

New Castle Storm Water Management Program

With the melting of the snow from the not soon to be forgotten winter, and the coming rains this spring, we need to be aware of where this rain water flows. We have all seen rain water rushing down the street and into a drain, but few of us think about where it goes from there. In most cases it flows to the sanitary sewer system that is connected to our homes and on to the Water Pollution Control Facility where the water is treated before being released to the Big Blue River. Unfortunately, if too much rain water enters the sanitary sewer system it overflows to the river untreated. These overflows are regulated by the city's Long Term Control Plan. In a separated storm sewer system the rain water entering the drain is piped directly to the nearest stream and eventually to the Big Blue River untreated. This untreated storm water is the concern of the City of New Castle's Storm Water Management Program.

The sewers that overflow, dumping raw sewage into the river, is an urgent problem the city is addressing with new construction over the next several years. But as we reduce this *point source* water pollution we have the real potential to increase pollution from the urban environment. Oil, gasoline, grit, litter, and various other contaminants accumulate on city streets, parking lots, and driveways. Our yards have fertilizers, weed killers, and pet waste. Construction sites have bare ground that can contribute to the silting of streams through erosion, as well as other contaminants used on the site. As these are just some examples of what is carried in storm water, this *non-point source* pollution is a real concern for water quality in our local waterways, and is now the greatest source of pollution to the nation's waterways.

As business owners, landowners, homeowners and tenants we need to be keenly aware of our contribution to storm water pollution. Use herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers properly and sparingly, pick up after pets, do not blow yard waste into the street, and never dump anything in the street or in a drain, remember "Just rain in the drain". Consider using rain barrels to harvest the rain water and use it for watering around the yard. Build rain gardens to store runoff from the yard and let it naturally return to the ground. There are many option available to protect our local waterways and preserve our most precious of natural resources... water.

Call me, Ed Hill at 529-7605, ext. 3113 or stop by my office in City Hall if you want to learn more.