

You can help!

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) is teaching people easy ways to stop storm drain pollution where it starts — in our own neighborhoods and backyards.

Our in-school “Down the Storm Drain” program explains problems caused by dumping into storm drains. Students then apply decals on drains in their neighborhood that remind everyone not to dump into or near these drains.



You can help keep our waterways clean by attaching HVA’s “Don’t Dump — Drains to River” decals on storm drains in your neighborhood. This message will help remind people that only water should enter storm drains. By spreading the word that storm drains are not trash cans, you can keep the river clean.

Help HVA continue this work. Join the Storm Drain project or a volunteer Stream Team or Water Quality Monitoring Team. Call us at 800-TEAM-HVA.

Important!

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is notifying towns that are required to develop a stormwater educational and outreach program under the Clean Water Act Phase II Stormwater Regulations. HVA’s Storm Drain Awareness program fulfills those requirements.

About HVA

HVA is the only nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting water and land in our entire Housatonic River valley, covering 2,000-square-miles from the Berkshires to Long Island Sound.

For more information about our many programs, to become a member or to volunteer call 800-TEAM-HVA.



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Help Keep Our Waterways Clean!

Did You Know?



Nearly everyone thinks that water pollution is caused by industry. In the past, most of it was. But today the #1 threat to rivers and ponds is from untreated storm water runoff. Much of this untreated runoff reaches the water through storm drains. Eventually that pollution reaches the Housatonic River.

What are storm drains?

Storm drains are found on city and suburban streets along the curb. They are on the side of major roads, bridges and highways as well as in parking lots. Storm drains are holes or openings, usually with a grate over them, leading to underground pipes which carry water, usually to a stream or pond and channel the runoff into a nearby waterbody.



What is runoff?

When rain falls or snow and ice melt, it either soaks into the ground or evaporates. When the water meets hard surfaces like roofs or

paved parking lots, streets and driveways, it flows as runoff, traveling down streets and gutters into storm drains — which carry it into nearby rivers and ponds.



How does runoff become polluted?

As water flows down streets and across parking lots and lawns it picks up pollutants such as —

- Yard trash like pet wastes and grass clippings;
- Fluids that leak from cars and trucks like oil, gas, and antifreeze;
- Litter of all kinds, including waste paper, bottles and cans;
- Fertilizers and pesticides; and
- Sand, salt, and soil from roads, unpaved driveways, or construction sites.



How can polluted runoff harm rivers and ponds?

Runoff is not treated. It carries pollution directly into storm drains and rivers and ponds. Hundreds of thousands of storm drains throughout the Housatonic River watershed carry thousands of gallons of runoff with motor oil, gasoline, pet waste, pesticides, fertilizers, paints and detergents straight into our rivers, ponds and wetlands. Some people even dump trash and pollutants right into storm drains. These contaminants destroy the water's ecosystem, killing fish, frogs and plant life and making the water unsafe for us as well.



1 Use less fertilizer on your lawn

You can use less fertilizer, reduce pollution and still keep your lawn green and healthy. Many lawns need as little as one-half of the fertilizer recommended on fertilizer bags. Too much fertilizer makes your lawn more susceptible to diseases and pests.



2 Use fewer toxic pesticides less often

All pesticides, even natural ones, are poisons. Some that seem safe to use in your home or garden can be lethal in the environment. For example, rotenone is a natural pesticide that is extremely toxic to fish. Use pesticides sparingly. Prepare and use only the amount that is absolutely necessary. Follow label directions exactly.



3 Compost yard waste

Grass clippings, leaves and garden trimmings can block storm drains. They use up oxygen from water, leaving less for fish and other aquatic life. Instead, compost grass clippings, leaves and pulled garden weeds.

4 Don't litter

Garbage that washes down storm drains fouls our waterways and can harm or kill wildlife. Some litter, such as plastics, break down so slowly they can remain in the river or pond for centuries.



5 Properly dispose of pet waste

Pet waste is raw sewage. Dispose of it far from all water sources and storm drains.

6 Recycle used motor oil and antifreeze

Take used motor oil and antifreeze to your local recycling center and promptly repair fluid leaks in cars, trucks, and other motorized equipment.



7 Take hazardous household materials to authorized collection sites

Contact your local town hall to find out where to take leftover paint, pesticides, cleaners such as drain openers and other hazardous household materials for disposal.



8 Wash your car on the lawn and use vegetable soap

Wash the car on the lawn so the water is absorbed into the soil rather than running off your driveway. A mild vegetable soap also benefits your lawn by washing away pollutants from the grass blades and inhibiting many lawn pests and diseases.



9 Limit sand and salt use

When it comes to using sand and salt on your driveway and steps, you shouldn't compromise your safety — but don't overdo it. Salt can poison your drinking water supply and sand can fill in rivers and streams, destroying fish habitat.

10 Spread the word

Most storm drain pollution is caused by the actions of uninformed people. Share what you know and help protect our rivers and ponds.

