

## The Effects of Stormwater Pollution

What are the Effects of Pollution? Polluted stormwater can have many adverse effects on plants, fish, animals, and us!



- Sediment can cloud the water and make it difficult or impossible for aquatic plants to grow.
- Excess nutrients can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they decompose which removes oxygen from the water. This in turn kills the fish and other organisms in the water!
- Debris such as plastic bags, six pack rings, bottles and cigarette butts that wash into waterbodies can choke or suffocate aquatic life like ducks, fish, turtles and birds.
- Household cleaners, insecticides, paints, etc. can poison aquatic life. Then, land animals and people can become sick or die from eating these diseased fish and shellfish or by ingesting polluted water!
- Polluted stormwater can affect drinking water sources which in turn can affect human health and increase drinking water treatment costs.

## Impact on Drinking Water

Stormwater pollution can contaminate our surface waters which directly impacts the source of our drinking water. Water is a staple in our daily lives. We use it for drinking, washing our clothes, showering, watering our lawns and more. As pollution continues to impact drinking water

supplies, there will be continued efforts to test and treat contaminants, leading to increasing prices for clean and safe drinking water.

### **Impact on Wildlife Habitat**

Urban development can alter aquatic habitat by polluting water, changing water temperature, degrading in-stream and riparian habitat, and altering the natural flow of rivers and streams. Water pollution creates an unhealthy environment for habitat and wildlife that live in and around waterways. The erosion of sediment into rivers and streams can be detrimental to fish and other aquatic life that need gravel and rocks to spawn and rear their young (i.e. fish and frogs). Sediment can also fill in pools that are an important part of fish habitat.

### **Impact on Recreation**

Stormwater pollution is a serious problem for wildlife dependent on our waterways and for the people who live near polluted rivers, lakes and streams. It can cause a decline in fish populations, disturb habitats and limit water recreation activities. E. Coli (*Escherichia coli*) bacteria from human and animal waste is often carried in polluted stormwater runoff posing a threat to humans and the overall health of the ecosystem.

### **Impact on Quality of Life**

Uncontrolled stormwater pollution affects the way a stream or other water body looks and smells, making it unpleasant to be near. This can impact the quality of life for everyone living in and around a community. Increased

nutrients, usually from fertilizers, may cause algae blooms, particularly on ponds and small lakes. These algae blooms not only make the pond look bad, they choke out the other vegetation and aquatic life. Trash and debris in the drainage system can lead to foul odors and may attract rats and other pests. Large amounts of sediment can harm the quality of life and reduce opportunities for recreation due to infilling of creeks, ponds and lakes. If trash reaches the stream, it ruins the beauty for everyone.