



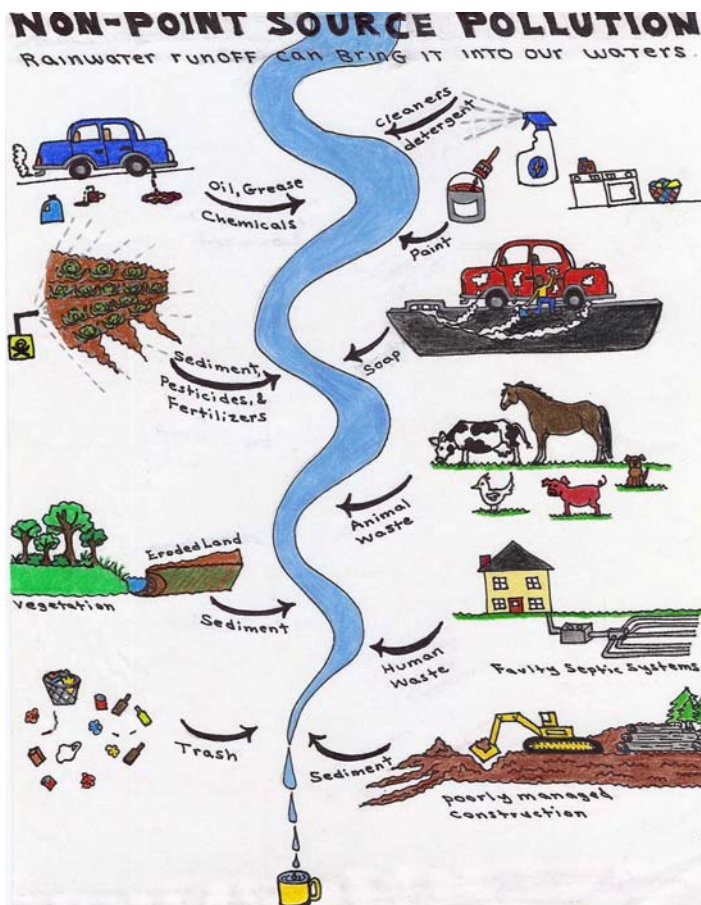
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Watershed Pollution- Point and Nonpoint

In last week's article we defined what a watershed is. This week we will look at pollution in a watershed.

When you hear people talking about sources of pollution in a watershed, you will very likely hear the terms "point" and "nonpoint". Today most water pollution has become "pointless".

Many people still think that most pollution in a watershed comes directly from a factory—known as "point source pollution." At one time, this was true. Pollutants were discharged through pipes—a single point—directly into a river. Pollution could be traced to a single source, a specific business or activity. Since the passage of pollution control laws in the 1970s, most point sources of pollution have been cleaned up significantly.



Today we have to look into the entire Thunder Bay River watershed to find and fight "nonpoint" sources of pollution. Nonpoint source pollution, unlike pollution from industrial and sewage treatment plants, comes from many diffuse sources. Nonpoint source pollution is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, and even our underground sources of drinking water. These pollutants include:

- Excess fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides from agricultural lands and residential areas;
- Oil, grease, and toxic chemicals from urban runoff and energy production;
- Sediment from improperly managed construction sites, crop and forest lands, and eroding streambanks;
- Bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes, and faulty septic systems.

Even if you live miles away from the river, your backyard is connected to some part of the watershed's drainage network. It's easy for those who live directly on the river to understand the impact we have on its health. It is more difficult for those who never see the

river to understand how water flowing from their yards and farms and businesses reach it. Understanding this personal connection is critical.

We can all work together to reduce and prevent nonpoint source pollution. Some activities are federal responsibilities, such as ensuring that federal lands are properly managed to reduce soil erosion. Some are state responsibilities, for example, developing legislation to govern mining and logging, and to protect groundwater. Others are best handled locally, such as by zoning or erosion control ordinances. And each individual can play an important role by practicing conservation and by changing certain everyday habits.

More on that in a future article.

For additional information you can check out these sites:

US Environmental Protection Agency: What is Nonpoint Source Pollution?

<http://www.epa.gov/owow/NPS/qa.html>

US Environmental Protection Agency: Thunder Bay Watershed Profile

http://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/huc.cfm?huc_code=04070006

Michigan DEQ – Nonpoint source pollution

http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3313_3682_3714---,00.html