected annually. Improperly maintained septic systems are a top contaminant of water resources in Rhode Island.

Auto Care

- If you change your own oil, never dump the used oil down storm drains, on the ground, or down household drains. Take the used oil to a transfer station in your community. A local auto parts shop might also accept used oil from you.
- It's best to wash your car at a certified car wash facility, as they are required to either recycle, collect, or dispose of the wash water properly. But if you wash your car at home, moving your car off a paved surface and onto a more permeable one such as the lawn or a gravel driveway can help keep the polluted wash water out of storm drains.
- Sweep, don't hose, the driveway or other paved surfaces.

Pet Care

- Always pick up your pet's waste. It's easy to do when you're prepared, so carry a bag with you, put the waste in the bag, and throw it in the trash—never in a storm drain!
- Don't feed waterfowl; it causes them to concentrate in higher numbers than they would if they had to rely solely on natural food supplies, and that results in large quantities of waste that are carried by stormwater to local ponds, rivers, and the Bay.
- If you have large animals, barnyard and manure management is critical. For information specific to livestock, please consult URI's Healthy Landscapes publications.

Polluted stormwater is the result of local land-use policies and our everyday personal actions. However, because our personal choices have such an impact, there are many opportunities to do something about the problem!

Yard Care

- Mow at the highest setting on your lawn mower. Longer grass helps to conserve water and control weeds.
- Leave grass clippings on the lawn to improve its health and quality. You'll also require less fertilizer.
- Keep fertilizer, pesticides, leaves, and grass clippings off hard surfaces and out of the path of storm drains. Sweep any product that spills back onto the lawn to prevent it from being washed into a storm drain.

Yard Waste

- Compost yard waste when possible; it can be used as mulch later. But don't stockpile yard waste in wetlands or near surface waters.
- Either compost leaves or bag them for Town recycling. Never rake them toward a storm drain.

Lawn Chemicals

- Fertilize sparingly. If you only fertilize once a year, doing so in September is best: there are cooler temperatures, ample rain, and weeds are dying back. If you do apply fertilizer in the spring, do so after the grass is actively growing. A good rule of thumb is to wait until you've mowed the lawn three times.
- Use slow-release fertilizers. The label should read: slow release or time release fertilizer with water-insoluble, slowly-available, or slowly-available soluble nitrogen.
- More is not always better. Skip the "step programs" offered by many lawn care companies, and be sure to apply fertilizers and pesticides only as directed. If you use a lawn care company, ask them about their environmental options and certifications.
- Check the weather forecast before fertilizer or pesticide applications, and don't apply chemicals when there is rain predicted.
- Avoid using combination fertilizer/pesticide products. Hand pick weeds when possible, and if you must treat weeds or insects with pesticides, spot treat them rather than dousing the entire lawn.
- Avoid using lawn chemicals near wellheads or within 75 feet of waterways.

Water Conservation

- Water wisely. Many species of turf grass go naturally dormant during hot, dry summer months and do not need to be watered when dormant. If you must water, water less often for longer lengths of time and put no more than 1 inch of water per week on the lawn.
- Adjust sprinklers so that they don't water paved surfaces. In the event that it's unavoidable, try to direct the flow of water toward your garden or lawn.
- Check the weather forecast, if you have automatic sprinklers to ensure they aren't programmed to come on in the rain.
- Don't water in the heat of the day. Watering early in the morning or late in the evening minimizes the water lost to evaporation.
- Consider using slow-watering techniques such as drip irrigation or soaker hoses.

Diverting Rooftop Runoff

- If the runoff from your roof flows directly onto pavement, consider using downspout extenders to direct the water onto a landscaped area instead.
- Runoff also can be directed to a rain garden, which is a natural or dug shallow depression designed to soak up water.
- Roof runoff can be captured in a rain barrel and used later for irrigation, which not only reduces stormwater but also conserves water.