

## Why Should I Care About Stormwater?

We are all part of a watershed. Watersheds are land areas that drain to the nearest body of water. For example, if you are in western Pennsylvania, you are part of the Ohio River watershed, while eastern Pennsylvania lands may ultimately drain to the Chesapeake Bay. Smaller local creeks and streams also eventually drain to a larger local water body.

- **Flooding**  
When excess water has nowhere to go, flooding can impact property and cause damage to land and structures. Flooding can also be a public safety issue that affects entire communities.
- **Pollution and Health Impacts**  
Stormwater picks up anything that is on the ground and carries it along with it. Animal waste, chemicals, pesticides, oil, and sediment – all end up in waterways and potentially in our sources of drinking water.
- **Streambank Erosion**  
Uncontrolled stormwater can cause streambank erosion, leaving bare soil and exposing tree roots. This can lead to property damage and cause issues with streambank stability.
- **Sedimentation**  
Erosion and runoff, can also lead to sedimentation. Sedimentation of waterways from runoff causes changes to aquatic habitats. Undesirable plant growth increases, water becomes more turbid or cloudy, which leads to disruption of aquatic ecosystems. Sedimentation also fills in waterways, which can increase the flooding potential.
- **Impacts to Groundwater Recharge**  
If stormwater isn't sinking into the ground it can affect recharge of groundwater resources. This can affect water levels in drinking water wells as well as impacting levels in surface water.
- **Impacts to Recreational Opportunities**  
Stormwater runoff can cause polluted waterways which can lead to restrictions on boating, swimming, and fishing in recreational areas.

Making changes to how stormwater is managed can go a long way to reduce negative impacts. Even small actions by individual homeowners like using a rain barrel, choosing permeable landscaping surfaces, or installing a rain garden can make a difference. Stormwater affects everyone!

If you have additional questions about stormwater, or you are just interested in learning more, you can find a full series of videos and articles in the [Penn State Extension Stormwater Basics series](#) .