



# Town of Ashland

## MASSACHUSETTS

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE – COMPLIANCE, MAINTENANCE AND FUNDING

##### *What is Stormwater and how is it different from Sewer?*

You've seen one drain, you've seen them all. They are all the same, right? I can pour this cleaner down the drain because it goes to a wastewater treatment plant, right? Not so! It's important to understand the difference between sanitary sewers and storm sewers so we can prevent environmental damage.

The **sanitary sewer** is a system of underground pipes that carries sewage from bathrooms, sinks, kitchens, and other plumbing components to a wastewater treatment plant where it is filtered, treated and discharged.

The **storm drain** is a system designed to carry rainfall runoff and other drainage. It is not designed to carry sewage or accept hazardous wastes. The runoff is carried in underground pipes or open ditches or swales and discharges untreated into local streams, rivers and other surface water bodies. Storm drain inlets are typically found in curbs and low-lying outdoor areas. Some older buildings have basement floor drains that connect to the storm sewer system. Disposal of chemicals or hazardous substances to the storm sewer system damages the environment. Motor oil, cleaners, paints and other common household items that get into storm drains can poison fish, birds, and other wildlife, and can find their way into drinking water supplies. In addition, grass clippings, leaves, litter, and organic matter can clog storm drains and cause flooding.

Here are some things you can do to help maintain our sewer systems and keep our environment clean:

- Do not pour anything into storm sewer drains.
- Keep storm sewer drains clear of leaves, grass clippings, sticks and litter
- Repair any leaks and drips from your vehicle.
- Collect and recycle motor oil
- Clean up spills and don't wash them into a drain.
- Don't pour paints, solvents, cleaners, etc. into any drain – take it to your local county household hazardous waste collection.
- Minimize the use of herbicides and pesticides.

Watch this easy to understand video from the City of Durham:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ak-js9MPSMU>

and this one from Maine:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLt8c2fO3QU>

### **What is NPDES / MS4 Permit?**

NPDES stands for: National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

MS4 Permit stands for: Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System Permit.

#### **Wha....What now?**

Polluted storm water run-off (rain water collected from roofs /driveways and other impervious surfaces going through those square grates on the side of the streets also known as Catch basins) is often transported through our town's drain systems (Municipal Separate storm water systems) and ultimately discharged into local rivers and streams without treatment.

EPA's (Environmental Protection Agency) Stormwater Phase II Regulations establishes an MS4 management program that is intended to improve the Nation's waterways by reducing the quantity of pollutants that stormwaters pickup and carries into the drain systems. Common pollutants include oil and grease from roadways, pesticides from lawns, sediment from construction sites, carelessly discarded trash (cigarette butts, plastic bottles etc.). These impair the waterways, thereby discouraging recreational use of the resource, contaminating drinking water supplies, and interfering with the aquatic wildlife.

#### **What does it mean for us in Ashland?**

Most part of the Town of Ashland, belongs to the SuAsCo (Sudbury, Assabet, Concord) water shed and a small section of Ashland belongs to the Charles River Watershed. Our town went through the MS4 2003 permit which mandated that all catch basins are cleaned, outfalls are identified. For some towns where it was mostly the Charles the MS4 requirements were extensive and included treatments eliminating Phosphorus and some Nitrogen compounds to tackle the issue of pollutants in the Charles river.

The new MS4 permit regulations (where the Notice of Intent(NOI) is due in Sept 2017), include (not limited to): Outfall stormwater Quantity and Quality measurements, Pollution prevention by cleaning and maintaining our drainage infrastructure and outfalls, Culvert maintenance. See link for detailed information: [https://www3.epa.gov/region1/npdes/stormwater/MS4\\_MA.html](https://www3.epa.gov/region1/npdes/stormwater/MS4_MA.html)

#### **What have we done so far?**

Department of Public works has a couple of line items budgeted every year to clean catch basins and do street sweeping. Due to budget cuts over the course of the past 10 years. We have been unable to clean all catch basins and sweep all streets in the town every year. This means, we have not been able to handle pollutants and maintain drain infrastructures in a standard manner. We sometimes lean on grants / funds

from state /federal department to be able to accomplish this, the best way we can. Unfortunately, these funds are not available consistently every year and the funds are not sufficient most every year.

***What's the plan and how does it affect me?***

In order to comply with the NPDES / MS4 State regulations, we will need to establish consistent funding and utilize it solely for the purpose of Storm Drain Infrastructure maintenance, cleaning and treating the stormwater. There are some options for how to fund this program regularly on an annual basis.

Option 1: General Fund – Revenues from property taxes.

Option 2: Stormwater Utility (Enterprise account) – Revenues from fees based on percentage of impervious cover.

We are currently discussing these options and many other at our Storm water Advisory meetings. The primary objective of the Stormwater Advisory Committee is to determine the best way for the Town of Ashland to fund its compliance with the EPA's Draft Massachusetts Small MS4 General Permit. This may involve creating an enterprise fund-- or stormwater utility -- to raise the funds necessary to comply with the permit terms.