

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



Stormwater

What is stormwater?

Stormwater is water generated from precipitation events such as rain, snow and ice melt. During a typical rain event (in natural settings), stormwater can infiltrate into the soil to recharge groundwater or be stored on the surface to evaporate. Stormwater runoff is the water that has not infiltrated into the soil and flows downhill to surface waters such as lakes, rivers, and streams. In urban settings, the large areas of impervious surfaces increase stormwater runoff.

Why is protecting the quality of our stormwater important?

Stormwater that flows over impervious surfaces such as paved streets, parking lots, driveways, and rooftops does not get an opportunity to infiltrate into the soil. When stormwater flows over these surfaces it picks up many pollutants (litter, chemicals, sediment, etc.). The stormwater runoff eventually flows into a surface water body depositing all the pollutants it has collected, causing harm to water quality and local wildlife.

Isn't stormwater treated?

No. In Oklahoma stormwater flows directly to local surface waters and does not go to a facility for treatment. Anything that goes into the storm drain will eventually make its way to a river or lake.

For more information, contact:

**Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality
Water Quality Division**

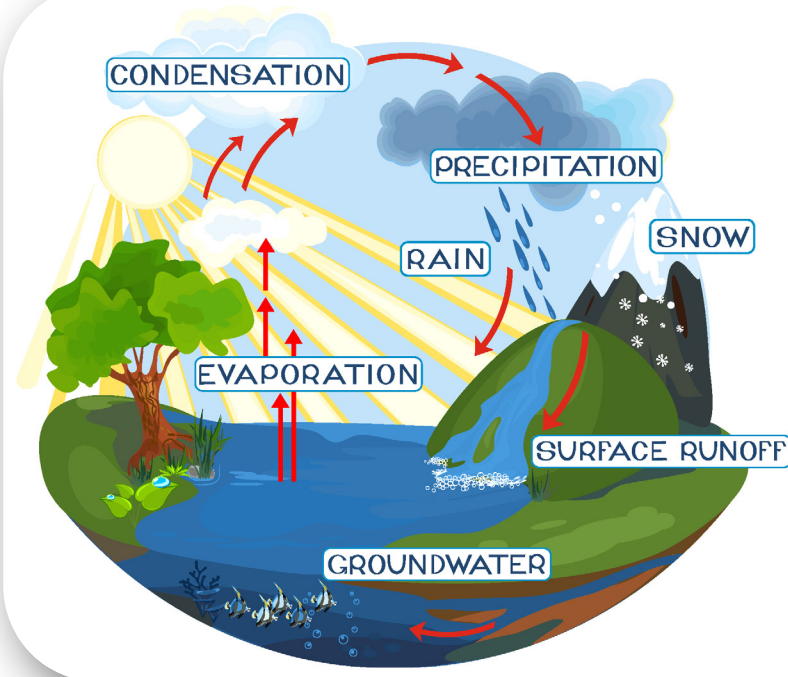
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What is Stormwater

What can I do at home?

Keep an eye on storm drains in your neighborhood. If you see evidence of spills or a buildup of trash, paint cans, or other hazardous materials, please contact your local municipality or DEQ via our 24-hour Environmental Complaint Hotline at (800) 522-0206, or our online complaint form at <https://www.deq.ok.gov/environmental-complaints/>.

Homeowners can also help by using rain barrels or cisterns, building rain gardens, and even picking up litter and pet waste. While these practices may not seem to have an effect at the household level, the cumulative effect of these practices throughout Oklahoma can have a huge impact on both stormwater quality and quantity.

Rain Barrels and Cisterns

Rain barrels and cisterns are a great way for homeowners to harvest rainwater. By connecting your downspout to a rain barrel, rather than allowing the stormwater to flow into the street, you can collect that water for later use. This will reduce the amount of water settling around the foundation of your home. Additionally, the collected water can be used to supplement irrigation, rinse garden tools or water your compost pile. This will not only help reduce the amount of pollution ending up in our lakes and rivers but it will also help lower your water bill.

Rain Gardens

Rain gardens divert stormwater into an attractive garden that allows stormwater to percolate slowly into the surrounding soil. Rain gardens are specifically designed to collect, filter and absorb stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces such as your roof or driveway. Rain gardens can be customized with a variety of decorative grasses and drought resistant plants to match your taste and existing lawn. In addition, they can provide valuable habitat for birds, pollinators and other beneficial wildlife. Rain gardens should be designed to infiltrate water within 24 hours to discourage mosquito larva.

Pet Waste

Pet waste may seem like a fairly innocuous byproduct of our furry friends but it has the potential to cause serious issues in our waterways. As it decomposes, pet waste can add harmful bacteria and nutrients to stormwater runoff and subsequently our local surface waters. Excess bacteria and nutrients can make waters unswimmable or unfishable by causing human illness or causing excessive algae and weed growth. Excess nutrients can also make waters murky, green or smelly. The solution is as simple as carrying around baggies to pick up your pet's waste for proper disposal.

