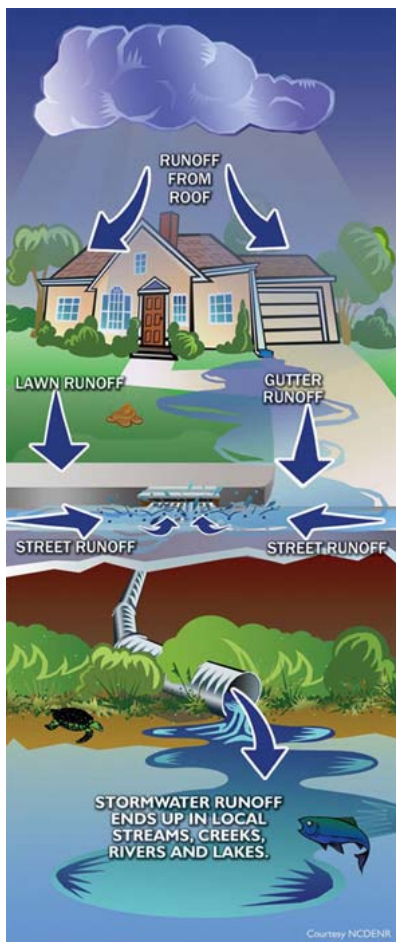


## More on Non-Point Source Pollution – Stormwater

*The previous article defined the difference between point source pollution and non-point source pollution. This week we look at why stormwater runoff is part of the problem.*

Stormwater is often described as water from rain, melting snow and other precipitation that turns into “runoff.” You might wonder why something as natural as rain or snow can become a problem for a watershed. There are two reasons.

When early settlers entered the Thunder Bay River watershed, they were in the middle of a very large forest that caught the rain as it trickled down to the ground. Then it either soaked into the soil or slowly made its way into streams and then into the river.



Today, rain falls on the hard surfaces of pavement and rooftops. These hard or “impervious” surfaces keep water from soaking into the ground. They include driveways, paved roads, sidewalks, and parking lots—and even our lawns can be impervious. When rain is not absorbed by the ground, the heat, quantity, and speed of rain running off increases. The more houses, stores, factories, and other development a watershed contains, the more impervious surfaces there are and the more water-quality problems.

Secondly, stormwater is only as clean as the land it flows over—whatever we put on the land will eventually end up mixing with stormwater. The flowing water may pick up salt, sand, soil, pesticides, fertilizers, leaves, grass clippings, animal waste, oils, grease, litter and many other pollutants. Storm drains and storm sewers are not connected to wastewater treatment plants. Instead everything that flows (or is poured) into them is discharged into the nearest water body

We live in a place of global significance. Nowhere else on earth is fresh water so available. Here in the Great Lakes Basin, we share responsibility for protecting fresh-water resources that represent more than 90 percent of U.S. fresh water and 20 percent of the world’s available

fresh water resources. Our responsibility starts with the Thunder Bay River, which is at the heart of our watershed. The river does not have an infinite capacity to absorb all the waste we let flow into it. Water quality is tied directly to what we do—and don’t do—about nonpoint source pollution.

Here are several pictures that illustrate the problems associated with stormwater runoff.



Stormwater runoff carries litter.



Oils and other chemicals are washed off roads and parking lots.



All of this is discharged into the nearest body of water.



When rain water cannot soak into the ground because of impervious surfaces, it rushes to the nearest stream.



Eventually, this pollution makes its way to our rivers and lakes.

To learn more about stormwater runoff, check out these sites:

Why is Stormwater Runoff a Problem?  
[http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/agecon/WEC/O/nemo/page\\_08.htm](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/agecon/WEC/O/nemo/page_08.htm)

EPA brochure: Make your home the solution to stormwater pollution  
<http://www.wellsvillecity.com/wp-content/uploads/StormWater-001.pdf>