

SWIMMING IN STORMWATER

Preventing Pollution of Watercourses in the Town of Stratford

Most of us do not think twice about what happens to rain once it hits the ground. Given the current drought conditions, rainfall is probably even further from your mind. So perhaps this is a good time for a quick lesson on stormwater management and what you can do as a responsible citizen to protect local waterways from pollution.

When rain falls, water that is not absorbed into pervious ground surfaces becomes runoff. As runoff flows over roads, yards, parks, and homes, it picks up pollutants along the way. Pollutants include garbage, dirt from construction activities, pet wastes, oil, fertilizers and other chemicals. The polluted runoff is then captured by storm drains which direct the water to streams, rivers, and estuaries (i.e. Long Island Sound). The receiving waterbodies are adversely impacted by the polluted runoff; garbage ruins the aesthetic appeal of waterways, pet wastes contribute to high levels of bacteria, fertilizers cause blooms of aquatic weeds and algae that are unsightly and can be deleterious to the ecosystem. Moreover, impacted waterbodies are often used for boating, fishing, and swimming. Unless you are comfortable with the idea of swimming in polluted stormwater (YUCK!) it is a good idea to stop pollution of stormwater before it starts. Here are some tips on how you can help curb pollution of local waterways:

- Don't be a litterbug! Always throw garbage in a waste receptacle and recycle when appropriate.
- Properly dispose of oil and hazardous household wastes. Never dump these substances in a storm drain. The Town will be organizing another Household Hazardous Waste Collection in 2017.
- Pick up after pets.
- Reduce (or eliminate) the use of fertilizers on your lawn.
- Plant a tree on your property to absorb runoff.
- Install a rain garden on your property to capture and filter stormwater (see <http://www.sustainability.uconn.edu/> and <http://www.nemo.uconn.edu/> for more information).

As a basic rule, if you would not want to be swimming in something, do your best to keep it from running off into waterways and stormwater infrastructure. Also, remember the animals that call our local waterways "home" are first to be impacted by polluted runoff. You can help protect our local populations of turtles, fishes, crabs, and birds by preventing pollution of stormwater.