

This is Todd Becker from the Humboldt County Public Works Department and the North Coast Stormwater Coalition with your KINS Community Comment.

It's raining, it's pouring, storm drains are filling, and storm drain outfalls are flowing. Did you know that stormwater runoff from streets, parking lots, rooftops, and other surfaces often flow directly into local streams, rivers, bays, and the ocean?

Stormwater runoff accumulates pollutants such as oil and grease, chemicals, nutrients, metals, bacteria, and trash as it travels across surfaces. Stormwater runoff is not treated and these pollutants are carried directly into our waterways.

Our local streams, rivers, bays, and the ocean are used for recreation, food, water-supplies, and habitat for plants and animals. We want only rain down the storm drain.

Now let's talk about some of these stormwater pollutants in more detail...

Used Motor Oil and other household chemicals – Every year across the U.S. and locally, used oil and other chemicals are dumped in storm drains and other locations causing these pollutants to spill or be washed into waterways. This dumping is illegal. Auto supply stores and local waste management facilities provide free and low cost disposal of used motor oil and other chemicals.

Pet Waste – If you think picking up your pet's waste is unpleasant - how about swimming in it? Pet waste is full of bacteria and other organisms that do not belong in our waterways. Pet waste is carried in stormwater runoff to our local waterways where we enjoy activities such as swimming or surfing. Many parks, trails, and other public places provide bags and receptacles for disposing of pet waste. Pet waste in yards can easily be disposed with the household trash.

Washing vehicles – Are you planning to wash your car this weekend? If you are washing your car on the street, a driveway, or parking lot where the rinse water flows to a storm drain, then all the soap, dirt, chemicals, and metals being washed from the car are flowing to the waterway. Car washing can be done on the lawn that allows wash water to infiltrate into the ground, or car washing can be done at a commercial facility that treats the wash water and sends the wash water to the sanitary sewer system.

Trash – Trash in stormwater runoff frequently makes its way into streams, creeks, rivers, and the ocean. The types of trash that frequently pollute waterways include cigarette butts, paper, fast food containers, plastic grocery bags, cans and bottles, used diapers, and construction site debris. Birds and fish are harmed when they eat trash that looks like food. To us humans, trash just looks trashy in our waterways.

Remember...Only rain down the storm drain.

This is Todd Becker from the Humboldt County Public Works Department and the North Coast Stormwater Coalition with your KINS Community Comment.