

When it rains or when water flows out of your yard, it flows directly

into storm drains. You've probably seen storm drains on our Alabama streets. Many people think that everything that flows into a storm drain gets treated, just like wastewater in a sewer system. However, these two systems are not connected. Everything that flows into a storm drain goes untreated directly into our creeks, rivers, lagoons, and ultimately the ocean. Storm water can contain pesticides, fertilizers, pet waste, litter, oil, automobile fluids, sediments, and household chemicals. Some of these pollutants flow into storm drains unintentionally, but many items are carelessly put directly into storm drains. The Clean Water Act prohibits the disposal of wastes and pollutants into creeks, rivers, lakes, and oceans.

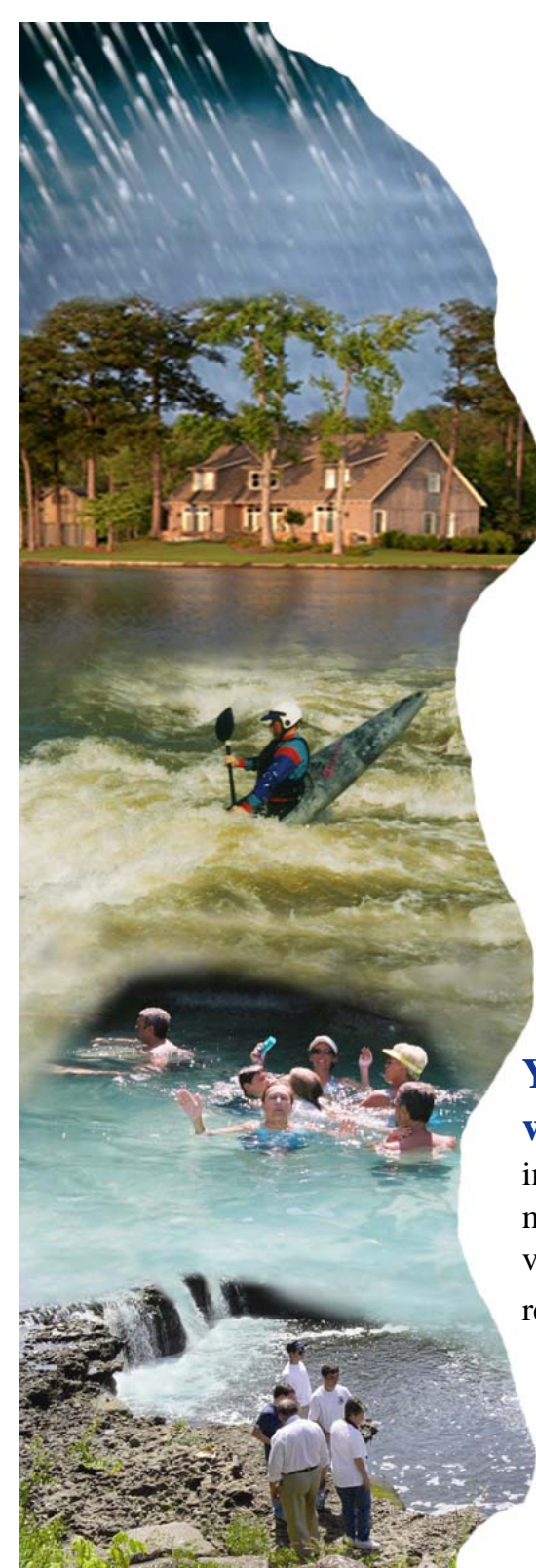


These pollutants can have harmful effects on recreational areas, waterways, and wildlife.

Some of Alabama's most popular waterways and beaches have been impacted by storm water pollutants. Ultimately, storm water pollution harms all of us because we depend on our waterways for recreation and to support Alabama's tourist industry. By preventing pollution from occurring in our homes, neighborhoods, and businesses, you can help protect our environment.

You and your family play an important role in storm water pollution prevention.

This brochure provides you with easy and inexpensive tips to prevent pollutants from entering storm drains. If everyone makes a few simple changes, we can help protect our Alabama lifestyle and environment. "Take Action for Clean Water" means preventing pollution before it reaches our waterways.



Take Action for Clean Water: Top Tips



Healthy Yards and Healthy Families

Before beginning an outdoor project, locate the nearest storm drain and take action to protect it from debris. This may require you to sweep the gutter between your project and the storm drain, before starting work. Chemicals, fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides can be harmful to you, your family, plant and animal life.

- Use them sparingly. Read labels carefully and don't apply if the forecast calls for rain.
- Use mulch instead of herbicides to prevent weeds from growing and to help absorb and retain water for your plants.
- Select drought resistant native plants that conserve water and prevent runoff.
- Don't overwater your lawn. Water during the cooler times of day and don't water your driveway, walkway, or the street.
- Drain swimming pools only when chlorine levels are not detected by your swimming pool test kit.
- Keep the street in front of your house clean of leaves and grass clippings. Sweep up debris instead of hosing down the driveway.
- Install "rain gardens" in low lying areas of your yard that normally collect water, allowing the water to infiltrate into the ground.



Helpful Habits Around the House

- If you use hazardous substances such as paints, solvents, and cleaners, use them sparingly, according to directions. Store them properly to avoid spilling.
- If you use water based paints, rinse paint brushes in the sink. For oil based paints, filter and reuse paint thinner. Never clean brushes or pour paint in the gutter or the storm drain.
- Pick up trash and litter around your yard and home.
- If you are working on a home improvement project, dispose of drywall, concrete, and mortar in the trash. Don't rinse concrete or mortar into the street. Sweep up all project debris.
- Pick up pet wastes and dispose in the toilet or in a bag for the trash. Pet waste contains harmful bacteria that can pollute our waterways.



Vehicle and Garage Tips

- Routinely check your car for leaks and keep it properly tuned. Car pooling or using a bicycle for transportation helps reduce pollutants on our streets.
- Never pour any chemicals or other hazardous substances from cars down a storm drain, on the ground or leave on driveways or parking lots. Try to use nonhazardous alternatives.
- When changing fluids from your car, drain into a clean container and seal completely. Take the oil to a gas station or oil change facility that recycles used oil.
- If you wash your own car, use a shutoff nozzle on your hose and use detergents and water sparingly.

Important Resources

Alabama Department of Environmental Management

Nonpoint Source Unit
334-394-4354

www.adem.alabama.gov

Your County Extension System www.aces.edu

Earth 911 www.earth911.org



Easy Solutions for Keeping Our Lakes, Rivers, and Ocean Clean

