



# Preventing Illicit Discharges & Keeping Our Waterways Clean

When water from snowmelt or a rain event flows over impervious surfaces, like streets, sidewalks, and driveways, it is considered stormwater runoff. The stormwater can carry pollutants associated with pet waste, car maintenance, lawn care, and litter into the storm sewer system, which conveys the polluted stormwater to local waterways like Ballenger Creek.

## Storm Sewer Systems vs. Sanitary Sewer Systems

The storm sewer system is made up of conveyances (pipes and drains) that direct stormwater runoff to our local waterways. Conversely, the sanitary sewer system, also made of pipes and drains, conveys used water (from toilets, sinks, floor drains and more) to wastewater treatment plants where the water undergoes an extensive treatment process. The water traveling through the sanitary sewer system will eventually be discharged into our local waterways with minimal pollutants, whereas stormwater (and the pollutants within the stormwater) will travel through the storm sewer system and be discharged as is. Therefore, it is incredibly important to prevent pollutants from mingling with stormwater prior to entering the storm sewer system.

Pollutants such as nutrients, sediments, and bacteria can have harmful effects on aquatic ecosystems and human health. They can contaminate drinking water, kill aquatic organisms, impair water quality and aesthetics, and prevent recreational uses.

## Illicit Discharge

An Illicit Discharge is defined as any discharge into a storm sewer system that is not composed of entirely stormwater. Some common examples of illicit discharges include: car washwater, improper oil disposal, and a connection between a municipal sewer and storm sewer system. It is important to know how to prevent illicit discharges, and also how to report instances of intentional illegal dumping or discharges into the storm sewer system. If you suspect an illicit discharge is being released into the storm sewer system, contact the County at 301-600-2325. This number is only staffed during normal business hours (Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). If you suspect an illicit discharge is going into the storm sewer system during non-business hours, or are unable to get in touch with County staff, please call the Maryland Department of the Environment's toll-free 24-Hour emergency number for pollution problems in Maryland at 866-633-4686, or 866-MDE-GOTO.)





*Eutrophication of a river as a result of excess nutrients*



*Illicit discharge from an outfall*

## Reduce How You Pollute

1. Freeze grease and oils and dispose of them in the trash instead of pouring down the sink.
2. Take your car to a commercial car wash.
3. Pick up pet waste and throw it in the trash.
4. Limit your use of fertilizer
5. Blow grass clipping and leaves back onto your yard, away from the street where they can reach a storm drain.
6. Compost or take your yard waste to a composting facility.
7. Reduce water use and collect rain water in a rain barrel to be used on your lawn.
8. Inspect your septic system every 3 years and pump as necessary.
9. Keep your car tuned and repair fuel or fluid leaks quickly.
10. Never dump anything down storm drains or in streams.

## Did you know?

*According to the EPA, stormwater pollution is the leading source of water pollution in estuaries.*

## Did you know?

*The first inch of runoff carries 90% of the pollution from a storm.*

## Resources

REPORT Illegal Dumping and Discharges to the storm drain system and local waterways!

- Call Frederick County's office of Sustainability & Environmental Resources at: 301-600-2325.
- For Emergencies: Call Maryland Department of Environment at: 866-633-4686 or 866-MDE-GOTO
- Or Report online at: <https://www.frederickcountymd.gov/RequestTracker.aspx?CID=22>
- For more information on Stormwater and Illicit Discharges, visit:  
<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/StormwaterManagementProgram/Pages/index.aspx>  
<https://www.epa.gov/nutrientpollution/sources-and-solutions-stormwater>

"Tips for Green Leaders in Frederick County" is a publication of the Frederick County Office of Sustainability and Environmental Resources, Office of the County Executive. For more information on this topic and about our programs, visit [www.frederickcountymd.gov/sustainability](http://www.frederickcountymd.gov/sustainability), email us at [sustainability@frederickcountymd.gov](mailto:sustainability@frederickcountymd.gov), or call at 301.600.1416. Sustainable Frederick County is on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

