

# Stormwater Facts

**What it is ....**

**Why it is important ....**

**How to protect stormwater quality ....**

*City of Athens  
Public Works Department*

## **What it is ....**

Stormwater is water from precipitation that flows across the ground and pavement due to rain or snowmelt (or also called stormwater runoff). The water may seep into the ground, flow in ditches or streams, or enter the storm drain system. The storm drains are what you see at street corners or at low points on the sides of your streets. The storm drains then lead to a discharge point such as an open channel or directly into one of the many natural streams and creeks within the City of Athens.

The natural creeks have a small amount of baseflow that is caused by groundwater recharge and high water tables; the baseflow is relatively clean.

When it rains, the baseflow is supplemented by stormwater runoff from parking lots and city streets. The baseflow is relatively clean groundwater that flows at a low velocity. Stormwater runoff tends to pick up garbage, debris, sediment, chemicals, automotive fluids and other pollutants; stormwater runoff is relatively dirty and will harm the fish and other wildlife living in the natural creeks.



Storm drains contain runoff that can not be treated by the prior to it's entering our natural creeks and streams. Sanitary sewers, however, convey wastewater from houses, businesses and industries to one of the city wastewater treatment plants. Storm drains are a completely different system than the sanitary sewers. Storm drains, therefore, usually travel anywhere from a few hundred feet up to several miles in underground pipes before being discharged.

## **Why it is important ....**

Stormwater runoff is a major problem when it picks up garbage, debris, sediment, chemicals, automotive fluids, fertilizers, leaves and other pollutants from parking lots, yards, city streets, shopping malls, house roofs, etc. This type of pollution is called nonpoint source (NPS) pollution and is more of a problem than direct discharges from commercial industries and plants, which have NPDES (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) permits as mandated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The City of Athens is required by the state and federal government to have a municipal NPDES permit for all waters that discharge from the city storm drain system to the natural creeks. The municipal NPDES permit requires that the city provide information and education programs, monitoring, stormwater inspections, stormwater policies, etc. The result of unclean stormwater runoff discharges is the loss of fish and aquatic wildlife from the out creeks, signs that say no fishing or no swimming.



***Help protect your water!***

***If you see illegal dumping into storm drains or into creeks, call immediately!***

***Athens Community Development (423) 744-2753***

***Athens Public Works (423) 744-2745***

## *How to Protect Stormwater Quality ....*

The best way to protect stormwater runoff quality is to avoid polluting in the first place. Conserve and recycle resources such as newspapers, plastic containers, glass jars, and metal cans at either the Athens recycling center.

- Don't dump hazardous substances such as used oil, household chemicals, yard fertilizer, or other wastes onto pavement or into storm drains.
- Practice street sweeping, picking up litter, and disposing of leaves and yard waste correctly.
- Prevent excess runoff of pesticides, fertilizers, and herbicides by using them properly and efficiently.
- Participate in local garbage and debris pickup days, and recycle household hazardous waste materials to prevent storm drain contamination.
- Encourage active citizen participation in stormwater protection and public group education on stormwater quality.
- Prevent sewage overflows to the creeks by diverting gutter drains away from the sanitary sewer system.



Common household contributions to stormwater pollution:

- Vehicle drips and leaks (oil, grease, gasoline, antifreeze, brake fluid) – particularly on paved areas.
- Overuse of lawn fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.
- Pet wastes and food wastes – particularly on paved areas – allows harmful bacteria and viruses into natural creeks.
- Incorrect disposal of paints, solvents, cleaning fluids and other chemical agents.



You may dispose of the following substances at the Athens Recycling Center at 118 Rocky Mount Rd. See website for more information at <http://www.cityofathensn.com/publicworks/sanitation.html>

**Aluminum Cans**  
**Cardboard**  
**Mixed Paper**

**Antifreeze**  
**Catalogs**  
**Motor Oil**

**Automotive Batteries**  
**Glossy Advertisements**  
**Newsprint**

**Automotive Oil Filters**  
**Magazines**



## *How can I get involved?*

There are many opportunities to become involved with stormwater cleanup efforts. These programs are coordinated by [Keep McMinn Beautiful](#), and the City of Athens Public Works Department.