

What's in Your Stormwater?

What is Stormwater?

Stormwater runoff occurs when rainfall, snowmelt, or drainage from irrigation flows over land, and then drains into surface water bodies and groundwater. Stormwater runoff from urban areas can be contaminated with pollutants from fertilizers, pesticides, litter, chemical spills, automobile fluids, deicing salts, pet waste and leaking septic systems. Urban runoff is the largest pollution source responsible for the impairment of our wetlands, rivers, lakes, and ponds. Stormwater runoff from natural areas is also an important source of recharge to the groundwater replenishing groundwater wells and supplying base flow to lakes, ponds, springs, brooks and tributaries.

How is Stormwater Management Regulated?

In 1990, the EPA promulgated Phase I of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act to regulate runoff from "medium" and "large" municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s), construction activities disturbing 5 acres of land or greater, and ten categories of industrial activities. While Phase I was a good beginning, it addressed a small segment of the problem. In 1999, the EPA instituted the Phase II Rule, extending coverage of the NPDES stormwater program to certain "small" MS4s and construction activities disturbing 1 or more acres of land. Webster is classified by EPA as one of these "small" MS4s.

Under the NPDES Phase II rule, Webster is required to develop and implement a Stormwater Management Program that reduces stormwater pollution, protects the water quality of Webster's lakes, ponds, rivers and wetlands and satisfies the requirements of the Clean Water Act. The Program is required to include the following six components.

- (1) Public Education and Outreach: Conduct public education activities about the impacts that everyone has on stormwater runoff and on water quality.
- (2) Public Participation and Involvement: Provide opportunities for public participation and involvement in stormwater management.
- (3) Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination: Develop and implement a plan to detect and eliminate prohibited discharges to the storm drain system.
- (4) Construction Site Runoff Control: Develop, implement, and enforce an erosion and sediment control program for construction activities.
- (5) Post-Construction Runoff Control: Develop, implement, and enforce a program to address discharges of post-construction stormwater runoff from new development and redevelopment areas.

(6) Pollution Prevention: Develop, implement, and maintain a program to prevent or reduce runoff of stormwater pollution from municipal operations.

Since 2009 EPA has issued over half a million dollars in fines to Massachusetts communities for non-compliance with the current NPDES MS4 permit.

What is Webster doing to Manage Stormwater Pollution?

Webster has recently embarked on a planning process to develop and implement a town-wide Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) in order to fully comply with its current NPDES permit and to mitigate the impacts of stormwater runoff within the Town. Webster has established a Stormwater Management Committee and retained the firm of Tighe & Bond, Inc. to direct this effort.

Webster has long recognized the importance of protecting its natural resources, and has established regulations including the Conservation and Lake Watershed Protection Districts to provide an added level of protection for key natural features, such as Webster Lake. The Planning Board and Conservation Commission review stormwater management for certain projects that require Site Plan Review or an Order of Conditions. The good news is that these regulations protect a significant portion of the town's most susceptible areas. However, additional regulations are required to comply with the town's NPDES MS4 permit.

In order to comply with Webster's NPDES MS4 permit, the Stormwater Committee has developed draft bylaws that are on the October 15, 2012 Town Meeting warrant. The bylaws address soil erosion during construction, stormwater runoff control for new development and redevelopment projects and management of non-stormwater discharges (also called illicit discharges). Authority to implement the bylaws would be granted to the Planning Board and DPW. Webster is required to enact these bylaws to be in compliance with its NPDES MS4 permit. If Webster does not approve these bylaws, the Town is at risk of fines from EPA.

Keeping the citizens of Webster informed throughout the planning process is of utmost importance to the Committee and the Webster Board of Selectmen. In addition to monthly meetings and updates to the Board of Selectmen, the Committee is planning a series of public meetings to solicit input on the SWMP, the proposed bylaws and other aspects of the plan. The first public meeting will be held on October 9th, 2012 at 7:30 pm at Webster Town Hall concerning the proposed bylaws on the October 15th Town Meeting Warrant.

For more information, please contact JT Gaucher, DPW Director, at 508-949-3865, or email jtgaucher@webster-ma.gov.