

Remember, it ALL Drains to our Lakes and Rivers



Photo: City of Lansing

You might not be able to see the stream or lake from your house, but it's there! It might be a small stream or ditch or even a storm drain in the street. All of these lead directly to our lakes and streams. What we do at home affects our water. So, any oil, pet waste, leaves or dirty water from washing your car that enters a storm drain gets into our lakes and rivers without being treated. We all need to be aware of what goes into our storm drains.

An illicit discharge is anything that drains to a storm drain or directly to the river and is not stormwater. An illicit discharge can be an illegal pipe draining directly to the river, a failing onsite septic system, or even a spill that goes into the storm drain. As a community member, you play a large role in identifying and reducing illicit discharges in your community.

What Can You Do About Illicit Discharges?

You can help keep our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater clean by applying the following tips.

- **Sweep it.** Do you have extra fertilizer, grass clippings, or dirt on your driveway or sidewalk? Sweep it back onto your lawn. Hosing your driveway sends these pollutants into storm drains that lead directly to our lakes and rivers.
- **Keep it clean.** Whether in the street or in your yard, remember to keep leaves, grass clippings, trash, and fertilizers away from storm drains.
- **Only rain in the drain.** Never dump motor oil, chemicals, pet waste, dirty or soapy water, or anything else down the storm drain. All of these materials pollute our lakes and rivers!
- **Clean it.** Clean up after your pet to reduce pet waste traveling to local waterways.
- **Dispose of it properly.** Take household hazardous waste (paint, motor oil, etc.) to a local collection event.
- **Report it.** If you see someone dumping something into a storm drain, or see a direct connection to the river that may be pollution you are encouraged to report it. You can do this by contacting your local public works department. In addition, you can contact the Michigan Pollution Emergency Alerting System (PEAS) at (800) 292-4706. PEAS is a 24 hour hotline managed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and is used to report environmental pollution emergencies.

Having a clean environment is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean waterways provide recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, and add beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water - and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater clean. For more easy steps on protecting our lakes and streams, visit www.mywatersheds.org.