Going with the Flow:

Preventing Storm Water Pollution in Milwaukee

Focus Question:
What Causes Storm Water Pollution and What Can We Do To Prevent It?

In this activity, students learn how pollutants travel down storm drains and into Milwaukee's rivers and lakes, harming aquatic and human life. Students learn ways that they can prevent storm water pollution.

1 container each of clear and polluted river/lake water

Zip lock bags filled with pollutants: kitty litter and plastic cat, dog; grass clippings, leaves; salt for snow; toy car with sponge and miniature bucket; construction site materials

Containers of herbicide, pesticide, paint, motor oil, anti-freeze

Colored beads to represent solid pollutants and dyed water for liquids for model

Fake seaweed

Pictures of rain garden/rain barrel

2 buckets, strainer, watering can

Copies of Pollutant/Solution Cards, Take Home Sheet, Pledge Cards

Run off models

Getting Started
Ask students which container of water they would like to swim in or drink. Which would aquatic life prefer? How did the water get so polluted?

Getting Busy
Distribute the pollutants and have students identify and hypothesize how they get into rivers and lakes. Place pollutants on the Neighborhood Model. Record observations.

Test hypotheses using Neighborhood Model by raining on the model. Discuss conclusions about how pollutants get into the lakes and rivers and record conclusions.

Look at the run-off water. Simulate how a fish feels in polluted water by surrounding a student with the pollutants and fake seaweed. Record the effects of pollution.

Getting the Point
Discuss ways to prevent pollution. Rain on the Pavement/Natural Area Model and compare the different run-off amounts to show natural areas absorb more water than pavements and other "hard" surfaces.

Match pollutants to solutions using cards. Students write an action on Pledge Cards and sign.

Correlates to WI State Science Standards F and H