

# What happens to all that **RAIN** and how does it concern you?

Melting snow and rain that is not absorbed into the soil flows downhill and makes its way into a body of water. In areas that have been developed this water first finds its way into a catch basin that is part of the Towns stormwater sewer system. This water is then conveyed to a nearby stream or other water body. As this water makes its way towards this water body it can pick up pollutants like fertilizers, pet waste, litter and automotive fluids. This is stormwater pollution. There are two things to keep in mind; the first is that stormwater is never treated or filtered so what you do on your property directly effects the water quality in our streams and secondly, somebody lives down stream from you and you live down stream from somebody else.

## *The effects of pollution*

The Environmental Protection Agency considers stormwater pollution the greatest threat to clean water. This polluted stormwater can have adverse effects on plants, fish, animals and people.

- Sediments cloud water and make it difficult or impossible for aquatic plants to grow. Enough sediment will destroy aquatic habitats.
- Excess nutrients from fertilizer and pet waste can cause algae blooms. When algae die, they decompose in a process that takes oxygen from the water. Fish and other aquatic life can't exist in water with low oxygen levels.
- Bacteria and other pathogens from pet waste can wash into areas used for recreational activities creating public health hazards.

- Cigarette butts and other debris – plastic bags, bottles, six-pack rings – washed into our waterbodies can poison, choke, or suffocate aquatic animal life.
- Household hazardous wastes that are washed or purposely dumped into the stormwater system can poison aquatic life. Sometimes these chemicals like solvents, automotive fluids, pesticides and paints find there way back to us through the food chain.

## *Ways you can help*

There are some things you can do to minimize this threat and help your community improve the quality of its waterbodies.

### Lawn Care

- Consider planting a rain garden to help filter stormwater runoff from your paved areas and roof. A rain garden is a specifically designed area with native plants that allows excess rainwater to soak into the ground.
- Recycle grass clippings from your lawn with a mulching mower. This reduces the need for fertilizer.
- Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly. A complete soil analysis will help determine the amount and type of fertilizer you lawn requires. A complete test through Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County is only \$12.00.
- Sweep overcastted fertilizer back on to your lawn; do not wash it into a storm drain.

### Auto Care

- Do not wash your car on the driveway. Use a commercial car wash or wash your car on the lawn using an environmentally safe soap.
- Immediately repair any fluid leaks.
- Clean up any spills with an absorbent material such as kitty litter.

### Home Care

- Have your rain gutters drain to your lawn instead of your driveway. This will reduce the flow into the stormwater system.
- Do not dispose of paint or any household chemicals in a catch basin. The Town has two hazardous waste collection days a year. Call the Transfer Station or visit our web site for times and dates.
- Drain your pool or outdoor spa only when the test kit no longer detects chlorine.

### Pet Waste

- When walking your pet remember to pick up the waste and dispose of it properly. Leaving pet waste on the ground allows harmful bacteria and nutrients to wash into the storm drain and eventually into local waterbodies. Disposing of pet waste in a toilet or trash are the best disposal methods.

### *What is Guilderland doing to help solve the problem?*

- The town has mapped all discharges (outfalls) from its stormwater system and will be monitoring these outfalls for water quality and illicit discharges.
- The Town will enact a law that expands its control over stormwater discharges from its stormwater sewer system and construction sites within the town.

- Guilderland is implementing a comprehensive Stormwater Management Program to reduce and remove stormwater pollution from our roads and Town owned facilities.
- Road salt on Guilderland roads has been reduced by 30% since 1999 with the use of computer-controlled spreaders in all plow trucks.
- The Highway Department cleans and maintains over 2,500 storm drains on Town roads.
- The Transfer Station has two hazardous waste collection programs a year.

*Report illegal dumping to storm drains by calling the stormwater hotline or one of the other contacts listed below.*

### *Contacts*

Stormwater Hotline 356-1980 Ext.  
1097 Highway Department 861-5108  
Zoning Enforcement 356-1980 Ext. 1066  
[www.guilderland.org](http://www.guilderland.org)