

# STORMWATER & STREAMS

Our local streams and floodplains provide important ecological functions and services that benefit us for FREE. But polluted stormwater runoff can degrade and even eliminate these free services. When it rains (or snow/ice melts) the runoff transports any contaminant that it touches such as oil, salt, gas, trash, food residue, brake dust, bacteria, heat from hot pavement and so on, to the local stream degrading the stream's water quality and aquatic habitat. An increase in bank erosion from runoff that was accelerated by pavement, a decrease in oxygen, and an increase in bacteria and water temperature are a few of the resulting problems. Urban development can also eliminate or damage nature's ability to provide these beneficial services through habitat encroachment.

## FREE services streams & floodplains provide us!

**Property flood protection** A floodplain protects properties by giving floodwater the room it needs to spread out near the stream instead of forcing it to rise onto your property.

**Air purification** Trees and vegetation in the natural habitat intake CO<sub>2</sub> from the air and convert it back to clean air.

**Water purification** A stream and floodplain system act as natural filters allowing runoff to slow down and infiltrate the soil beneath filtering out nutrients and sediment. It also allows the runoff to be absorbed and filtered by the vegetation. This free way of purifying the water can save us money on water treatment costs.

**Free storm sewer** Keeping stream systems healthy provides us a free and natural way to drain and convey rainwater instead of paying to have a storm sewer built to handle the runoff.

**Groundwater recharge** Streams and floodplains allow rain to recharge groundwater reserves giving us clean drinking water.

**Free recreation** They are also beautiful, provide wildlife habitat and are great for hiking, hunting, fishing, canoeing, watching wildlife, and many other outdoor activities.



## How you can help the streams!

- Plant trees wherever practical
- Vegetate all bare areas of your yard to prevent erosion
- Use rain barrels to capture the water for later use
- Build a rain garden to let rain slowly filter through your soil
- Get a soil test to see if you need to fertilize
- Reduce the amount of fertilizer and pesticide you use
- Compost your yard waste to reduce nutrient run off
- Recycle car fluids and pick up pet waste
- Use eco-friendly salt or sand to be safe in the winter
- Wash your car and lawnmower in the grass
- Don't mow up to the stream's edge, leave a buffer of taller vegetation between the stream and your yard
- Use vegetation such as young tree stakes instead of concrete or rock to prevent your stream banks from eroding, and don't alter the stream
- Chemically dechlorinate your swimming pool water before discharging it into the storm drain or better yet, use it to water your yard
- Run your gutter water through your grass and not down the storm drain