Storm Water Pollution Prevention
At-Home Best Management Practices (BMPs)

AUTO MAINTENANCE

The first step in preventing storm water pollution is keeping your vehicles in good repair. This prevents leaks from dripping fluids on streets and highways, which eventually flow to our waterways. There are also a few things you can do when you are working on your car.

Oil/Fluid Changes

Unless you are perfect, you are going to have fluids leak onto the ground. Unfortunately, these fluids, left on the pavement, get washed down our driveways and streets with the rain.

BMPs: Use a drip pan when changing your oil, antifreeze, and other fluids. If fluids leak onto the ground, do not hose them into the street. Cover them with an absorbent material like kitty litter or sand, sweep them up, and take them and all of your used fluids to a household hazardous waste collection facility.

Car Washing

The rinse water from washing our cars carries the soap, oil, and other pollutants down the street, into the storm sewers, and eventually into our rivers and streams.

BMPs: If you are going to wash your car at home, put it up on your lawn for the short time it takes to wash it. The lawn will soak up the water, soap, and other pollutants. Or, take your car to a car-washing facility. There, the water is recycled and eventually released into the sewer system, which leads to a treatment plant.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTES

Household hazardous wastes are all around us. They are in our garages, cupboards, and cabinets. They are the leftover paints, cleaners, and fluids from past projects. When the projects are over, these chemicals usually end up being poured down the sink, flushed down the toilet, or rinsed down the driveways or into the gutters; all of which are illegal and hazardous to the environment.

BMPs: Share usable products with neighbors. Take all unwanted products to a household hazardous waste collection facility. These facilities typically accept antifreeze, batteries, oil, paints, and other household chemicals.

PAINTING

It used to be a common practice to rinse paint off of brushes and rollers into the gutter. This paint flows into rivers and streams. Paint contains chemicals which can harm wildlife and drinking water.

BMPs: Rinse water-based paints off brushes and rollers into the sink, where the water flows to a treatment plant. Wash oil-based paint off brushes in paint thinner, then rinse brushes in a sink, and take the used thinner and leftover paint to a household hazardous waste collection facility.

PET CARE

Dogs and cats, horses and birds. We love our pets. Keeping them healthy is not only good for them, but also for our rivers and streams. Pet waste left on the lawn can carry disease and be carried into our streets by rain and sprinkler runoff.

BMPs: Pick up pet waste frequently and dispose of it in the trash. If you wash your pet outdoors, do so on the lawn, where the grass can absorb the water and pet shampoo.

YARD CARE

Everyone loves a well-kept yard. Green lawns and trimmed hedges keep property values and prestige up, but green waste, fertilizers, and other chemicals can lead to problems if not managed correctly.

Green Waste

Although natural products, grass clippings, leaves, and trimmings can cause problems when they enter rivers and streams. As they decay, they rob the water of precious oxygen and also cloud it, preventing sunlight from reaching aquatic life.

BMPs: Sweep up your green waste instead of hosing it into the street. This prevents the material and water from running into the storm sewer system and conserves water as well. Put the grass clippings, leaves, and trimmings into your green waste container or, better yet, compost it! In a few months, you can place the compost back into your garden, and return nature's nutrients to your yard.

Garden Chemicals

While fertilizers keep things green and pesticides keep unwanted critters in check, too much of a good thing is not necessarily healthy. Excess chemicals can be washed off yards with rain and sprinkler runoff, go through the storm sewer system, and into streams and rivers.

BMPs: “If one pound is good, two pounds is better.” In the case of garden chemicals, this is not true. The most important thing you can do is read and follow the directions. This includes not overwatering, never applying them if rain is forecast, and only using them in areas where they are needed. Consider less toxic methods, like organic fertilizers, beneficial insects, and plants which repel pests. Any leftover chemicals should be taken to your local household hazardous waste collection site.

Trash

Trash/litter ends up on our yards and streets, either from careless visitors or wind blowing it out of trash cans.

BMPs: Make sure the lids of your trash cans are on tight, and pick up the litter around your yard. To help prevent trash buildup, follow the “three Rs.” Reduce the amount of trash by buying items in bulk and those with less packaging. Reuse things for other purposes. Recycle as many products as possible, and buy recycled products whenever possible.