

Keep Rainwater In Its Place?

Build little dams in the street curb. That's what kids like to do during summer rain storms. Pile up stones, pebbles, leaves, mud, grass, sticks, and anything that'll hold back or divert the water. But the water always wins, breaks through and rushes down the street into the storm sewer. The only way to stop the water is to stop the rain, and that's a little miracle neither child nor adult can accomplish.



But if we could keep the rain in its place, our lakes would be much cleaner. That's because it's rainwater and melting snow that wash away dirt, leaves, grass, oil, salt, fertilizer, pesticides and pet waste from our yards and streets into storm sewers. When this happens, we call it "nonpoint" or runoff water pollution.



Contrary to common belief, the water that goes into storm sewers is **not** filtered by wastewater treatment plants. Instead, it usually ends up draining **directly** into Dane County lakes and streams.

In the water, these materials from our homes, yards and pets decompose into a murky green soup. They promote excessive plant growth, emit a rancid odor, kill fish, and release health-threatening bacteria.

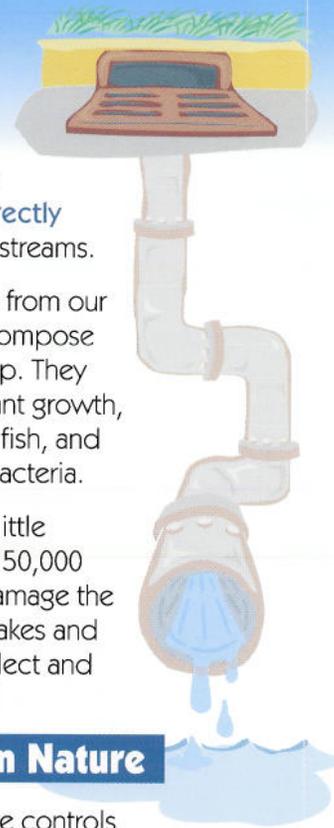
Individually, we contribute little pollution. Collectively, our 150,000 Dane County households damage the natural environment of our lakes and streams through simple neglect and lack of awareness.

Take a Lesson from Nature

Left to herself, Mother Nature controls the ill-effects of runoff by covering the ground with porous layers of plants, grasses, and leaves. These materials act like sponges, soaking up rainwater and melting snow. The water that does run off moves slowly, picking up fewer pollutants—a stark contrast to the runoff "highways" created by our paved city streets and sidewalks. In our urban landscape we need to follow nature's example.

Make Your Lawn a Sponge

There's one sure way to reduce runoff pollution: slow down the flow of water. Give your lawn a chance to soak it up. This not only reduces runoff but it also replenishes the groundwater.



Here are a few easy ideas you can use to give nature a hand:

- ◆ Create garden beds with a mixture of flowers, shrubs, and trees.
- ◆ Create natural landscapes, especially along streams and lake shorelines.
- ◆ Aim downspouts at grassy areas instead of pavements.
- ◆ Wash your car on a grassy area.
- ◆ If you water your lawn, don't spray the sidewalk or driveway.
- ◆ Instead of paving areas of your property, consider using bricks, stones, blocks, gravel or wood chips.
- ◆ Protect sloping ground from runoff and erosion by maintaining a healthy lawn or rock garden in the area.

Runoff pollution is a serious problem for our lakes. We can't stop the rain and we can't dam the water, but we can help keep it in its place. Do your share to keep Dane County lakes and streams clean for everyone to enjoy.

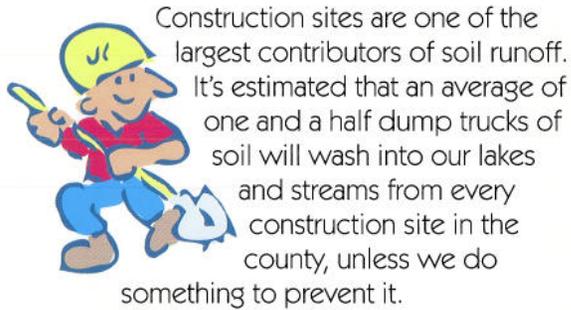


from Soil...

It's true, one of the major components of runoff water pollution in Dane County today is soil. Simple, plain soil.

Whenever it rains, exposed soil easily washes away into the storm sewers and then directly into our lakes and streams.

The soil muddies the water and damages fish habitat. It makes lakes and streams shallower, which changes their ecology and can require costly restoration to remove the sediment.



Save the Soil, Save the Lakes

Here's what you can do to prevent soil runoff:

- ◆ Seed, then mulch large areas of exposed soil as soon as possible.
- ◆ If you get a load of soil for your yard, cover it with a tarp until you're ready to use it.
- ◆ When you build a home, work with a builder who will take steps to reduce soil erosion.
- ◆ Don't dig up more soil than necessary.



... to Sediment.

For more information

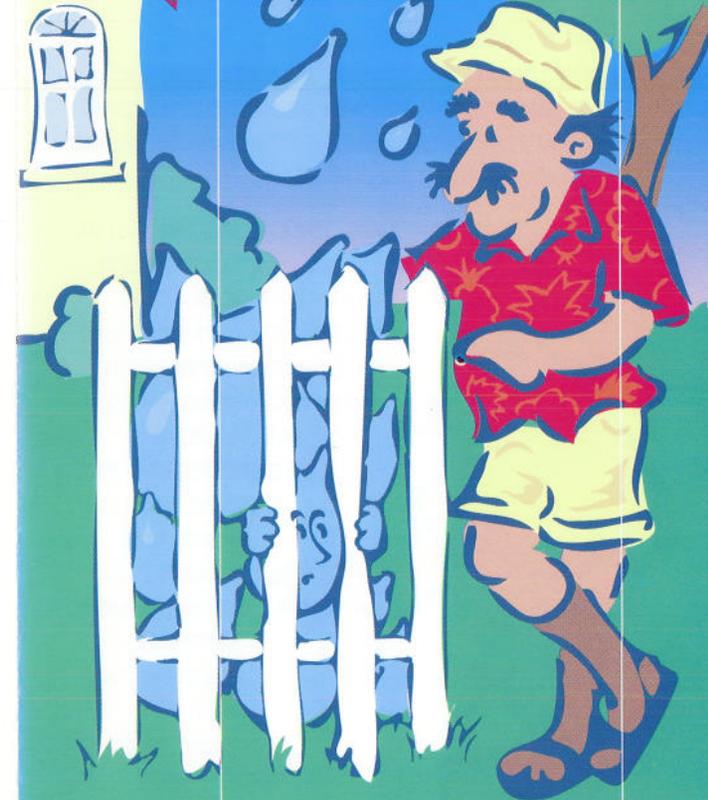
on how you can be the solution to water pollution
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www.co.dane.wi.us/commissions/lakes

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WaterWatch