



Richland Soil and Water Conservation District

Conservation, Education and Stewardship
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2021 MS4 Theme – Only Rain Down the Drain

In 2021, the Richland Soil and Water Conservation District promoted watershed awareness and protection strategies which will increase the public's knowledge of the impacts of pollution that does not come from a specific location. "Only Rain Down the Drain" is an educational campaign geared toward the public and homeowners with a message that connects the important role of keeping stormwater drains clean. There are many reasons why we want to keep our streams clean in Richland County, not only does it look aesthetically pleasing, but we rely on this water for everything we do. Taking a shower, washing the dishes, and getting a fresh drink of water all counts on everyone working together to keep our streams clean. Richland County has many watersheds. All the water that goes down our storm drains or into ditches eventually leads from one of our watersheds in Richland County to inland bodies of water like Lake Erie and the Ohio River. Lake Erie and the other 4 great lakes are very important, not only to Ohio but to the rest of the world because they hold more than 20% of the world's freshwater. When we let pollutants go down the storm drains, we can alter ecosystems and be part of what helps to create the harmful algal blooms happening on our great lakes and streams. The most common pollutants are fertilizers for your lawn, natural substances like leaves, and pet waste. The fertilizers can contain high amounts of chemicals like phosphorus that helps harmful algal blooms grow and cause dead zones; places where animals and organisms cannot live. Natural substances can cause blockages that can lead to damage to stormwater systems which in turn can cost taxpayers money.

There are many things that we can do to help our stormwater systems run as smooth as possible. Here at Richland SWCD, we offer soil tests that can help you fertilize your lawn properly and save you money on expensive chemicals your lawn does not need. You can also water your lawn or garden with free water stored in a rain barrel which can also be purchased from us. For leaves, pet waste and even kitchen scraps you can compost these things in your backyard and have free fertilizer that make your plants and soil healthier. For bare spots around your yard, it is best to plant something there, for example grass or a non-

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invasive species of plant or, perhaps we could help you build a rain garden. The last and easiest thing you can do is regular inspections on your septic systems and to check pipes coming off any buildings on your property to make sure that everything is running properly and not backing up. You can also check stormwater catch basins on your property and make sure that only rain is going down the drain!

How to Care for Septic Systems

1. If you are on a septic system, have it inspected and pumped regularly.
2. If your system is not working properly, they can “overflow” or “leak” effluent into our natural waterways without even seeing it.
3. Effluent can contain e-coli and high levels of nitrates, which can be passed into our drinking water and potentially cause outbreaks and cause algal blooms in local ponds and lakes causing fish kills.
4. Untreated wastewater can also contain fungi that can cause skin eye and respiratory infections.
5. If your septic system is not maintained as it is recommended by the manufacturer, you could be causing long term damage to your septic system that may end up costing more to replace than it would have if it were maintained properly.
6. Untreated wastewater is a major health concern and can cause many human diseases.
7. There may be as many as 100 types of different viruses in raw effluent, but they are difficult to identify. (source: gchd.org)

Storm Drains and Roadside Ditches

Storm Drains and roadside ditches eventually lead to our inland lakes, Lake Erie or the Ohio River and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico so we want to do everything we can to keep them clear of debris, litter, and pollutants.

1. Never dump anything down a storm drain or into a ditch.
2. Debris and pollutants can damage storm drains, back up natural waters and be very costly for repairs or clean-up.
3. It can cause flooding and back-ups.
4. Natural materials like grass and leaves should never be swept or dumped into a storm drain or storm ditch. They produce extra nutrients as they break down that pollute our waterways.
5. Remove pesticides and lawn fertilizer from hard surfaces with a broom or other dry method so they do not get washed into our storm drains.
6. Was your vehicles on your lawn, this will allow the dirt and soap a chance to soak into your lawn before getting washed down a storm drain. The surfactants that are in car wash soap can cause harm to aquatic life, polluting the water and endangering human health.
7. Make sure you take petroleum based products like used motor oil, antifreeze and other vehicle fluids to be properly disposed of at a waste facility made for those types of wastes. Make sure you take pool chemicals, herbicides, paints and medications to the proper facilities to be disposed of properly. All of these can cause major damage to our environment if not disposed of properly.

Direct Downspouts Away from Paved Surfaces

1. When the pavement is hot this will help to decrease the water temperature. The decreased water temperature will be better for the fish, wildlife and other organisms that live in our waterways. Cooler water also has more oxygen in it.
2. Auto chemicals that are sitting on your driveway, roads or sidewalk can find its way to our local waterways and be potentially fatal to fish and wildlife.
3. Road salt that is applied during the winter months can increase the salinity of freshwater streams. Once this salt is on your vehicle you should take it to a carwash where the wastewater is treated rather than going directly into a storm drain.
4. Downspouts without a proper outlet like a splash blocks or rip rap could cause major erosion concerns.
5. Chloride can contaminate drinking water in which there is no treatment for this chemical.
6. Check cars for leaks and recycle motor oil.

Related Links

- [Only Rain Down the Drain introduction video](#)
- [Only Rain Down the Drain demonstration video](#)
- [Learn about the Water Cycle, Runoff, and more in this interactive video](#) from The Eastern Washington Stormwater Outreach project
- [Learn about Rain Barrels](#)
- [Learn about Impervious Areas](#)
- [Learn about EPA Best Practices](#)

To find out more about Only Rain Down the Drain and the MS4 program, contact Dan at herrold.dan@richlandswcd.net or 419-747-8077