

## WHAT IS STORMWATER RUNOFF?

Stormwater runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. As it flows over driveways, streets, lawns, and sidewalks, it picks up debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants. Stormwater that flows into catch basins enters the municipal separate storm sewer system (or MS4). This system of underground drains carries the stormwater runoff under the streets and discharges it directly into lakes, streams, rivers, wetlands or coastal waters.

Anything that enters the MS4 is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing and other recreation.



## THE EFFECTS OF POLLUTION

Polluted stormwater runoff can adversely affect plants, fish, animals and people. Excess nutrients causes algae blooms in lakes which removes oxygen from the water. Fish cannot exist in water with low dissolved oxygen levels. Bacteria and other pathogens can wash into swimming areas and necessitate beach closures. Trash washed into waterbodies can choke, suffocate or disable aquatic life. Hazardous wastes can poison fish and shellfish. Sedimentation caused by erosion clouds the water and makes it impossible for aquatic plants to grow.

## WHAT SHARON AND OTHER MUNICIPALITIES ARE DOING

In 1972 Congress enacted the Clean Water Act to prohibit the discharge of any pollutant into waters of the U.S. from a point source unless the discharge is authorized by a NPDES permit. Congress added section 402(p) to the Act in 1987 to require implementation of a comprehensive program for addressing stormwater discharges. Under Phase II of this program, local governments are assigned responsibility for protecting the quality of the stormwater that they discharge from their MS4 into waters of the U.S. Municipalities have been required to file Notices of Intent with the EPA and to draft stormwater management plans, which Sharon has done. Municipalities are using best management good housekeeping practices at town-owned facilities and during vehicle maintenance to prevent leachate from polluting the stormwater that leaves the site. They are sweeping streets and cleaning out catch basins regularly to keep debris out of the MS4. Sharon has been and will be adopting and expanding local regulations that prohibit dumping or discharging contaminants into the MS4. All Municipalities are doing what they can to keep our water resources clean.