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Environmental Education

Watershed Stewardship

Conservation Programs

For Immediate Release

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Perkiomen Creek communities working together on stormwater issues

If gold coins fell from the sky, would you collect them in trashcans and throw them away? Of course not! But that is exactly what we do when it rains. Stormwater may be a nuisance or occasionally a hazard but it should never be treated like trash! It is actually a precious resource.

Many of our communities depend on well water for day-to-day water needs. Even communities with public water supplies often use deep wells as their water source. On average, a household in our region uses about 75 gallons of water per person per day. Multiply 75 gallons by the number of folks in your community and you begin to realize the amount of water we use everyday.

Groundwater is replaced in the local aquifers by the rain and snowmelt that seeps into the ground. The process of infiltration can take thousands of years to develop an abundant and clean water supply. In fact, infiltration of rain and snowmelt into the ground is the only way to recharge our groundwater supplies but too often we treat our precipitation like trash – rushing it away from our properties and communities as fast as possible.

The result – a greater chance for depleted wells and water supplies, especially during periods of drought.

A group of municipalities in the Perkiomen Creek watershed, known as the Perkiomen MS4 Partnership, are working together to address portions of the state's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) regulations by helping communities and property managers identify ways to improve their stormwater management techniques and treat stormwater with... well, with more respect!

The Perkiomen MS4 Partnership is a collaboration of municipalities in Montgomery, Bucks, Lehigh and Berks Counties and the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy. Current municipal partners include Colebrookdale Borough, East Greenville Borough, East Rockhill Township, Franconia Township Hilltown Township, Lansdale Borough, Lower Pottsgrove Township, Lower Providence Township, Lower Salford Township, Marlborough Township, New Hanover Township, Perkasio Borough, Perkiomen Township, Salford Township, Schwenksville Borough, Sellersville Borough, Upper Milford Township, Upper Salford Township, Washington Township, West Rockhill Township and Worcester Township.

The Perkiomen MS4 Partnership is focusing on private property management because a growing number of property owners are now responsible for privately held, stormwater management systems. Stormwater basins and swales are vital components of these systems but their functions are often misunderstood, even by well meaning property managers. Improper maintenance of stormwater systems can lead to flooding problems and water quality issues as well as problems for groundwater supplies throughout the region.



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Updated state and federal guidelines no longer recommend flushing stormwater into the nearest waterway or detention basin as quickly as possible. The standard mown grass stormbasin may help limit localized flooding, but these traditional basins actually degrade water quality and waste water that should be recharging local groundwater supplies.

Stormwater can also cause devastating physical impacts to streams by flushing lawn chemicals, liquids that drip from vehicles and wash off parking lots and roads, pet and animal wastes into local waterways. Individual property owners can do a great deal to improve stormwater run-off and protect water quality in local streams as well as water supplies in our communities.

Homeowners' associations (HOA's) or owners of privately managed stormwater facilities can obtain updated information about managing large community stormwater systems by contacting the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy or their local municipal Perkiomen MS4 Partner. Throughout 2011, the Conservancy will be available to meet with HOA representatives or other large property managers to discuss current stormwater management techniques, options for improving water quality and increasing recharge to local groundwater supplies. The 2011 Perkiomen MS4 Partnership will also focus on helping residential property owners learn about raingardens and how every yard can help replenish local water supplies.

Also included are "10 Things I Can Do To Protect My Water". Please contact the PWC if you would like more information regarding stormwater management and/or non-point pollution in your community.

The PA Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) initiated the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) program to promote greater understanding of stormwater as a valuable resource and to improve overall stormwater management practices.

**If you are interested in learning more, please contact
Crystal Gilchrist at the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy at 610/287-9383
or check the website www.perkiomenwatershed.org.**



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TEN THINGS I CAN DO TO HELP PROTECT MY WATER

- 1. Pick up after your pets and keep livestock out of streams.**
Pet and animal wastes can carry harmful bacteria and diseases. They contaminate creeks and require expensive water treatment for human uses.
- 2. Never dump anything down a stormdrain!**
Stormwater systems do not filter pollutants from stormwater so anything that goes down the stormdrain will end up in the nearest creek.
- 3. Maintain open, forested floodplains.**
Floodplains are critical landforms that absorb water during floods and act as giant filters the rest of the time. Filling or paving them increases flooding and pollution elsewhere.
- 4. Plant trees and maintain naturally vegetated streamside buffers.**
Streamside trees and native vegetation help filter pollutants from stormwater run-off and reduce erosion by holding streambank soils in place.
- 5. Convert large yards or public spaces from mown grass to meadows.**
The typical suburban lawn is nearly as impervious as a parking lot! Native meadow grasses infiltrate stormwater better and provide critical habitat for grassland birds.
- 6. Cut back on lawn fertilizers and pesticides.**
Much of the fertilizer applied in the spring flows directly into the local creeks because the grass is not ready to absorb it. Use a mulching mower set at 3 inches to create a healthy, *organic* lawn. Fertilize only in the fall!
- 7. Disconnect your downspout from the storm drain.**
Rainwater from your roof is just as damaging to creeks and streams as run-off from a parking lot. Let your yard help filter out impurities and infiltrate stormwater back into your aquifer.
- 8. Convert a corner of your yard to a rain garden.**
A wet area in your yard can be a nuisance or an amenity, depending on how it's managed. Use native plants that like occasional "wet feet" and create a focal point.
- 9. Keep your paved surfaces to a minimum.**
Patios and parking spaces can be created with attractive *pervious* materials that allow stormwater infiltration to the soils below.
- 10. Maintain your septic tank.**
Septic tank maintenance isn't sexy but with thousands of on-lot septic systems in our communities, proper maintenance is critical to protecting groundwater and surface water from contamination.