



## Fact Sheet

# Stormwater Pollution

February 2017

### What is stormwater runoff?

When it rains in an undeveloped area, water is typically able to soak into the ground. When hard surfaces like roads, roofs, and parking lots are added to a landscape, the ground can't absorb the water and instead it pools and runs downhill. Water from rain and snowmelt that flows over these hard surfaces into a waterbody or stream, is called **Stormwater Runoff**.

As stormwater moves across parking lots and roads, it picks up pollutants like fertilizers, oil, dirt, and pet waste, washing them into the nearest waterway or storm drain. While water from your house gets treated when it goes down the drain, stormwater systems are separate. Storm drains transport polluted stormwater directly to the nearest waterway, untreated.

This source of pollution is currently the largest contributor to water quality problems in the state of Kentucky. However, with some simple changes in your daily activities, you can help reduce stormwater pollution and keep your stream clean!

### Reduce stormwater pollution

- Position sprinklers so that water falls only on the lawn and not on the driveway, sidewalk, patio, or street. This gives water a chance to soak into the soil.
- Sweep clean rather than spray clean the hard surfaces around your home to prevent runoff into storm drains.
- Clean up after your pet. Pet waste left on the ground gets carried away by stormwater, transporting harmful bacteria, parasites, and viruses into our rivers and lakes.
- Recycle used motor fluids such as oil, gas, and antifreeze. **NEVER** pour them down a storm drain, onto the pavement or into the yard. Contact your local city and county government for collection locations.
- Apply the same practice to old paint, pesticides, solvents, and batteries.
- Use a commercial car wash. These facilities recycle their wastewater and/or treat it before it goes into the sewer system. If washing at home, use a bucket or a hose nozzle that can turn off water between rinses. Use cleaners sparingly and park the car on the lawn to catch the runoff.
- Compost yard clippings, leaves, and tree trimmings for use in the yard. These materials can clog the storm drain, causing flooding. Also, large amounts of grass and leaves decomposing in a creek can cause oxygen depletion in the water which is harmful to stream life, like fish and macroinvertebrates.
- Use a rain barrel to catch roof runoff for a free source of water for your garden. The barrel captures the stormwater, preventing it from washing pollutants like fertilizer and loose soil from your yard into the storm drains.
- Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly. Investigate alternative lawn treatment methods and products.
- Have your soil tested. Use the right fertilizer at the right time and don't use more than needed.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for storage and disposal of pesticides and fertilizers. Buy only as much as you can use in a season.
- Refrain from pesticide/fertilizer use when rain is expected, so that it doesn't wash away.
- Help soak up stormwater by leaving no mow zones along your creek. Trees and shrubs serve to soak up excess water and filter pollutants.
- Keep your septic system running properly. Inspect regularly and pump out every 3-5 years.
- Help organize a cleanup day to collect and dispose of hazardous house and garden products.