

## What the city is doing

Water quality is an aspect of storm water management administered by the Oshkosh Storm Water Utility. The storm water utility was established as a way to fund the cost of municipal storm water services and broaden the city's ability to manage flood control, improve water quality and meet federally mandated goals. The storm water utility operates similar to an electric, water or wastewater utility. Properties within the city pay for storm water management services based on the amount of runoff generated by each type of property.

Some of the utility's services to protect water quality are street sweeping, storm sewer maintenance, new storm sewer construction, construction of wet detention basins, planning and educational projects, and citizen incentive programs. Two on-going incentive programs offer storm water credits to residents who install a rain barrel or rain garden to minimize runoff to our waterways:

**A rain barrel** is used as a cistern to catch rain-water falling from the roof.



**A rain garden** is a shallow depression typically planted with colorful native plants and strategically located to collect, infiltrate and filter rain falling on hard surfaces like roofs, driveways, alleys and streets.

To learn more about residential storm water credits, contact the Oshkosh Storm Water Utility.



City of Oshkosh

[www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us](http://www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us)

[www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/SustainableOshkosh](http://www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/SustainableOshkosh)

215 Church Avenue

P O Box 1130

Oshkosh WI 54903

### For additional information:



EPA Environmental Protection Agency

[www.epa.gov/ow/](http://www.epa.gov/ow/)



Wisconsin Stormwater Management Consortium

<http://newwaterwisconsin.org>

UW Extension

Water Resources Education

<http://clean-water.uwex.edu>

Oshkosh Storm Water Utility Board

[www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/Government/Board\\_Commission/Storm\\_Water\\_UTILITY\\_Board/](http://www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/Government/Board_Commission/Storm_Water_UTILITY_Board/)

This brochure is part two of a two-part series on water conservation and protection. Part one addressed saving water.

# PROTECTING WATER QUALITY



Simple ways households can contribute to cleaner lakes rivers and streams

Sustainability Advisory Board



## Polluted runoff is Wisconsin's number one water quality problem.

Runoff is rain or melting snow coming from hard surfaces like streets, lawns, roof tops, driveways, parking areas, patios, and compacted soils. The flowing water carries salt, sand, soil, pesticides, fertilizers, leaves, grass clippings, oil, litter and many other pollutants into nearby waterways. In developed areas, storm sewers collect a large amount of polluted runoff. **Many people don't realize that these storm sewers bypass water treatment facilities and empty directly into our rivers, lakes, and streams.**

Nutrients, sediments and toxic chemicals in runoff can degrade water quality by feeding algae blooms, reducing the amount of light available to plants, depleting oxygen resulting in fish kills, introducing unsafe micro-organisms, and changing the types of plants and animals able to survive in our waterways.

***If you live in the Oshkosh area, all water passing through your home and yard will eventually end up in one of the Winnebago Pool lakes or in the Fox or Wolf rivers.***

That means what you do at home has an impact on water quality. Here are some ways you can help reduce pollution. The amount you stop may seem small, but together it adds up to cleaner rivers, lakes and streams for everyone to enjoy.



## What you can do

**1. Keep household hazardous waste out of storm sewers.** Whatever enters storm sewers in front of your house usually ends up in one of our waterways. Properly dispose of hazardous waste. Take used motor oil to the city drop off facility. Other hazardous waste, such as antifreeze, unused pesticides and non-latex paint can go to the Winnebago County hazardous waste facility.

**2. Employ best practices for lawn maintenance.** Keep lawn clippings on your lawn after mowing. Grass clippings serve as fertilizer as they decompose. In fall, mulch leaves for fertilizer. Limit other fertilizer and pesticide use, and if used, keep them off sidewalks and driveways and out of storm sewers. Compost yard waste.



**3. Landscape with fewer hard surfaces.** Plant trees, shrubs, and

native vegetation to absorb water. Limit pavement and lawn. Use vegetation buffers near shorelines to filter runoff and stabilize banks.

**4. Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces.** Hard surfaces serve as a conduit straight to the storm sewer and directly to the waterway. Divert water to lawns and gardens where it can safely soak in.



**5. Prevent animal waste from entering waterways.** It's the law. When you walk your pets, pick up pet waste. Avoid feeding waterfowl; their waste adds bacteria and other harmful pathogens to water.

**6. Wash your car at the car wash, not in your driveway.** Road salts and other debris washed off your car can contaminate ground and surface water.



**7. Use asphalt based, not coal tar, sealants to reseal your driveway.** Coal tar sealants contain high levels of PAHs—polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons—which have been linked to lesions in fish and cancer in humans. Runoff from driveways with PAHs builds up in sediments in lakes and streams.



**8. Control ice and snow without chemicals.** In winter shovel frequently to clear sidewalks and driveways to avoid the need for de-icers or sand.

When ice and snow melt, sand, salt and other chemicals flow into street drains leading directly into our waterways.

**9. Dispose of old medicines safely.** Don't throw old medicine down the toilet or sink drain. Deposit it at the 24-hour drop-off center located at the police station. Medication in waterways create adverse reactions in fish and other wildlife.



**10. Take advantage of the city's storm water credits.** Install a rain barrel to collect roof water or plant a rain garden to help absorb and filter excessive water draining from hard surfaces.