

Stormwater Pollution Prevention for Residents/Pet Owners

Stormwater runoff from residential areas and pet wastes has caused bacterial contamination in Wolcotts' waterways.

What is Stormwater Run-off and Why is Run-off a Problem?

Stormwater runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent stormwater from naturally soaking into the ground.

Stormwater can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants and flow into a storm sewer system or directly to a lake, stream, river, wetland, or coastal water. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, and providing drinking water.

There are lots of LITTLE ways to make a BIG impact!

Pick Up After your Pet!

Pet waste can contribute harmful bacteria to storm drains and watercourses. Cleaning up after your pet to make sure these pollutants don't reach our Town's rivers and streams that are used for recreation is a great way to help. Bring a pet waste or plastic bag with you when you take your dog out for walks and dispose of the waste in your trash barrel. Never throw pet waste into storm drains or sewer drains! [Print our handy flyer](#) and keep it somewhere visible in your home to help you and your family members remember these tips!

Clean Up Excess Fertilizer

Excess lawn fertilizer that lands on hard surfaces like driveways and sidewalks will eventually drain into the Town's stormdrains and watercourses. This will create excess nutrients that kill wildlife and create problematic algae blooms. Sweeping up excess fertilizer from these areas onto the grass where it belongs will help prevent this pollution.

Maintain your septic system properly

Septic systems can contribute harmful bacteria to storm drains and watercourses when not properly maintained. See the Health Department page on [Septic Systems](#) for more information on how to avoid this.

If you see something, say something!

Participate in Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days

Get rid of those old toxic chemicals that are hanging around the house at one of the many Town sponsored collection events. See the [Household Hazardous Waste](#) webpage on the Town site for more information.

Effects of Stormwater Pollution

Polluted stormwater runoff can have many adverse effects on plants, fish, animals, and people.

- Sediment can cloud the water and make it difficult or impossible for aquatic plants to grow. Sediment also can destroy aquatic habitats.
- Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they sink to the bottom and decompose in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic organisms can't exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels.
- Bacteria and other pathogens can wash into swimming areas and create health hazards, often making beach closures necessary.
- Debris - plastic bags, six-pack rings, bottles, and cigarette butts - washed into water bodies can choke, suffocate, or disable aquatic life like ducks, fish, turtles, and birds.
- Household hazardous wastes like insecticides, pesticides, paint, solvents, used motor oil, and other auto fluids can poison aquatic life. Land animals and people can become sick or die from eating diseased fish and shellfish or ingesting polluted water.
- Polluted stormwater often affects drinking water sources. This, in turn, can affect human health and increase drinking water treatment costs.

Other ways to Help

See the brochures below for other ways that you can help reduce stormwater pollution.

- [Effects of Pollution](#)
- [Pollution Prevention for Residents](#)
- [Pollution Prevention for Businesses](#)
- EPA Fact sheet on Stormwater Pollution Prevention
- [Construction Site Run-off - Does your site need a permit?](#)

