

A green map of the Capitol Region Watershed District, showing the outline of the region and major water bodies like the Mississippi River and several lakes.

Capitol Region Watershed District

1410 Energy Park Drive, Suite 4, St. Paul, MN 55108
Phone: (651) 644-8888 Fax: (651) 644-8894 www.capitolregionwd.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2007

Contact Elizabeth Storey, 651-644-8888

In forests, fields, and wetlands, rainwater stays where it falls and seeps slowly into the ground to recharge groundwater. In urban areas, however, it's a different story. Water that flows across the urban landscape is called *stormwater runoff*. Stormwater runoff starts as rain or snowmelt, but picks up pollutants from streets, sidewalks, and lawns on its way to storm drain pipes that quickly discharge into our lakes and rivers.

Stormwater runoff from parking lots picks up oil and grease dripped from cars, asbestos from worn brake linings, and zinc from tires. Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers are washed off from landscaped areas, and soils are washed away from construction sites. Any substance found on the ground can pollute runoff, thus polluting surface waters. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, all stormwater runoff ends up in the Mississippi River, the source of drinking water for many in the Twin Cities' metropolitan area. Pollutants can harm animals and people, while too much water at once can cause streams to overflow and erode their banks sending muddy polluted water downstream.

Every day, people make choices that may or may not add more pollution to Minnesota's lakes and streams. Choices that pollute, such as driving, applying fertilizers and pesticides, and leaving pet waste on the ground mean that the Mississippi River will get more polluted. You can help communities reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff: minimizing pavement and keeping nutrients (leaves and grass) out of the street are the most important things to do in urban areas to keep street pollutants out of storm drains, which all end up in the Mississippi River. Your actions matter:

- Keep roadways and walkways swept and clear of soil, grass, and leaves;
- Regularly pick up the trash in your neighborhood;
- Write or call your elected representative and urge them to write legislation that protects natural watersheds from development and to develop plans for managing and controlling runoff and pollution;
- Recycle oil, antifreeze, batteries, fertilizer, pesticides and other chemicals and materials as much as possible;
- Limit the use of your car and maintain it for leaks;
- When cleaning your car, use a commercial car wash since the runoff goes to water treatment instead of running off into storm drains;
- Clean up after pets and dispose of droppings in the trash or toilet; and
- NEVER put anything in a storm drain...it's headed directly to your lake and river!

"Our mission is to protect, manage, and improve the water resources of the Capitol Region Watershed District."