

## What is a watershed?

A watershed is a place where water moves through a network of drainage pathways, both underground and on the surface, eventually draining into an outlet. The City of Rockville is home to three watersheds -- Cabin John Creek, Watts Branch and Rock Creek. Some watersheds are large like the Chesapeake Bay or Potomac River, and some are small like Rock Creek.

## Why is it important to protect watersheds?

As Rockville's population grows, the amount of impervious surfaces do too. Before any development occurred, much of the rain and melting snow soaked into the soil. Water that did not soak into the soil evaporated, was absorbed by plants or traveled slowly over land to streams, wetlands and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay.

- Today driveways, roofs, roads and other impervious surfaces – those that water cannot penetrate – alter the water cycle, causing rapid runoff. The fast flowing water picks up pollutants and flows untreated into gutters, inlets and storm drains.
- In addition to debris and other pollutants entering storm drains, the fast flowing water causes stream banks to erode dumping sediment into waterways.
- Fertilizers, soils and pesticides also are carried from lawns and sports fields through the storm drain system.

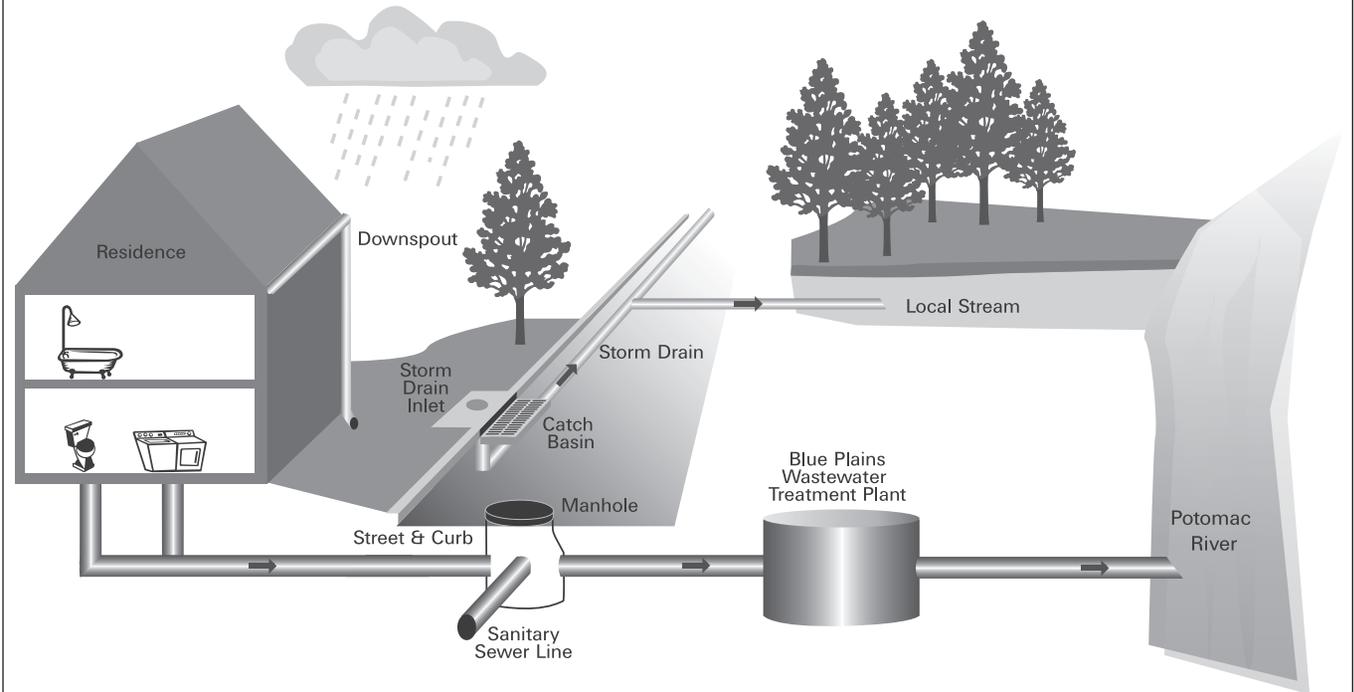
All of Rockville's streams flow into the Potomac River, which provides drinking water to neighbors located downstream from Rockville. Additionally, these streams are home to plants, insects and other animals.

## How can I help?

What can you do at home, work or school to protect Rockville's watersheds?

