



## Stormwater FAQ Sheet

### What is stormwater and why is it a problem?

Stormwater is water from rain. As rain falls to earth in undeveloped areas, it is either absorbed or it slowly runs off and dissipates. In an urban environment like Coconut Creek, where rooftops and paved areas not only prevent the water from being absorbed, but also help it run off at a much faster rate, problems arise. Unmitigated, the stormwater could accumulate, causing nuisance flooding and possible threats to public health and safety. Flooding is only a part of the problem. As the rain falls onto our streets and runs off, it carries with it pollutants such as pet waste, gasoline, oil, and heavy metals. Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers are washed from lawns and other green spaces. Sediments are eroded by wind and water from construction sites and unvegetated landscape areas. With the passage of time, these pollutants will buildup in our local waterways causing environmental damage.

### What is an impervious surface?

Impervious surface means those disturbed or hard surfaced areas that either prevent or restrict the natural entry of water into the soil. Rooftops, buildings, streets, parking lots, sidewalks, asphalt, concrete, other paving, driveways, gravel, patios, artificial turf and storage areas are all examples of impervious surfaces. Impervious areas affect natural infiltration, create more runoff, increase the rate of runoff and alter runoff patterns of stormwater that drains from an area.

### Are sewers and storm drains the same thing?

The sewer system, also known as the sanitary sewer or wastewater sewage system, conveys household, commercial and industrial wastewater through a separate plumbing system into an underground sewer pipe system. Wastewater in the sanitary sewer system is from sources such as water and waste from sinks, toilets, washers, and car washes. Discharges to the sanitary sewer system is conveyed to and treated by Broward. The storm drain system on the other hand, discharges primarily untreated stormwater runoff directly into local canals.

## **What is a catch basin?**

A catch basin is a drainage structure whose function is to convey water from streets and other impervious surfaces into the storm drainage system. The design of this drainage structure includes a sump and hood that captures and temporarily stores some pollutants such as oils and sediment. Maintenance to clean out the sump removes the stored pollutants and prevents them from washing further into the storm drain system and into our local canals.

## **What kinds of pollutants are found in the storm drain system?**

Paint thinner and paint products, used motor oil and antifreeze, pesticides and fertilizers, sediments containing heavy metals, cigarette butts, trash, human and animal feces, golf balls, dirty diapers, and dead animals are but a few of the many pollutants found in the system on a regular basis. We all have the ability to help reduce stormwater pollution by taking individual actions to pick up after our pets, dispose of trash and wastes properly, and use fertilizers and insecticides sparingly and wisely.

## **How is stormwater managed?**

“Best management practices” is a term used to describe different ways to keep pollutants out of stormwater runoff and to slow down high volumes of runoff. Preventing pollution from entering the storm drain system is much more affordable than cleaning polluted water. Educating 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.

## **What do I do if I observe someone dumping trash and other pollutants into storm drains?**

Only rain belongs down the storm drain system. Dumping into storm drains is illegal. To report illegal dumping in Coconut Creek call #954-973-6782.

## **What is a stormwater fee and why do I have one?**

The state does not charge residents for stormwater management. Stormwater fees are one way municipalities can choose to raise funds to perform the six steps required by the federal government. Cities can levy fees based on a variety of standards, but one of the most common methods is to base them on the amount of impervious surfaces (surfaces like concrete and roofs, where water can't seep into the ground) on a property. In these cases, property owners with more impervious surfaces pay more than those with less impervious surfaces. In some cities, taking steps to reduce the amount

of impervious surfaces – by installing a green roof, permeable paving or cisterns that collect rainwater runoff – can reduce the fee applied to a specific property.

### **How does this benefit the average taxpayer?**

When our water is polluted, we all pay in one way or another. Damage from urban flooding can raise merchant prices and insurance rates. Sediment and pollution laden water takes more money to treat before it can be used for drinking water. Tourism and recreation businesses suffer along with residents when swimming, fishing and boating are curtailed. Because everyone plays a role in creating the pollution in stormwater runoff, we all have a role in preventing it and cleaning it up.

### **What can I do to reduce the amount of stormwater pollution I contribute?**

If you own a car, maintain it so it does not leak oil or other fluids. Be sure to wash it on the grass or at a car wash so the dirt and soap do not flow down the driveway and into the nearest storm drain.

If you own a yard, do not over fertilize your grass. Never apply fertilizers or pesticides before a heavy rain. If fertilizer falls onto driveways or sidewalks, sweep it up instead of hosing it away. When mulching leaves and grass clippings, place leaves in the yard at the curb, not in the street. Doing this keeps leaves out of the gutter so that they do not wash into the nearest storm drain. Turn your gutter downspouts away from hard surfaces, seed bare spots in your yard to avoid erosion, and consider building a rain garden in low-lying areas of your lawn

If you have a septic system, maintain it properly by having it pumped every three to five years. If it is an older system, be sure it can still handle the volume placed on it today. Never put chemicals down septic systems, they can harm the system and seep into the groundwater.

Pet owners should pick up after their pets and dispose of pet waste in the garbage.

Keep lawn and household chemicals tightly sealed and in a place where rain cannot reach them. Dispose of old or unwanted chemicals at household hazardous waste collections sites or events.

Never put anything in a storm drain.

Don't litter.