



Stormwater Outreach for Residents and Homeowners

The Walla Walla River and its tributaries are designated as water quality limited (degraded) by the State of Washington and we need your cooperation to improve the water quality of our rivers and creeks. Some of our local creeks exceed water quality standards for fecal coliform, pesticides, temperature, and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). High levels of fecal coliform, which come from pet waste and failed septic systems, make fish, animals, and people sick and can make swimming unsafe. Pesticides and PCBs can be toxic to aquatic life and may cause cancer. Also, warmer water contains less oxygen that aquatic organisms need to survive.

[Chapter 13.15 of the Walla Walla Municipal Code](#) prohibits the discharge of any material other than clean, uncontaminated stormwater into the City storm drain system, underground injection control wells (i.e., drywells), and/or surface and ground waters such as Mill Creek or any of the many other creeks running through the city. Prohibited contaminants listed in the code include, but are not limited to, trash, debris, petroleum products, paints, detergents, drain cleaners, pesticides, fertilizer, chlorinated swimming pool or spa wastewater, chlorine, bromine, other disinfectants, food wastes, lawn clippings, silt, sediment, concrete, and sewage. Storm drains do NOT empty into sewer pipelines that carry wastewater from our sinks and toilets to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Only clean stormwater may be discharged into stormwater systems, including drywells, and surface or ground waters. For swimming pools, the only exception is for discharges that have been de-chlorinated to a concentration of 0.1 parts per million (ppm) or less and are pH adjusted if necessary. However, most swimming pools and spas are normally maintained at chlorine concentrations of at least 1.0 ppm.

The following are best practices of what you can do to help prevent and reduce stormwater pollution:

Vehicle Maintenance

Maintain and fix all leaks from vehicles. Clean up all spills and leaks of fuel, oil, antifreeze, or other fluids with absorbent cloths or other absorbent material such as cat litter. Be sure to pick up and dispose of all used absorbent material properly in the garbage. Oil, fuel, and other petroleum products can suffocate fish and other aquatic organisms by coating their gills or other breathing surfaces, which prevents them from getting the oxygen they need to live. If you change your own oil or other fluids, make sure to use a drip pan and dispose of the waste fluid properly. Used motor oil and other fluids should be taken to the Household Hazardous Waste Facility at the Sudbury Landfill to be disposed of without charge.

RV Maintenance

Water from gray or black water storage tanks cannot be dumped in the street, because they contain detergents and raw sewage. Detergents add excessive nutrients to our creeks, which can lead to algae blooms and reduced oxygen levels for aquatic life. High levels of fecal coliform make fish, animals, and people sick, and can make swimming unsafe. Water from the holding tanks on your RV should be disposed of at a designated dump station.

Yard Waste

Grass clippings and other vegetative debris should not be dumped in the street or into creeks. It can block the proper drainage of stormwater in the gutter and storm drains causing ponding of water in the street which can be a traffic safety hazard. In addition, grass clippings and other vegetative debris add excessive nutrients to our creeks, which can lead to algae blooms and reduced oxygen levels in slower moving water. Unbagged leaves may be placed in piles in the street only during the leaf collection season in the fall. An open pathway along the



curb should be left for stormwater to flow down the gutter to the storm drain. Other yard waste should be disposed of in your green waste recycling container, taken to the Compost Facility at the Sudbury Landfill or used to create your own compost. When mowing next to the street the discharge chute should only be directed back to the lawn. When blowing off your driveway and sidewalk, the debris should be blown back to your yard.

Fertilizer and Pesticides

When applying fertilizer and pesticides with hand-held devices, do not let any of this material get into the street. Avoid over-fertilizing as this can leach nutrients into the groundwater. Fertilizer and grass clippings add excessive nutrients to our creeks, which can lead to algae blooms and reduced oxygen levels in slower moving water. Pesticides can be toxic to aquatic life and may cause cancer.

Dirt and Sediment

Dirt, sand, gravel, bark, or other landscaping material may not be stockpiled or stored in the street. In addition, care should be taken to prevent exposed soil, sand, gravel, and other material from eroding into the street. Sediment destroys spawning areas for steelhead, salmon and other fish by smothering eggs laid in the gravel. It also fills our storm drains causing more frequent maintenance and settles out in our creeks which reduce their ability to carry water and potentially cause flooding and increased bank erosion.

Pet Waste

Stormwater runoff from your lawn can carry fecal coliform into the street. High levels of fecal coliform, which come from pet waste and failed septic systems, make fish, animals, and people sick and can make swimming unsafe. Pet waste on your property should be picked up and disposed of properly in a garbage can. When walking your dog, carry pet waste bags with you to pick up after your dog and dispose in the garbage.

Household Hazardous Waste

Any household hazardous waste should never be disposed of in the street or storm drain. This includes a wide variety of products such as soaps, detergents, ammonia, drain cleaners, degreasers, paint, dyes, stains, solvents, and any flammable or explosive material. These should all be taken to the Household Hazardous Waste Facility at the Sudbury Landfill to be disposed of without charge.

Gutter and Storm Drain Maintenance

The city is responsible for maintenance of the stormwater system including storm drains. During a storm event, a substantial amount of debris is carried into the streets and down the gutters to storm drains. Often this debris covers the drain grate causing ponding of water which can be a traffic safety hazard. You can help by keeping the streets and gutters clear of debris and unplugging storm drain grates. Keeping the lower branches of trees planted near the street trimmed back helps the street sweeper get in close to clean up debris along the curb.

Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated. Please be advised that violations of the above-referenced municipal code could result in fines, penalties, or other remedies as allowable by law.

Remember...only rain down the drain. Keep our rivers and creeks healthy!

Questions and/or Comments?

Contact the City of Walla Walla Stormwater Coordinator at 509.527.4537