- Never dump anything down a storm drain. Water in storm drains is not treated; it flows directly into streams. Do not put trash,

## Are the contents of storm drains filtered or treated?



## Sanitary Sewer vs. Storm Drain Do You Know the Difference?

### Sanitary Sewer

The sanitary sewer collects wastewater generated from indoor plumbing (i.e., toilets, sinks, showers, washing machines, etc.) of residential, commercial and industrial properties and conveys it to a wastewater treatment plant. The City's sanitary sewers flow to Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant, where nutrients, sediment and pollution are removed from the water before being discharged into the Potomac River.

### Storm Drain

The storm drain is a system of inlets, pipes and swales that drain excess rain and ground water from impervious surfaces (paved streets, parking lots, sidewalks, roofs) to prevent or minimize flooding. The stormwater runoff collected by the storm drain is discharged to local streams **untreated**. The water then flows to the Potomac River and eventually to the Chesapeake Bay.

chemicals or pet waste in a storm drain.

- Pick up pet waste and dispose of it in the toilet, or place it in a bag and into a trash receptacle.
- Do not litter. Litter travels through the storm drains and into streams.
- Avoid disposing of fats, oils and greases (FOGs) in sinks or toilets. Improper disposal can lead to clogs that decrease drain capacity or cause

blockages that can result in sewer backups into streams. Remember to put all used fats, oils or greases into a disposable bottle or can, and dispose of it with trash.

- Practice good winter habits. Shovel early and often, and apply salt sparingly. Consider calcium chloride (CaCl<sub>2</sub>) instead of sodium chloride (NaCl). Avoid kitty litter and ashes.

Practice on-site stormwater management activities and eco-friendly gardening:

- Install a rain barrel to capture rainwater run-off from your roof and use the water during dry times.
- Utilize Conservation Landscaping techniques to reduce the size of your lawn in favor of deeper rooting plants. Deeper root systems help recharge the ground water and keep stormwater run-off from rushing into streams. Conservation Landscaping utilize native plants. Because these plants have evolved in local conditions and with area predators, they are heartier and better equipped to defend themselves against diseases, insects and other natural pressures associated with this region and require fewer fertilizers and pesticides.
- Test your soil and reduce the use pesticides and fertilizers.
- Grasscycle. Leave grass clippings on lawns, as they provide a natural source of nitrogen and therefore reduce the need for fertilizers to keep the grass green. The chemicals in many fertilizers get washed away by rain and into the storm drains, thus causing serious water pollution.

### Get involved:

- ✓ **Adopt-A-Stream:** If your homeowners association, scout troop or other organization is interested keeping a stream clean, you can adopt one. An adopting group agrees to hold two stream cleanup events per year – one in the spring and one in the fall. The City of Rockville will provide trash bags, gloves and other materials, and will collect the debris from the cleanup.
- ✓ **Storm Drain Marker Program:** Help spread the word about preventing water pollution by signing up for the Storm Drain Marker Program. Storm drain markers are small, colorful signs that are attached to the sidewalk on top of storm drains. They serve to educate and remind people that anything dumped into the storm

drains will flow directly into streams and creeks.

- ✓ **Be a Pollution Detective:** Call the Pollution Hotline to report pollution or illegal dumping at 240-314-8348. Rockville's Water Quality Protection Ordinance allows officials to take corrective actions and enforce laws to protect Rockville streams.
- ✓ **City of Rockville Save Our Streams (SOS) Program:** Rockville Save Our Streams (SOS) volunteers are the first line of defense for City watersheds. By volunteering to monitor aquatic insects, chemical contaminants and physical appearance you will help protect Rockville's streams.
- ✓ **Be a Weed Warrior:** Watershed health does not end at the stream banks – a healthy riparian buffer is also necessary. Weed Warriors are trained to focus on the worst invasive plants in Montgomery County and are taught proper methods for manual pulling and clean up strategies.

For the most up-to-date information, visit the Volunteer Section at [www.rockvillemd.gov/environment](http://www.rockvillemd.gov/environment).

Thanks to the Watershed Committee of the Environment Commission for its guidance on this brochure. For more information about the Commission, visit [www.rockvillemd.gov/government/commissions/ec/index.html](http://www.rockvillemd.gov/government/commissions/ec/index.html).



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# City of Rockville

## From Creeks to the Chesapeake: Protecting Rockville's Watersheds

*We all value clean drinking water and safe recreational waterways, please help to protect the natural environment.*



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• watershed protection • watershed protection •