

TOWN/VILLAGE OF HARRISON  
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# Stormwater Quarterly

## *Cleaning Up Stormwater Runoff*

**WHAT IS STORMWATER RUNOFF?** It is the rain and melting snow that flows from streets, rooftops and lawns. The flowing water carries salt, sand, oil, pesticides, fertilizers, leaves and grass clippings, oil, litter and many other pollutants into nearby waterways.

**STORM SEWERS—RIVERS BENEATH OUR FEET** In developed areas, much of the land surface is covered by buildings and pavement which do not allow water to soak into the ground. Instead, storm sewers are used to carry large amounts of runoff from these roofs and paved areas to nearby waterways. Storm sewers are simply pipes laid underground, often below streets. Inlets or drains located along curbs collect the runoff, which then flows into nearby streams or lakes. A common misconception is that water running off streets goes into a sewage treatment plant. It does not. In fact, stormwater usually receives no treatment and flows directly into waterways.

**STORMWATER IS NOT CLEAN WATER** Stormwater carries pollutants that seriously harm our waters. **Sediment** is soil particles that get washed off pervious pavement and make their way into our waterways making them cloudy. When the sediment settles out of the water, it gradually fills in the stream or lake bed. **Phosphorus** is a nutrient, often attached to soil particles which fuels the growth of algae and aquatic weeds. These plants are important in providing habitat for fish and wildlife. Rapid and excessive growth of algae and aquatic plants can degrade water quality. **Micro-organisms**, such as bacteria and viruses, make water unsafe for recreation. Some of these organisms are difficult to remove through water treatment and may endanger all who depend on

drinking water supplies drawn from lakes and streams. **Toxic chemicals**, such as motor oil, lead from gas and auto exhaust, zinc from roof drains and pesticides in stormwater runoff make kill aquatic organisms or impair their health, growth or ability to reproduce.

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT IS NOW THE LAW** Federally mandated stormwater permits require the control of stormwater runoff. All communities are required to control erosion on construction sites and provide for better stormwater management in new development.

**WE CAN HELP** Each of us contributes to stormwater pollution and each of us can stop it. Here are some ways you can help:

- \* Keep pesticides, oil, leaves and other pollutants of streets and out of storm drains.
- \* Divert roof water to lawns or gardens where it can safely soak in.
- \* Clean up pet waste—bury it or flush it down the toilet.
- \* Keep cars tuned up and repair leaks—or better yet, bike, walk or take the bus.

The amount of pollution that you can stop may seem small, but together it all adds up to cleaner water for everyone to enjoy.

Source: University of Wisconsin –Extension

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