

WATER POLLUTION

WHAT IS MS4

MS4 is commonly known as “Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems.”

The Town of Walworth has been mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to be included in this program to control stormwater runoff in order to protect and improve the Nation’s waterways. Polluted stormwater runoff is often transported to municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) and ultimately discharged into local rivers and streams without treatment.

This program is intended to improve the Nation’s waterways by reducing the quantity of pollutants that stormwater picks up and carries into storm sewer systems during storm events. Common pollutants include oil and grease from roadways, pesticides from lawns, sediment from construction sites, and carelessly discarded trash, such as cigarette butts, paper wrappers, and plastic bottles. When deposited into nearby waterways through MS4 discharges, these pollutants can impair the waterways, thereby discouraging recreational use of the resource, contaminating drinking water supplies, and interfering with the habitat for fish, other aquatic organisms, and wildlife.

Sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced in recent years. Now, more than 60% of water pollution comes from things like runoff from homes, excess fertilizer, and pet waste. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. So, believe it or not, the biggest source of water pollution today is not industry – it is actually households like yours. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water. And it starts with realizing that **our sewers and storm systems are separate – what goes into storm drains flows directly into the environment, untreated.**

FACTS AND FIGURES

- During the summer months it is estimated that nearly 40% of household water is used for lawn and garden maintenance.
- Homeowners use ten times more chemicals per acre on lawns than farmers use on crops.
- If lawns were classified as a crop, it would rank as the fifth-largest in the country, based on area.
- Even the White House lawn is “going green.” Staff there are using gardening and landscaping practices designed to protect the environment and minimize polluted runoff.

Storm Drains

Remember, storm drains lead directly to our waterways. Check streets and sidewalks after applying lawn products, and sweep any excess back onto the lawn. Use dry clean-up methods (sweep with a broom rather than spray with a hose), which prevents debris from entering storm drains.

Lawn Maintenance Facts & MS4. What this means to the homeowner.



We all live in a watershed. A watershed is a land area that drains into a waterbody, like a creek, river, or lake. Think of a watershed as a series of funnels nested inside each other. For example, when it rains, all the water from a watershed may travel to a creek or waterbody. From there, the creek will flow into a larger stream, which in turn collects water from a larger watershed. This brochure will provide you with some tips for helping to keep our waters clean.

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Mowing



Mow your grass at your mower's highest setting or at least 3-4". The roots of your lawn grow as deep as the grass grows tall, so taller grass has deeper, healthier roots, enabling your lawn to better tolerate hot, dry weather. Not spending extra time and money on watering and fertilizing makes your lawn easier and cheaper to maintain.

Sharpen your mower blade at least once per summer.



Bare Spots, Tree Cover , Mulch & Native Plants

- Increase the amount of your yard in tree cover.
- Mulch circles beneath trees and around plant beds.
- Add native plants to your yard. They are low maintenance, tolerate drought, and require no fertilizers or extra watering, thus conserving water and preventing unnecessary pollution.
- Vegetate bare spots in your yard. This helps prevent soil erosion and can beautify your land at the same time. The best way to prevent erosion is by planting shrubs and plants to hold soil in place.

Compost

Dispose of lawn waste in compost piles and use a mulching mower. Making compost results in a rich natural fertilizer for your plants or garden, productively reusing yard waste rather than throwing it away, and saving you money in the process.



Impervious Surfaces



Impervious surfaces prevent rain-water from soaking into the ground, causing runoff to pick up pollutants as it flows toward our waterways. So reduce the amount of impervious surfaces around your home. Alternatives such as paving blocks, gravel, cobbles, brick, and natural stone can replace asphalt and concrete in driveways, parking lots, and walkways.

When you apply these principles, you end up with a beautiful yard and don't waste water, fertilizers, or pesticides, saving both time and money. At the same time, our area streams, rivers, and lakes as well as our wildlife are protected for generations to come.

Rain Barrel

Install a rain barrel. A rain barrel is a system that collects and stores rain-water from your roof that would otherwise run off and be diverted to the storm system. It provides an ample supply of free "soft" water for watering plants, washing cars, topping off swimming pools, etc. Using rain barrels reduces runoff, conserves water, provides irrigation water during watering restrictions, and helps lower your water bill. You can buy prepackaged rain barrel systems, or you can make one from scratch.

Rain Garden

Install a rain garden to capture runoff. Rain gardens typically absorb much more water than the same size area of lawn. They are drought-resistant, winter hardy, and less prone to destructive insects and diseases. Rain gardens create preferred habitats for birds, butterflies, and dragonflies. These specialty gardens are versatile. In addition to their aesthetic beauty, they help filter runoff, prevent flooding, and enhance groundwater recharge.



Pet Waste

Pick up pet waste and dispose of it properly.