

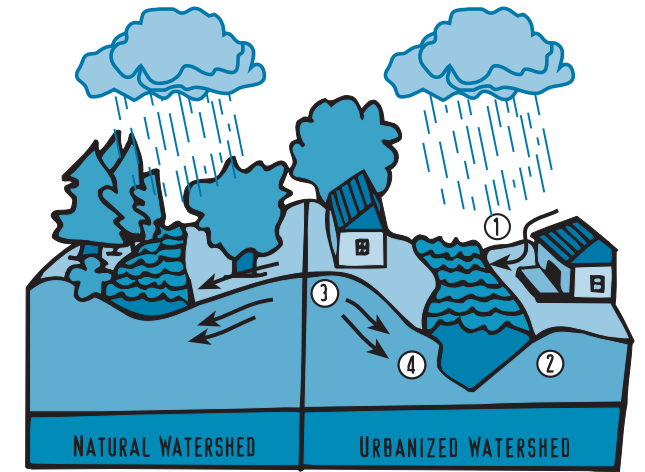
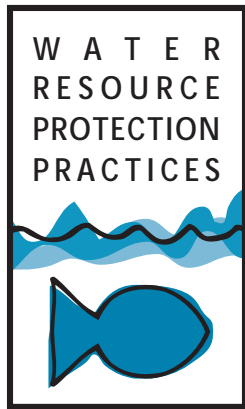
# HOW DOES URBANIZATION CHANGE A WATERSHED?

Urbanization (or development) has a great effect on local water resources. It changes how water flows in the watershed and what flows in the water. Both surface and ground water flow are changed.

As a watershed becomes developed, trees, shrubs and other plants are replaced with impervious surfaces (roads, rooftops, parking lots and other hard surfaces that do not allow stormwater to soak into the ground). Without the plants to store and slow the flow of stormwater, the rate of stormwater runoff is increased. Less stormwater is able to soak into the ground because sidewalks, roads, parking lots and rooftops block this infiltration. This means a greater volume of water reaches the waterway faster and less of that water is able to infiltrate to ground water. This in turn leads to more flooding after storms but reduced flow in streams and rivers during dry periods. The reduced amount of infiltrating water can lower ground water levels, which in turn can stress local waterways that depend on steadier flows of water.

In the stream, more erosion of stream banks and scouring of channels will occur due to volume increase. This in turn degrades habitat for plant and animal life that depend on clear water. Sediment from eroded stream banks clogs the gills of fish and blocks light needed for plants. The sediment settles to fill in stream channels, lakes and reservoirs. This also increases flooding and the need for dredging to clear streams or lakes for boating.

NJ Department of Environmental Protection  
 Division of Watershed Management  
 PO Box 418  
 Trenton, NJ 08625-0418  
 609-984-0058

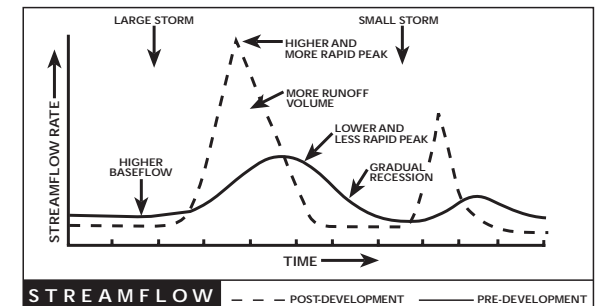
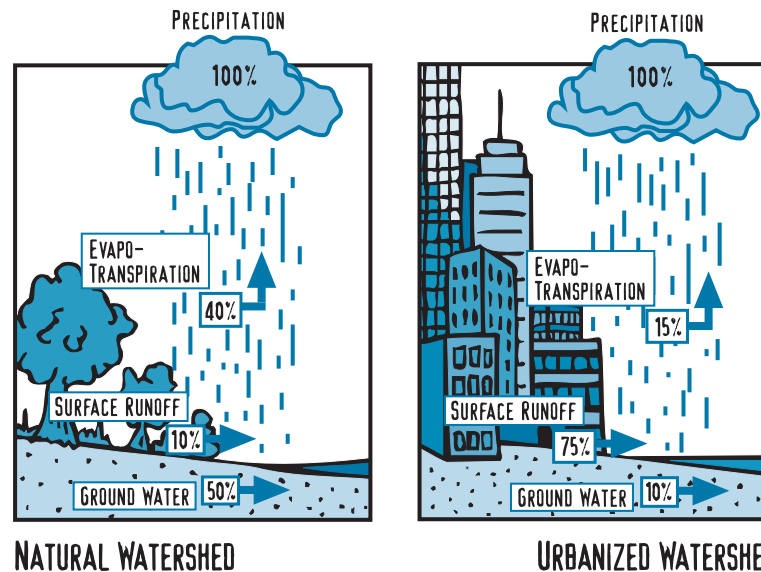


