

Nashville's Storm Drain Adoptions

Frequently Asked Questions

www.NashvilleH2o.org/adopt



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Nashville's Adopt-a-Drain pilot program is bringing the clean water cause within feet of your work or home. It is easy to make a difference — look out your window and find the nearest storm drain, then adopt it at www.NashvilleH2o.org/adopt.

Here are answers to common questions about our drain adoptions.

What is stormwater?

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow that does not soak into the ground. It flows from rooftops, over paved areas, bare soil, and sloped lawns.

What is stormwater pollution?

The pollutants washed from streets, construction sites, and land by rain and snowmelt into storm drains and ditches and then directly into streams and rivers with no treatment are known as stormwater pollution.

How do I identify a storm drain?

Several types of storm drains exist; most are located in or next to the curb and have a metal grate to prevent people and debris from falling in. They can be rectangular or circular. Some storm drains are stenciled or stamped with messages such as "Dump No Waste", "Drains to River".

Sanitary sewers, which usually have solid manhole covers, are NOT storm drains.

What is the purpose of a storm drain?

Storm drains are designed to move rainwater and runoff into our rivers, creeks and streams so we can avoid local flooding. That rainwater often collects contaminants like litter, animal waste, automobile fluids, fertilizers, cigarette butts, leaves, yard debris, and erosion sediment from nearby construction areas. Where stormwater flows into the storm drains, your stewardship will help identify threats of pollution in our streams and rivers, and help prevent clogs that lead to localized flooding.

Where does the pollution come from?

Nearly everyone contributes to stormwater pollution. Dropping cigarette butts on the ground, allowing paper or trash to blow into the street, or hosing leaves or dirt into the gutter are all examples of how you might be contributing. Water that flows over streets,

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parking lots, construction sites and industrial facilities pick up oil and other pollutants and carry them through our storm drain network directly into creeks and streams.

Is stormwater treated like sewage before reaching waterways?

Water from storm drains flows directly into our creeks, streams and rivers without treatment. The storm drain system is separate from the sewage system.

How does pollution affect my community?

Litter and debris that obstructs storm drains can make streets and homes susceptible to flooding when it rains, creating hazardous driving conditions and unsanitary conditions. Nutrients from fertilizers can cause the overgrowth of algae resulting in oxygen depletion in waterways; toxic substances from motor vehicles and careless application of pesticides and fertilizers can kill fish and other aquatic life; bacteria from animal waste and failing septic systems can make lakes and waterways unsafe for swimming and fish consumption; and eroded soil from construction sites interferes with the habitat of fish and plant life, too.

What is Point Source pollution?

The Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1972 regulates pollutants discharged from what the EPA calls "point sources" — specific origins such as industrial, commercial, and municipal facilities — into any navigable waters of the United States. Point sources are required to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, which requires compliance with technology and water quality standards. These pollutants — are easy to identify and monitor. They fall easily under the enforcement of the EPA.

What is NON Point source pollution?

Pollution from what EPA calls "nonpoint" sources (NPS) is far harder to control than pollution that comes from a single source. Nonpoint source pollution comes mainly as rainfall, snowmelt or irrigation runoff flows across a surface and collects natural and human-made pollutants, depositing them into creeks, streams, lakes, and other waterways. These pollutants can include:

- Litter and other items improperly disposed of
- Oil, grease, and other automotive fluids that have been spilled or leaked.
- Sediment from improperly managed construction sites, crop and forest lands, or eroding stream banks

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- Salt from winter de-icing practices on roadways and sidewalks
- Bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes, and faulty septic systems

According to the EPA, nonpoint source pollution is the leading cause of water quality concerns. As urbanization continues, the effects of nonpoint pollution will worsen without programs like Nashville's Storm Drain Adoptions.

Additional tips include:

- Don't allow anything but rainwater into storm drains.
- Avoid throwing litter into the street and securely close outdoor trash cans and recycling bins. Trash-laden streets increase neighborhood pollution and clog storm drains causing street flooding and hazardous driving conditions.
- Pick up after your pet. Animal waste, when left on the ground, washes down storm drains and contaminates our waterways. Picking up dog waste is a County ordinance and dog owners who disregard this law may be fined.
- Clean up spilled or leaked automotive fluids such as brake fluid, oil, and antifreeze. Do not hose them into the street where they can eventually reach local streams and lakes. Recycle your motor oil.
- Control soil erosion on your property by planting ground cover and stabilizing erosion-prone areas.
- Have your septic system inspected and pumped, at a minimum, every 3-5 years to ensure it is operating properly.
- Bag, compost or recycle your grass, tree limbs, leaves and other yard waste. Yard waste is a major reason storm drains clog and streets and local areas flood. Use yard waste as mulch, as natural fertilizer, or as ground cover.
- Report illegal dumping. To report illegal dumping anytime, day or night, Metro Public Works at (615) 862-8750.
- Be smart when you apply pesticides or fertilizers. Do not apply pesticides or fertilizers before it rains and only use amount recommended on the label.