

Frequently Asked Questions

Clean Water Program

1. Q: Why does Lincoln have water quality programs?

A: The City of Lincoln has developed a Stormwater Management Program to comply with State and Federal regulations regarding water quality. The Stormwater Management Program contains activities to help reduce the amount of pollution in the stormwater that runs off into Lincoln's lakes and streams. An objective is fishable swimmable area waters.

2. Q: How do pollutants get into stormwater runoff?

A: Stormwater originates from rainfall. Whatever doesn't soak into the ground runs off into local streams and lakes. Stormwater starts off relatively free of pollutants, but as it flows over the landscape it picks up pollutants from roads, parking lots and lawns and carries these pollutants into the streams and lakes.

3. Q: Where does the water that flows into storm drain inlets go?

A: Stormwater is conveyed through a storm drain system, but unlike the sanitary sewer system, it does **NOT** go to a treatment plant. Stormwater discharges directly to our streams without any treatment. Pollutants picked up by stormwater are a detriment to aquatic and riparian habitat because of the sediment and nutrients which are carried into the streams and lakes fostering excessive algae blooms and causing water quality problems.

4. Q: What types of pollution are found in stormwater?

A: Some of the most common contaminants that are found in stormwater are:

- **Sediment** from eroded soil and construction sites
- **Excess nutrients** from lawn fertilizers
- **Excess organic matter** from leaves and grass clippings
- **Bacteria** and disease causing organisms from animal waste (pets, wildlife, sewage)
- **Debris /Trash** such as plastic bags, cans, bottles, and cigarette butts
- **Household chemicals** like pesticides, paint, solvents, motor oil, and other auto fluids
- **Metal particles** deposited on roadways from automobiles

5. Q: Where do most pollutants come from?

A: Numerous studies have documented that stormwater runoff from urbanized areas in general contributes significant amounts of pollution to lakes and streams. The increase in impervious surfaces when areas are developed, such as rooftops, roads, and parking lots, increase urban runoff. The increased runoff combined with increased traffic and fertilizer and chemical use can increase concentrations of sediment, nutrients, pesticides, road salts, heavy metals, pathogenic bacteria, and petroleum hydrocarbons which are harmful to streams and lakes.

6. Q: What is the best way to deal with pollutants from these areas?

A: The best way to reduce the negative effects of stormwater from urban areas is to use water quality measures to treat, store, and infiltrate runoff onsite, before it can affect downstream streams and lakes.

7. Q: What's a BMP or Best Management Practice?

A: A BMP is a best management practice or water quality measure that reduces pollution in stormwater runoff. A **Construction BMP** is one that is put in place for use during construction while a **Post-Construction BMP** is one that is for use on a permanent basis to control runoff once construction is complete.

8. Q: What are some examples of Post-Construction BMPs?

A: Innovative site designs that reduce impervious area of sidewalks, driveways, parking lots and rooftops to allow more stormwater to soak into the ground before it can run off and affect downstream water bodies is one example. Other examples would be Bioretention/rain gardens, infiltration basins, vegetated bioswales, water quality wetlands, pervious pavers/concrete, etc.

9. Q: What is green space?

A: Generally waterways that have existing trees or native grasses and other natural landscape which help to slow down stormwater and allow it to soak in before it reaches streams and lakes.