



think blue

clean water starts with you!

Storm Water Protection in Maine

Clean water is one of Maine's most precious natural and economic resources. Our health depends on it. And while summer is the time that water is most on our minds, protecting Maine's groundwater, wetlands, rivers, and ocean is something we need to think about year-round.

Fall is a time when Mainers undertake lots of yard projects to get ready for winter – raking leaves, last minute gardening and fertilizing lawns. It's also the time of year when we get a lot of rain. And whenever it rains, water flows across and out of our yards. It flows directly into ditches or storm drains. And these ditches and stormdrains are not part of our water treatment system.

As soon as fertilizer washes off your lawn or garden and enters a ditch or storm drain, it's no longer fertilizer - it's pollution. That's because items such as eroding soil, pesticides, fertilizers, pet waste, litter, household chemicals, oil and automobile fluids that find their way into ditches and storm drains go untreated into our waters.

With that in mind, here are ten tips for making sure you aren't contributing to Maine's water pollution problem this fall and winter.

- Don't rake leaves into the gutter or ditch. Keep these drainage ways clean. Before beginning an outdoor project, locate the nearest ditch, drainage swale, or storm drain and take action to protect it from debris.
- Don't leave bare soil; stabilize it by planting grasses, trees and shrubs. Maintain driveways and ditches so they are not washed away in big fall or spring storms. Eroding soil is the most common pollutant to Maine's waters.
- Before you fertilize, check to see what your lawn needs. Do a soil test, available from your local Cooperative Extension Office. You may only need lime. Think of the time and money that will save. Apply the minimum amount required and don't apply if the forecast calls for heavy rain.
- If you have insect or plant pests, try natural, safe alternatives first. Use pesticides as a last resort. Spot treat problem areas only.
- Pick up pet waste and dispose of it in the toilet or in the trash. Pet waste contains harmful bacteria that pollute our water
- Dispose of all used paints, toxic cleaners and solvents through a hazardous waste collection program on October 8th from 7 am to 10 am at the Transfer Station.
- Our driveways, parking lots and roads can be a big source of water pollution

due to dripping oils, grease and gas from our vehicles! Routinely check engines and motors for leaks and keep them tuned up.

- Like automobiles, the engines from snowmobiles and snow throwers also require periodic oil changes. Take the oil and the oil filter to the transfer station used oil collection site. If you spill fluids, contain quickly with rags or kitty litter and then dispose in the trash.
- If you have a swimming pool, drain it only after testing the water with your swimming pool test kit to make sure that chlorine levels are undetectable. Chlorine can be toxic to the plant and animal life in our waterways.

We all need to do our part as Maine residents to help make our beaches and bays, wetlands and other waters free of pollution. Share this information with your neighbors and family. The steps outlined in this article aren't hard and don't take a lot of effort or time, but every little bit helps. By working together we will make a difference in reducing water pollution in Maine. Clean Water starts with you!