

Tips for Improving Stormwater Quality

All Hopewell Borough residents can help improve stormwater quality, which will also help keep our town clean:

Be tree-friendly

One of the best things residents can do to improve stormwater quality is to plant trees. Tree leaves help slow rain as it falls to the ground, thus increasing water absorption. Leaf litter on the ground also slows stormwater runoff and keeps the soil surface looser, so more water can be absorbed rather than run off. Tree roots hold soil, preventing sediment from washing away with stormwater. And, trees cycle water from the land to the atmosphere through evapotranspiration. As much as 10,000 gallons of water can be cycled through a one-acre tract of woodland of moderately sized trees in a year. Up to one quarter of precipitation is cycled back to the atmosphere through evapotranspiration.

Stop runaway trash

Make sure trash and recyclables cannot blow or spill out of receptacles, so it does not become litter and wash down storm drains. Always bag and tie trash before placing it in trash receptacles to prevent litter during refuse collection. Ensure that recyclables are contained especially lightweight items such as paper, cartons, and aluminum cans.

Bags are man's best friend

Imagine the amount of waste that the Borough's dogs and cats produce every day. If pet owners don't clean up after their pets, a significant portion of pet waste washes into storm drains. Picking up after pets keeps our town and our stormwater cleaner.

Compost happens

Leaves and brush should be kept out of the streets, so they do not wash down storm drains. Yard waste can clog storm drains, which can lead to street flooding. Start a compost pile and turn vegetative waste into compost for your garden. Your plants will thank you!

Don't paint the town

After painting, paint out the brushes on scrap material or paper, then throw away the material or paper into household trash. For water-based paints, rinse brushes in water, then pour water down the drain, where it will be treated in the sewage-treatment process. For oil-based paints, clean the brushes with paint thinner, and dispose of thinner at one of Mercer County's Chemical Clean-up days. Never dump paint, rinse water or thinner into storm drains or in the street. Leftover paint in cans can be dried and thrown away, or, leftover liquid paint can be donated to local organizations.

Soap up the car, not the street

For home car washing, park vehicles over grass to keep soapy water from flowing down driveways, into streets and down storm drains. The soil in your yard will trap and filter the soap, and the soap won't harm your grass. Soap and detergents that run unfiltered into streams can harm aquatic life. Better yet, go to commercial car washes, which use water efficiently by recycling or draining used water to the sewage system for treatment.

Prevent motor oil muck

It takes only one quart of oil to contaminate a million gallons of water. When changing motor oil at home, take used oil to service stations who offer free recycling or one of Mercer County's Chemical Clean-up days. Never dump motor oil in driveways, streets, or down storm drains. Keep vehicles well maintained to prevent oil and other fluid leaks.

A little lawn chemical can go a long way

When using fertilizers, pesticides or other lawn and garden chemicals, use only as directed. Avoid applying chemicals where they could be readily washed into drains, particularly when rain is forecast.

Don't let your dirt get out all over the neighborhood

Sediment is the most common stream contaminant. To keep exposed soil or mulch piles from home landscaping/construction projects from washing away in the rain, cover mulch/soil with plastic sheeting or tarps. Vegetate bare spots to hold soil in place.

Making a positive commitment to follow these suggestions will result in benefits that will be shared by all of us and add to the health of our local and regional water resources.