

# FIRST STORM FLUSH

The first storm flush! What is that?...No, it doesn't have anything to do with your toilet, but it does stink when it comes to keeping our drinking water clean!

During dry spells, various stormwater pollutants silently accumulate along road sides and on other hard surfaces that wash away all at once into our waterways when the next big storm comes.

We don't think about it as we drive by, but every day pollutants quietly, but massively accumulate and wait to hitch a ride on the next big rain that scours them off the streets, down into the storm drains and into our streams.



**Accumulating Pollutants**



oil & gas

metals from vehicles

mud

paint chips from the road

brake dust

road salt

pieces of trash

The initial runoff from a heavy rain after a period of dry weather is more polluted than if there has been consistent rain throughout the week.

**The stormwater containing this high initial pollutant load is called the "first flush".**

This multi-faceted first flush affect reaches the stream all at once and impacts our water quality and stream life with a rush of concentrated contaminants.

## SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Plant rain gardens and keep ditches vegetated to help filter out smaller particles like brake dust
- Keep leaves and grass out of the storm drain
- Always put your cigarette butts and other trash in the trashcan
- In the winter, use salt very sparingly and sweep up any clumps
- Keep your car in good condition to prevent leaks and sources of rust
- Ask your mechanic for copper-free brakes
- Keep your paved areas clean of mud and yard debris
- Cover old cars (sources of rust) when stored outside, or keep indoors
- Sweep and bag all brake dust debris when doing your own brake work
- Cover yard projects with a tarp before a rain to the prevent soil from being exposed to rain

**Remember, big or small, there is always something we as citizens can do to help protect our own local water quality!**