

THE PATHWAY OF STORMWATER

Whether you fish, kayak or just simply sit by the shores of a beautiful lake, having clean lakes and rivers is something we can all appreciate. But did you ever think about how our water travels and ends up in these bodies of water?

The USGS website (usgs.gov) explains how water travels best: “When rain falls onto the earth, it doesn’t just sit there, it starts moving according to the laws of gravity. A portion of the precipitation seeps into the ground to replenish the Earth’s groundwater. Most of it flows downhill as runoff. Runoff is extremely important in that not only does it keep rivers and lakes full of water, but it also changes the landscape by the action of erosion.

In cases of developed areas where stormwater cannot infiltrate into the ground because of impervious areas, more runoff occurs. In urbanized areas, runoff must be collected by “extensive drain systems that consist of curbs, storm sewers, and ditches to carry stormwater directly to streams. More simply, in a developed watershed, much more water arrives into a stream more quickly, resulting in an increased likelihood of more frequent and more severe flooding.”

“As it flows over the lands and other surfaces, stormwater picks up potential pollutants that may include sediment, nutrients (from lawn/agriculture fertilizers), bacteria (from animal and human waste), pesticides (from lawn and garden/agriculture chemicals), metals (from rooftops and roadways), and petroleum by-products (from leaking vehicles).” **We also have situations where people dump prohibited materials (anything that is not stormwater) directly into storm drains not thinking of the impact that it has down stream.**

Polluted stormwater runoff can be harmful to plants, animals, and people. Understanding that our water systems are all connected and by helping to keep our stormwater clean, can help keep our rivers, lakes and streams clean.

Help out our local water systems by keeping “only rain, down the storm drain.” Here are some items that you can do to help:

- Plant trees
- Disconnect/redirect downspouts
- Use a rain barrel to capture rain from your roof
- Plant a rain garden
- Reduce impervious surfaces