- ① INCREASED RUNOFF
- ② STREAMBANK EROSION
- ③ DECREASED INFILTRATION
- ④ DECREASED GROUND WATER FLOW TO STREAM

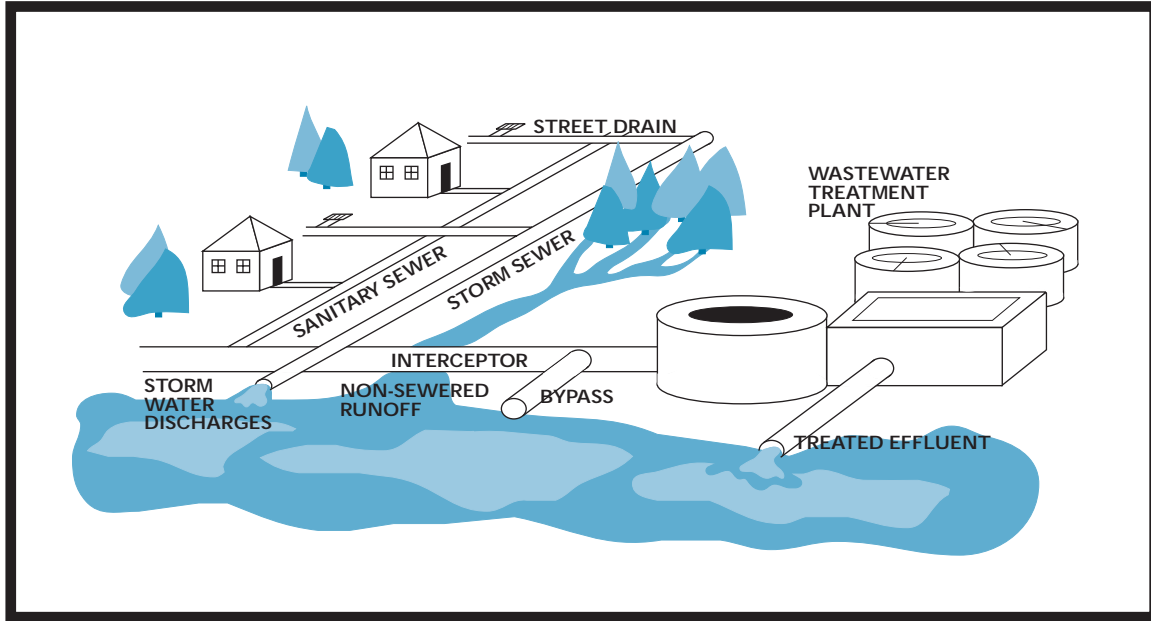
In addition to the high flows caused by urbanization, the increased runoff also contains increased contaminants. These include litter, cigarette butts and other debris from sidewalks and streets, motor oil poured into storm sewers, heavy metals from brake linings, settled air pollutants from car exhaust and pesticides and fertilizers from lawn care. These contaminants reach local waterways quickly after a storm.

State of New Jersey  
 Christine Todd Whitman, Governor  
 Department of Environmental Protection  
 Robert C. Shinn, Jr., Commissioner

Printed on Recycled Paper  
 Reprinted March 1999



## STORMWATER SEWER BASICS



Stormwater flows into the stormwater system through a storm drain. These are frequently located along the curbs of parking lots and roadways. The grate that prevents larger objects from flowing into the storm sewer system is called a catch basin. Once below ground, the stormwater flows through pipes which lead to an outfall where the stormwater enters a stream, river or lake. In most areas of New Jersey, the stormwater sewer goes directly to local waterway without any treatment.

In some areas of the state, the outfall may lead to a stormwater management basin. These basins control the flow of stormwater and can also improve water quality, depending on how they are designed. These basins are frequently seen in newer commercial and residential areas.

In some older urban areas of the state, the stormwater and sanitary sewer systems may be combined. Here both stormwater and sewage from households and businesses travel together in the same pipes. Both stormwater and sewage are treated at sewage treatment plants except during heavy rains. During these occasions, both the stormwater and untreated sewage exceed the capacity of the treatment plant and this overflow is directed into local waterways.

## PROTECTING STORMWATER SEWERS

In the first rush of water from a rainstorm, much of the debris and other pollutants that had settled on the land surface and in the stormwater sewer since the last storm will be picked up and carried into the local stream. This can significantly add to water quality problems. It is therefore important to protect the stormwater system from sources of pollution.

The following should never be dumped down storm drains, road gutters or catch basins: motor oil, pet waste, grass trimmings, leaves, debris and hazardous chemicals of any kind. Anything dumped in our stormwater collection systems will be carried into our streams.

## CONTROLLING STORMWATER FLOW

Managing stormwater to reduce the impact of development on local watersheds and aquifers relies on minimizing the disruption in the natural flow - both quality and quantity of stormwater. By designing with nature, the impact of urbanization can be greatly reduced.

This can be accomplished by following these principles:

- minimizing impervious surfaces;
- maximizing natural areas or areas of dense vegetation;
- structural stormwater controls such as stormwater management basins; and
- practicing pollution prevention by avoiding contact between stormwater and pollutants.

## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Managing stormwater in your own backyard is important. As an integral part of the watershed you live in, what you do in your backyard makes a difference. Here are some examples of what you can do at home:

- 1** Reduce impervious surfaces by using pavers or bricks rather than concrete for a driveway or sidewalk.
- 2** Divert rain from paved surfaces onto grass to permit gradual infiltration.
- 3** Landscape with the environment in mind. Choose the appropriate plants, shrubs and trees for the soil in your yard; don't select plants that need lots of watering (which increases surface runoff), fertilizers or pesticides.
- 4** Maintain your car properly so that motor oil, brake linings, exhaust and other fluids don't contribute to water pollution.
- 5** Keep stormwater clean. Never dump litter, motor oil, animal waste, or leaves into storm drains or catch basins.