

Contaminated Runoff

Storm drain systems collect rainwater and excess water (runoff) from irrigation, car washing, and other activities and routes that water, without treatment, to storm drain channels, rivers, creeks, and ultimately to a lake or ocean.

Since storm drain systems do not include any treatment, various contaminants such as fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, gasoline, oil, radiator fluid, and animal waste get washed into the drains and into our oceans. This has detrimental impacts on water quality and causes various different kinds of health problems. Streets, roads, and highways are significant sources of pollutants in storm water discharges, and operation and maintenance practices, if not conducted properly, can contribute to the problem. Storm water pollution from roadway and bridge maintenance should be addressed on a site-specific basis. In order to reduce pollutants in storm water there are a number of procedures that you can follow. First you can use the least toxic materials available (e.g. water based paints, gels or sprays for graffiti removal). You can recycle paint and other materials whenever possible and you can enlist the help of citizens to keep yard waste, used oil, and other wastes out of the gutter. For many other prevention and suggested protocol from the California Storm water Quality Association visit <https://www.casqa.org/>

Information for this article was sourced from:

1. Santa Cruz Public Works Department. 2005. <http://www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/pw/>.