

# Just The Basics: Illicit Discharge

What does it mean to me?



### **What is an Illicit Discharge?**

An illicit discharge is the discharge of pollutants or non-storm water materials to storm water drainage systems via overland flow or direct discharge of materials into a storm drain.



# Illicit Discharge Examples:

Suds may be harmful to fish because suds deplete oxygen levels in the water. Suds often enter lakes and streams as a result of improperly connected car washes or washing machines.

Oil/Gas is recognized as a sheen on the water. Natural sheens may be differentiated from an oil/gas sheen by swirling the sheen around in the water. If it re-attaches, the sheen is oil/gas. Natural sheens will remain separated. Oil/Gas enters water bodies via storm water runoff (spills while topping off at gas stations, oil leaks on pavement, etc.) and illegal dumping.

Sanitary Sewage may be present if there is black staining inside the drainage pipe; visible evidence of sanitary waste, such as toilet paper; or opaque or gray water. Sewage may originate from septic tank overflow pipes or improperly dumped travel trailer waste.



## *And don't forget these!*

- Motor vehicle fluids
  - Leaf litter
  - Industrial waste
  - Animal waste
- Commercial car wash flow



## **What Is Point Source Discharge ?**

A point source discharge (PSD) is an outlet from a drainage system to waters of the state, or a point where the storm water drainage discharges into a system operated by another public entity. Examples include a structural outfall, constructed swales, or a pipe discharging to another entity's drainage system. Composed entirely of storm water or uncontaminated groundwater.

## **What is Storm Water?**

Storm water is water that accumulates on land as a result of rainfall events.



## What is an Illicit Connection?

An illicit connection is an unlawful connection which allows the discharge of non-stormwater to the storm drain system or lakes and streams.

### Examples of Possible Illicit Connections:

- Paint being poured into or near a storm structure
- Changing oil or antifreeze over or near a storm structure
- Discarding yard waste in or near a storm structure



Some non-storm water discharges are acceptable.  
Here is a fairly comprehensive list:

- Water line flushing
- Landscape irrigation runoff
- Diverted stream flows
- Rising groundwater
- Uncontaminated groundwater infiltration
- Pumped groundwater
- Discharges from potable water sources
- Foundation drains
- Air conditioning condensate
- Irrigation water
- Springs
- Crawl space pump water
- Footing drains
- Lawn watering runoff
- Non-commercial car washing
- Flows from riparian habitats and wetlands
- Residential swimming pool discharges and de chlorinated pool discharges
- Residual street wash waters
- Discharges or flows from emergency fire fighting activities.



## Why do we need to manage stormwater and polluted runoff?

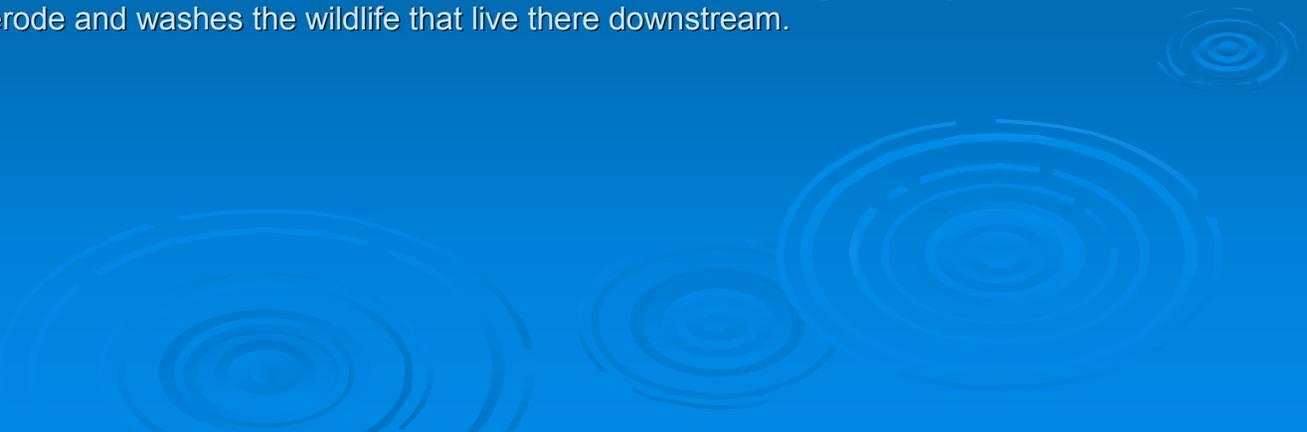
Polluted stormwater runoff is the number one cause of water pollution in many states. In most cases stormwater either does not receive any treatment before it enters our waterways or is inadequately treated.

Polluted water creates numerous costs to the public and to wildlife. As the saying goes, “we all live downstream.” Communities that use surface water for their drinking supply must pay much more to clean up polluted water than clean water.

Polluted water hurts the wildlife in creeks, streams, rivers and lakes. Dirt from erosion, also called sediment, covers up fish habitats and fertilizers can cause too much algae to grow, which also hurts wildlife by using up the oxygen they need to survive. Soaps hurt fish gills and fish skin, and other chemicals damage plants and animals when they enter the water.

The quantity of stormwater is also a problem. When stormwater falls on hard surfaces like roads, roofs, driveways and parking lots, it cannot seep into the ground, so it runs off to lower areas. To give you an idea of the difference a hard surface makes, consider the difference between one inch of rain falling onto a meadow and a parking lot. The parking lot sheds 16 times the amount of water that a meadow does!

Because more water runs off hard surfaces, developed areas can experience local flooding. The high volume of water also causes stream banks to erode and washes the wildlife that live there downstream.



## How are stormwater and runoff “managed”?

“Best management practices” is a term used to describe different ways to keep pollutants out of runoff and to slow down high volumes of runoff.

Preventing pollution from entering water is much more affordable than cleaning polluted water! Educating state residents about how to prevent pollution from entering waterways is one best management practice. Laws that require people and businesses involved in earth disturbing activities --like construction and agriculture -- to take steps to prevent erosion are another way to prevent stormwater pollution. There are also laws about litter, cleaning up after pets and dumping oil or other substances into storm drains.

Education and laws are just two best management practice examples. Some BMPs are constructed to protect a certain area. Some are designed to slow down stormwater, others help reduce the pollutants already in it – there are also BMPs that do both of these things.

Detention ponds, built to temporarily hold water so it seeps away slowly, fill up quickly after a rainstorm and allow solids like sediment and litter to settle at the pond bottom. Then, they release the water slowly. These ponds are one constructed BMP example. Green roofs, storm drain grates, filter strips, sediment fences and permeable paving are other examples.



# If you see it: Report It!

Call 382-CITY to report issues or concerns.  
The City will send a representative to  
investigate the problem.

