

# What is a Watershed?

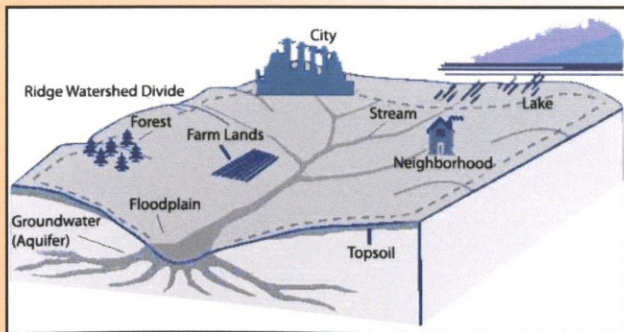
A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common point, such as a nearby creek, stream, river or lake. Every small watershed drains to a larger watershed that eventually flows to the ocean.

Watersheds support a wide variety of plants and wildlife and provide many outdoor recreation opportunities. By protecting the health of our watershed we can preserve and enhance the quality of life for the residents of Somerset.

## What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow and is within a watershed. It flows from rooftops, over paved streets, sidewalks and parking lots, across bare soil, and through lawns and storm drains. As it flows, runoff collects and transports soil, pet waste, silt, pesticides, fertilizer, oil, grease, litter and other pollutants, depositing them directly into our water supply.

Polluted stormwater contaminates streams, rivers and lakes. It can kill or damage plants, fish, and wildlife, while degrading the quality of our water.



## Useful Links:

### Environmental Protection Agency

- [cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/index.cfm](http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/index.cfm)
- [cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/index.cfm?action=min\\_measure&min\\_measure\\_id=4](http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/index.cfm?action=min_measure&min_measure_id=4)

### Kentucky Stormwater Association

- [www.kystormwater.org](http://www.kystormwater.org)

### Upper Cumberland Watershed Watch

- [www.uppercumberlandriver.org](http://www.uppercumberlandriver.org)

## For More Information:

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# Storm Drain Stewardship

Clean Water



Healthy Life



SOMERSET, KY

# The Facts About Storm Drains

## What is a Storm Drain?

Storm drains are the metal grates found on urban and suburban streets, often at corners and on the sides of curbs and gutters. They help prevent flooding by draining rainwater and melted snow from streets and other paved surfaces.

## *Is a Storm Drain System the same thing as a Sanitary Sewer System?*

Sewer systems and storm drain systems are not the same. The water that goes down a sink or toilet in your home or business flows through a sewer system to a wastewater treatment plant where it is treated and cleaned. Water that flows down a driveway or street and into a gutter goes into a storm drain which goes directly to a natural body of water, untreated.

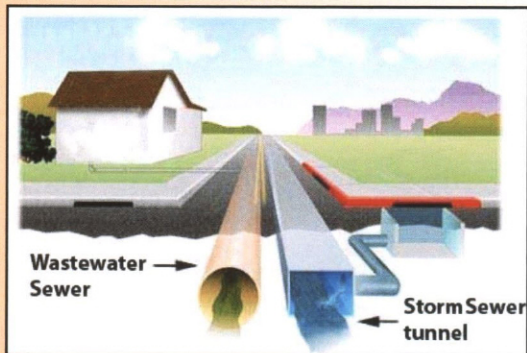


Image source: <http://www.chandleraz.gov>

# What's the Problem?

While storm drains were designed to divert water from streets, they become dangerous water polluters when harmful substances from lawns and streets flow through them.

During a rainfall, water runs down streets and through yards, picking up substances along the way. This "runoff" often contains elements that pollute our waterways, harm wildlife, and degrade water quality.



Untreated pollutants can leak into streams.

Water that enters storm drains is not cleaned at a wastewater treatment plant before it flows directly to streams, rivers and lakes.

Some common contaminants in stormwater include lawn chemicals, pet waste, household chemicals like paint, and soaps used for washing cars. Products advertised as "non-toxic" or "biodegradable" are not typically safe for our waterways either—even small amounts of dirt entering storm drains can affect the water quality.

These small amounts of pollution can create a big problem when they come from an area the size of Somerset. Each storm drain can have harmful effects on wildlife, recreation, and forestry.

# What Can You Do?

**To help prevent stormwater pollution follow these simple tips:**

- Use lawn chemicals safely. Always follow label instructions and never apply before rain or watering the lawn, unless directed.
- Clean up after your pets. When walking your pet, remember to bring extra bags to pick up and properly dispose of waste.
- Recycle used oil. Never place used motor oil in the trash or pour down storm drains.
- Sweep driveways and sidewalks clean. Remove debris and residue that could end up in a storm drain from concrete or paved areas around your house.
- Wash your car the right way. Either wash your car at a car wash that filters the wastewater, or wash your car in a grassy area. Avoid washing your car on a driveway or in the street.
- Never discard trash or yard waste down storm drains or in the street.
- Storm drain marking. Join or start a group that attaches markers or paint stencils with anti-dumping messages on storm drains to remind citizens where the water flows.