Stormwater Pollution and the MS4 Permit Program

In urban areas, storm sewers drain rain and melting snow off of roads quickly to prevent flooding. From there, the runoff water travels away safely through underground stormwater pipes. In most communities built before the late 1970's, stormwater pipes carry runoff directly to nearby wetlands, lakes, streams and rivers without treatment.

Storm sewer systems help to protect communities against flooding, but they also carry pesticides, fertilizers, oils, metals, bacteria, salt, sediment, litter, and other debris into our waterways.

STORMWATER IS THE LARGEST SOURCE OF WATER POLLUTION IN URBAN AREAS.

The **Clean Water Act** establishes a structure for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and state agencies to regulate water pollution and set water quality standards for rivers, lakes and streams.

Within this structure, the **Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4)** permit program regulates cities and other entities that manage storm sewer systems. In Minnesota, the program is administered by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

MS4 permit holders include cities, watershed districts, counties, and townships, as well as large campuses such as universities, hospitals and prison complexes that operate their own private roads and drainage systems.

MS4 permit holders are required to develop stormwater pollution prevention programs, educate the public about stormwater pollution, and engage citizens in solving local water pollution problems. The permit also requires these MS4 entities to identify and stop illegal dumping (called illicit discharges), take steps to reduce runoff from construction and development, and practice "good housekeeping" to avoid polluting waterways during routine road and park maintenance. In addition, there are separate permit programs to regulate industrial sites and construction sites.

What's NOT included in the MS4 program

The MS4 permit program does not address issues such as flooding or aquatic invasive species that are not related to stormwater pollution. Likewise, it does not apply to agricultural or rural water pollution outside of permitted cities and townships.

Do you have concerns about stormwater management in your area?
Contact your community's MS4 Permit Coordinator to share comments and suggestions.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MS4 GENERAL PERMIT:

1: Public Education and Outreach

Permittees must educate the public about stormwater pollution and suggest actions that people can take to reduce stormwater pollution in their communities.

Required topics include:

- Illicit discharge recognition and reporting (illegal dumping in ditches and storm sewer systems)
- Winter salt and deicing materials
- Pet waste

In addition, permittees must educate the public about at least two other high priority stormwater issues in their communities (ex. yard waste, lawn chemicals, raingardens, etc.)

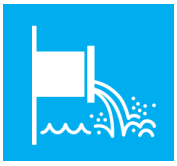
2: Public Participation and Involvement

Permittees should seek input from the public on their Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) and involve the public in activities to protect water.

Each year, there must be:

- At least one public input opportunity (could be a meeting)
- At least one participation event (ex. e.g., rain barrel distribution event, rain garden workshop, cleanup event, storm drain, stenciling, volunteer water quality monitoring, adopt a storm drain program, household hazardous waste collection day, etc.)

3: Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE)



Permittees must develop, implement, and enforce regulations and implement a program to detect and eliminate illicit discharges.

These program should address:

- Illegal dumping in ditches and storm sewer systems
- Proper disposal of pet waste on municipal property
- Proper storage of salt at commercial and industrial facilities (indoors or under cover and over an impervious surface such as concrete)

In addition, permittees should:

- Provide training for staff
- Map areas where illicit discharges are most likely to occur
- Investigate potential illicit discharges and enforce regulations as needed

4: Construction Site Stormwater Runoff Control

Permittees must develop, implement and enforce rules for construction activity that disturbs one or more acres of land and discharges to the municipal stormwater system.

Permittees should regularly inspect to ensure that construction sites:

- Stabilize exposed soils, stockpiles, ditches and swales
- Install practices to prevent sediment from leaving their sites
- Protect storm drains
- Contain liquid and solid waste from concrete, stucco, paint, form release oils, curing compounds, and other construction materials; and
- Preserve natural buffers within 50 ft of waterways or incorporate additional sediment controls if that is not possible.

5: Post-Construction Stormwater Management

Permittees must also develop rules to address stormwater pollution after construction is complete. Developers must install practices to treat stormwater runoff from any projects that create one acre or more of new or reconstructed impervious surface (roads, parking lots, buildings, etc.), Where practical, practices that infiltrate water into the ground are recommended.

6: Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping

Permittees must map all municipal facilities that may contribute stormwater pollution (compost sites, parks, salt storage, and public works facilities, etc.) and use best practices in their operations to minimize stormwater pollution. Permittees must also inspect and maintain their stormwater treatment devices (ponds, infiltration basins, rain gardens, etc.) and provide training for staff.

MINNESOTA POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY