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Stormwater Runoff

Condensed from the brochure After the Storm by Huron Pines RC&D

“Stormwater runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent stormwater from naturally soaking into the ground. Stormwater can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants and flow into a storm sewer system or directly to a lake, stream, river, or wetland. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, and providing drinking water. Polluted stormwater runoff can have many adverse effects on plants, fish, animals, and people.

Residential property owners can help prevent polluted stormwater runoff by properly disposing of household insecticides, pesticides, paint, and used motor oil. Don't pour them onto the ground or into storm drains. Use pesticides and lawn fertilizers sparingly. Consider using a permeable pavement instead of concrete or asphalt. Use a rain barrel to catch rooftop runoff for later use. Consider incorporating a rain garden, grassy swale, or vegetated filter strip as part of your landscape plans. They provide natural places for rainwater to collect, trap pollutants, and soak into the ground.

Commercial property owners can sweep up litter and debris from parking lots, especially around storm drains. Properly maintain fleet vehicles to prevent oil, gas, and other discharges from being washed into local waterbodies. Cover grease storage and dumpsters and keep them clean to avoid leaks. Automotive facilities need to clean up spills immediately and properly dispose of cleanup materials; provide facilities for spill containment; and install and maintain oil/water separators.

Construction companies can divert stormwater away from disturbed or exposed areas of the construction site; install silt fences and other erosion controls and properly maintain them, especially after rainstorms; and prevent soil erosion by minimizing disturbed areas during construction projects.”

Next time there is a heavy rainfall, try taking a walk around your property whether you are a business owner, homeowner, or on a construction site. Watch where the water flows and observe closely what the runoff is carrying with it. Then get to work on the solutions. We all enjoy clean water—we are all responsible to do what we can to keep it that way.

To read the complete brochure go to:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/ess-nps-savvy-afterstorm_209381_7.pdf

For more information on rain barrels:

<http://www.epa.gov/region3/p2/what-is-rainbarrel.pdf>

For additional information on rain gardens, etc.:

Landscaping for Water Quality – booklet

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/wb-nps-Landscaping-for-Water-Quality_250582_7.pdf