

Stormwater Runoff Pollution: What You Can Do To Help

The Town of Farmington has the benefit of two major rivers that flow through its borders: the Farmington River and the Pequabuck River. These rivers provide a habitat for wildlife and provide many aesthetic and recreational opportunities including enjoyment of wildlife, canoeing, fishing and swimming to name a few. These benefits, however, are ours to enjoy only as long as we are good stewards and protect the water quality of these rivers and all the smaller tributaries that ultimately flow into them (collectively called a watershed). We can all do our part to prevent stormwater runoff from polluting our waters. Under natural conditions, some rainfall and snowmelt penetrates into the ground where it travels before being discharged into a river while another portion of the rainfall evaporates into the atmosphere. The remaining rainwater runs off when rain or snowmelt flows over impervious surfaces like driveways, parking lots and roads, where it picks up debris, dirt and other pollutants before flowing into rivers or streams either directly overland, or inside a storm sewer system via catch basins. The result is the discharge of untreated pollutants into the same rivers we treasure for their aesthetic and recreational values. We can all do our part to minimize pollution of stormwater by minimizing the contaminants that runoff comes in contact with.

Here are 10 Things You Can Do to Prevent Stormwater Runoff Pollution:

1. Use fertilizers sparingly and sweep up driveways, sidewalks, and roads. If you apply fertilizer shortly before a rainstorm, much of it will be washed into nearby storm drains, streams and lakes, and rivers. So when you fertilize your lawn, apply it well in advance of a rainstorm, use it sparingly, and use organic, slow-release fertilizers.
2. **Never dump anything down the storm drains.** Homeowners should be aware of any illicit connections or discharges they may have to the storm drain system. Any pollutants that enter the storm drains will be washed into nearby storm drains, streams and lakes, and rivers.
3. Vegetate bare spots in your yard to prevent soil erosion.
4. Compost your yard waste. Grass clippings left on the lawn are a natural fertilizer.
5. Avoid pesticides; learn about Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
6. Direct Downspouts away from paved surfaces. Consider installing a rain garden or rain barrels as a great way to recycle water and to use around the yard for watering of gardens. Information on rain gardens and rain barrels can be found under the landscape construction link at (<http://www.sustainability.uconn.edu>). Rain barrels can be purchased through the Farmington Valley Watershed Association (<http://www.fvwa.org>).
7. Take your car to the car wash, where wash water is filtered and recycled, instead of washing it in the driveway. If you must wash at home, wash your car on a grass or gravel surface and use a small amount of soap.
8. Check and/or repair fluid leaks in your cars, and recycle motor oil and other automotive fluids.
9. Pick up after your pet. Pet waste can be a source of bacteria, and can lead to contamination of streams and lakes, and rivers.
10. Have your septic tank pumped and system inspected regularly. An improperly operating/maintained septic system can lead to polluted surface and groundwater; therefore, improper use and failure of septic systems should not be taken lightly. Dispose of household chemicals properly. Do not dispose of them down the drain where they can contaminate the groundwater. Use household hazardous waste collection days to dispose of any chemicals. Additional information can be found at the MDC website (<http://www.themdc.com/hazwasteschedule.htm>).

In compliance with Federal regulations, the Town of Farmington has been testing runoff from various areas of Town over the past five years. The results of this testing is then utilized to determine areas of concern, and to pinpoint sources of contamination.

The Town is currently working on adding a link on its website, <http://farmington-ct.org>, addressing stormwater runoff pollution and recycling. The site will be filled with additional useful information you can do to prevent stormwater runoff from polluting our waters. Look for it in the near future.

