

## After the Storm: Stormwater Pollution Solutions

GDOT's efforts to keep our streams, rivers and lakes healthy and clean



### Did you know?

**The quality of Georgia's streams, rivers, and lakes are threatened by the daily activities of residents and businesses.** Thousands of stream miles throughout Georgia are impacted by stormwater runoff, which can carry harmful pollutants into our waterways. In fact, the leading threat to our water quality is from stormwater pollution, and the only way to combat its adverse effects is by educating people like you, to take actions to prevent it!

### What is stormwater runoff?

**Stormwater runoff is rain that flows off streets, rooftops and lawns.** Our many impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent stormwater from naturally soaking into the ground, so it is often collected in storm-drains and drainage swales, where it flows untreated into streams, rivers and lakes.

### Why should you care about clean water?

**Can you imagine not being able to swim or fish in your favorite stream, river or lake?** Each time it rains, stormwater runoff from our roofs, streets, parking lots and lawns carries with it contaminants as it flows across these surfaces.

Unlike wastewater, the water that flows through our storm-drains is untreated before it enters our waterways. If polluted stormwater contaminates our water sources, the health of the aquatic ecosystem may be directly compromised. This can mean keeping the public from entering and using our rivers, lakes and streams. Stormwater pollution also makes monitoring and treating our drinking water more difficult and costly.

### How can we solve the problem?

**As people learn more about the effects of stormwater runoff and how it impacts the quality of our streams, rivers and lakes, they can take positive actions to help minimize these negative effects.** People can make simple changes that can have far-reaching positive impacts. As more people learn that what goes into the storm-drains on their street flows directly into nearby streams and lakes—they will be more likely to take actions to prevent these pollutants from reaching our water supply. They will also be more likely to support efforts to address the problems of stormwater runoff quality in their community. See the list on the back of this page for specifics on what you can do to help.

### When it rains, it pollutes!

Many people are unaware that the quality of our streams, rivers and lakes is threatened each time it rains. Stormwater runoff carries pollutants like oil and grease, lawn fertilizers, chemicals, pet waste, litter and other contaminants into our waterways. These pollutants are harmful to both people and aquatic life. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 80% of water pollution is caused by stormwater runoff.



## The effects of 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 and can destroy aquatic habitats. Excess nutrients can cause rapid algae growth in a water body; when the algae dies it breaks down in a process that removes oxygen from the water. Less oxygen in the water makes it difficult for fish and other aquatic organisms to survive. Trash such as plastic bags, six-pack rings and cigarette butts that end up in the storm-drains can choke, suffocate, or disable aquatic life like fish, turtles, and birds. Household hazardous wastes like paint, used motor oil, pesticides, insecticides, solvents, and other similar fluids can poison aquatic life. Land animals and people can become sick or die from eating diseased fish and shellfish or from ingesting polluted water.

## What is the source of all these pollutants?

**We all are!** The fact is that we are all part of the stormwater pollution problem, and we can all choose to be part of the solution, as well. Many of the things we do on a daily basis, like taking care of our lawns, driving or washing our cars, and even walking our pets can contribute to stormwater pollution. Nobody wants polluted water—become part of the solution!

**BACKGROUND:** On January 3, 2012, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit #GAR041000 to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) for stormwater discharges from its municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) to waters of the State became effective. The permit requires GDOT to reduce pollutants in stormwater through six minimum control measures: public education and outreach on stormwater impacts, public involvement/participation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, construction site stormwater runoff control, post-construction stormwater management, and pollution prevention/good housekeeping for municipal-type operations. The permit covers GDOT's roadways, drainage, detention ponds, etc.

## An Untreated Mess!

A common misconception is that water running from the street into a storm drain goes straight to a wastewater treatment plant, but it doesn't! Stormwater is seldom treated. Therefore pollutants that flow into a storm sewer system can go directly into a lake, stream, river, wetland, or coastal water. These materials are discharged into the water we use for swimming, fishing, and providing drinking water.

## What can I do to help?

- **First, never dump anything on the street, down a storm drain, or into a drainage ditch.** Report stormwater pollution on state routes by logging onto: [www.dot.ga.gov/informationcenter/programs/environment/Pages/StormWater.aspx](http://www.dot.ga.gov/informationcenter/programs/environment/Pages/StormWater.aspx)
- **Next, clean up after your pet in your yard, on walks, in public parks, and in rest-areas while traveling.** Clean up and bag pet waste, and throw it in the trash. GDOT provides pet waste stations at all highway rest stops.
- **Also, remember to check your vehicles for leaks and repair them.** Recycle motor oil and other vehicle fluids; clean up gasoline and oil leaks and spills immediately.
- **Learn more!** Education is the key to change. Signs and markers near storm drains warn residents that pollutants entering the drains will be carried untreated into a local waterbody.
- **Support a highway beautification program, and throw litter (even cigarette butts) in its proper place.** Encourage your employer to participate in the Sponsor-A-Highway program. Tell a friend or neighbor about how they can prevent stormwater pollution by helping to clean up litter and let them know how you get involved. You can also visit a [Keep Georgia Beautiful](http://www.KeepGeorgiaBeautiful.org) affiliate. **Together we can help reduce stormwater pollution!**

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

**The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)**

[www.dot.ga.gov/informationcenter/programs/environment/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.dot.ga.gov/informationcenter/programs/environment/Pages/default.aspx)

**The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** | [www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater](http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater) or [www.epa.gov/nps](http://www.epa.gov/nps)  
**Clean Water Campaign** (in metro Atlanta) | 404.463.3259 | [www.cleanwatercampaign.com](http://www.cleanwatercampaign.com)