

# Storm Sewer's Regional Impact



Did you ever wonder where the water goes when you pour it down the drain? Water discarded through household drains flows through the sanitary sewer system to one of the City's wastewater treatment plants. Storm drains on the other hand flow directly to receiving waters such as lakes, rivers, ponds, creeks or wetland areas. In the City of Crystal Lake, storm water flows through the storm drain to Crystal Lake, Three Oaks Recreation Area, Veterans Acres pond, Crystal Creek, the Kishwaukee Valley River or other wetlands. Each of these areas supports their own habitat and wildlife, which is why it is very important to be cautious about what goes down the storm drain.

**How the City Helps** – The proper maintenance of the storm sewer system is a priority for the Public Works Department. Storm drains are regularly cleared of debris and trash. Street sweeping efforts are routinely conducted to keep roads safe for motorists, but also to prevent foreign objects from flowing into the storm sewer. In addition, the City has been using anti-icing alternatives in addition to salt use in the winter. Plow trucks are now equipped with liquid components that are less harmful to the environment than salt. While salt continues to be the most effective method of de-icing, the use of liquid components greatly reduces the volume of salt needed to provide safe driving conditions for motorists.

**How You Can Help** – There are a number of things that an ordinary resident can do to help maintain and preserve natural waters and wetlands for years to come:

Pick up litter. Litter and debris often clog a storm sewer, preventing water from reaching its destination. Worse yet, litter travels through the storm sewer to collector streams or waters and has a significant impact on the natural habitat.

Use non-phosphate, low soap concentrations when washing your car in the driveway. Commercial car washes dispose of their used water into the sanitary sewer, but residents who wash their cars in the driveway often let the dirty, soapy water flow down the storm sewer.

Cleanup after pets. This isn't just a neighborly courtesy. When it rains, animal waste is washed to the storm sewer, and ultimately finds its way to natural waters or wetlands where it contaminates the habitat.

Properly dispose of chemicals. When working on your car or disposing of household chemicals, contact your local recycling facilities, auto shop, or even hardware stores to see if they accept old or unused chemicals. Don't pour them into your yard or wash them down the driveway. Please contact the McHenry County Defenders at (815) 338-0393 to find out when hazardous waste collections will be available to you.

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Storm sewers are important to the quality of life that Crystal Lake residents enjoy. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that the impacts of our actions are not felt downstream.

For more information on storm sewers and what you can do locally to help maintain waterways and wetlands across the region, visit the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's website at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/> or contact Rick Valent, Crystal Lake Sewer & Lifts Superintendent at [rvalent@crystallake.org](mailto:rvalent@crystallake.org).