

# POLLUTED STORMWATER RUNOFF

## Factsheet for Car Owners



After it rains, water flows off our yards, streets, parking lots, and driveways into the storm drains, and eventually into our streams, lakes, and bays. Unfortunately, this runoff picks up pollutants that flow directly into our local waterways. These pollutants can include soil, motor oil, pesticides, fertilizers, pet waste, and litter. Many people mistakenly think that the water entering from our storm drains is cleaned or treated in some way. On the contrary, our storm drain systems channel water directly into our creeks. If our runoff water and stormwater is contaminated, it can become a major source of water pollution. This factsheet series is broken into seven different user groups who can help prevent stormwater from becoming polluted.

**Builders/Developers**

**Gardeners/Homeowners**

**Automotive Businesses**

**Restaurants**

**Car Owners**

**Pet Owners**

**Pool Owners**



# FACTSHEET FOR CAR OWNERS

## Polluted Stormwater Runoff

There's no problem with washing your car, just how and where you do it. Most soap contains phosphates and other chemicals that harm fish and water quality. The soap, mixed together with dirt, metal, and oil washed from your car, flows into nearby storm drains which run directly into our streams, lakes, and bays. The phosphates from the soap can cause excess algae to grow. Algae not only look bad, but they can also smell bad and harm water quality. As algae decay, the process uses oxygen in the water that fish and other aquatic organisms need. You can help keep our waterways clean by following a few simple tips when washing your car.

1. When possible, take your car to a car wash to prevent oil and grease from washing into our drains. Car washes capture, treat, and recycle their wash water.
2. Wash your car in the grass and not on the driveway or road. This way, pollutants are taken up by the grass before the water enters our streams.
3. Use soap sparingly and wash your car with biodegradable, phosphate-free detergent. Either use a hose nozzle with a trigger to save water, or use a bucket instead of a running hose to wash and rinse vehicles. This conserves water and minimizes urban runoff.
4. Pour your bucket of soapy water down the sink when you're done. It should not be dumped down the street or the storm drain.
5. Use non-toxic cleaning products. Baking soda paste works well on battery heads, cable clamps, and chrome. Mix the soda with a mild, biodegradable dishwashing soap to clean wheels and tires. For windows, mix white vinegar or lemon juice with water.

### For "Do-It-Yourselfers"

1. Make sure you have protected the sidewalk or driveway from repair fluids by using a drip pan. Never allow any fluids to go into the gutter.
2. When changing your motor oil, recycle it at the nearest used oil collection center.
3. Avoid accidental spills by using a drip pan or collection container.
4. Never mix automotive fluids together. Keep them in separate containers with closed, sealed lids. Label.
5. Never hose down your garage floor, driveway, sidewalk, or gutter. Instead, sweep it regularly.
6. Keep automotive fluids away from children and pets and out of contact with water.