

# Milwaukee Waters:



**The Lowdown  
on Run-Off  
Pollution**



## First...

you have to understand this about the rainwater that falls here in Milwaukee.



Every inch of Milwaukee ... your front yard, the top of your car, the street in front of your home ... gets a little over 2 1/2 feet of rain a year. If it all collected where it fell, the water would come up to just below the doorknob on your front door. Quite a flood.

When you build a city, you use a lot of concrete and asphalt. The rain can't sink into the ground through the streets and buildings. It has to go somewhere. And it doesn't stand still for long.



## Storm Drains: Going with the Flow.

Once it splashes onto the ground, the water starts moving. It heads for the lowest place it can find. When the city was still very small, the citizens put in a simple wood and brick sewer system to move the water from the few streets into the Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic Rivers. But as the city grew — we have roads and buildings for about  631,000 Milwaukeeans today — the system had to be made bigger.

Rainwater still moves on Milwaukee's streets and along the sidewalks, and down driveways. And as it flows along, it sweeps up everything in its way ... leaves, litter, lawn chemicals and pesticides, dog poop, and garbage. The run-off flows along the curb until — fully loaded — it streams through the storm drains and into our rivers and lakes. Eventually, all this water winds up in Lake Michigan, one of our city's most valuable resources.

And Milwaukeeans swim in that water ... and catch fish in that water ... and drink that water after it's treated. If we're able to keep the water that runs into the storm drains more pollution free, we can enjoy even cleaner water.

## A Clean City Means Clean Water.

 We can all play a part in keeping the water in our rivers and Lake Michigan clean. Out west, they call a real heavy rain a “gully-washer”. It washes tons of dirt out of gullies or small deep valleys. The same thing happens here in our city. A heavy rain or snow melt swooshes everything lying around down the sidewalks and into the gutters. And they lead everything into the storm drains.

To keep the storm drain system from getting gunked up, we can help by keeping our sidewalks and street gutters clean and clear. Clean streets and gutters mean that the rainwater stays clear as it drains off into the storm drains and into the lake.



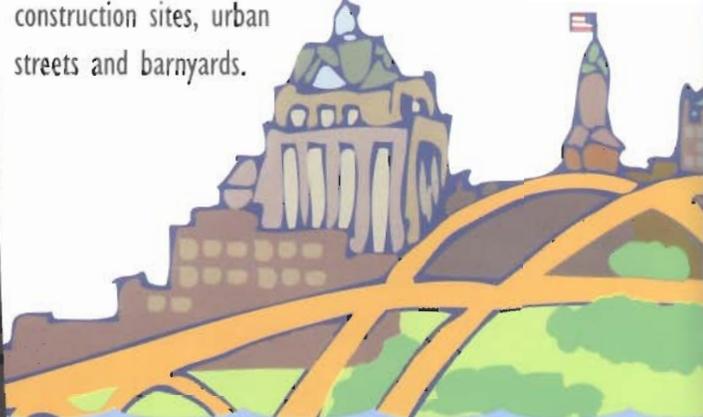
## Become a Water Watcher: Make a Splash in Milwaukee's Water Story.

The purity of your tapwater ... what you drink day to day ... depends in part on how clean we can keep the run-off water from rainfall. The cleaner the water that goes into the drains, the easier and less expensive it is for the Milwaukee Water Works to purify it and make it into clean and safe drinking water.



You can help keep Milwaukee's rivers and lakeshore clean by keeping the area around your home, your neighborhood, and your school clear of garbage and junk ... stuff that could be washed into the storm drains at the next heavy rain or snow melt. Dirty run-off is a type of what's called "non-point-source pollution."

That means it doesn't come from one particular point. Instead, there's NO point source: it comes from eroding farmlands, construction sites, urban streets and barnyards.



# Keeping Milwaukee Special

Milwaukee is lucky enough to have a beautiful natural setting — on the shore of majestic Lake Michigan. Cutting down on run-off from within the city and outlying areas will help keep our lakes and rivers clean. And we'll all enjoy living here in Milwaukee even more.



**Let's get specific.**

How can **YOU** and your friends prevent non-point-source run-off pollution?



## Don't litter.

Simple things like gum wrappers, soda pop cans, and fast food packaging can build up to a major problem. Put litter in trash cans ... or (even better) recycle it. If you're hanging out someplace and see a piece of trash lying around, pick it up and practice your jump shot into a trash can.

## Recycle yard waste.

Grass clippings, garden debris and other yard waste should be left in place as a mulch or put in a compost pile. Don't leave clippings on the sidewalk to wash into the storm drains.



## Clean up pet waste.

OK — not a favorite topic, but very important because of the chance for disease. Pick it up, bury it, flush it, or put it in the garbage. Never leave it on the sidewalk or in the gutter.



## **Work to get your family “clean water conscious.”**

Help your family become smarter about clean water. Recycle used motor oil and antifreeze. Try using an alternative to chemicals on your lawn and in your yard. Keep the area around your home uncluttered with things that the rainwater can wash into the storm drains.

## **Watch for “dirty” construction sites.**

Make sure construction sites in your neighborhood have “silt fencing” – simple plastic-sheet fences with wooden stakes – to keep dirt from being washed into storm drains. If you see a lot of mud and dirty water flowing from a building site into the gutter, let someone know.



## **Call the Pollution Prevention Hotline.**

Call 286-8162 for more information about non-point-source pollution and how you can help.