



New report helps citizens fight stormwater pollution in their communities

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Protect Clean Water and Healthy Streams in your Community

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Washington, DC — Stormwater – that dirty, oily runoff from streets and parking lots that contaminates local streams -- is a leading cause of water pollution in Midwestern states and around the country. Today, American Rivers and Midwest Environmental Advocates released a new report, “Local Water Policy Innovation: A Road Map for Community Based Stormwater Solutions” to help citizens tackle this pervasive problem and ensure clean water in their communities.

“Polluted stormwater is a huge problem nationally, degrading America’s streams and rivers,” said Gary Belan, Director of American Rivers’ Clean Water Program. “However, it’s a problem that can be solved at the local level by citizens and community leaders alike. This report gives people the tools to make a difference.”

The threats posed by stormwater are caused locally, seen locally, and are best addressed locally. Stormwater pollution begins when natural landscapes are altered, changing the way water moves over the land. Hard structures such as parking lots and rooftops prevent water from naturally soaking into the ground. The rain water picks up pollution from streets and runs off into local streams. A typical 10-acre parking lot will create 270,000 gallons of polluted stormwater runoff after only one inch of rain. Our paved surfaces and rooftops generate 16-times more runoff than the fields they replace, increasing the frequency and severity of flash flooding. Due to sprawling impervious surfaces, many urban areas now lose between 300 and 690 billion gallons of water annually that would otherwise be filtered back into groundwater and drinking water supplies.

This report explains how to improve stormwater policies in local communities and capture the attention of policy makers. Local governments already have the processes in place to ensure good stormwater practices with zoning districts, site plan reviews, zoning ordinances, and Comprehensive Plans – now it’s time to act.

By following the steps and guidelines in this report, citizens will be on their way to reducing stormwater pollution and making lasting changes in policy that preserve the natural landscape so many enjoy in local parks and at local waterways.

“Stormwater is regulated under the federal Clean Water Act,” says Karen Schapiro, Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates. “Enforcing stormwater discharges under that

law is tricky. It requires vigilance and oversight, which state and local governments don't always have the time and money to do. Citizens have an opportunity to be advocates for the environment by watching and reporting stormwater pollution in their communities. This report provides information to assist them in this work."

"Clean water is something we can not live without" adds Gary Belan. "Improving our stormwater management is an essential part of ensuring clean water for our communities. By managing our water more wisely we can ensure enough clean water for our rivers, wildlife and for future generations."

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American Rivers is the leading national organization standing up for healthy rivers so communities can thrive. American Rivers protects and restores America's rivers for the benefit of people, wildlife and nature. Founded in 1973, American Rivers has more than 65,000 members and supporters nationwide, with offices in Washington, DC and the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, California and Northwest regions. Visit www.AmericanRivers.org

Midwest Environmental Advocates is Wisconsin's first and only public interest environmental law center. MEA provides legal and technical support to grassroots organizations that are fighting for clean air, clean water, and environmental justice. See www.midwestadvocates.org for more information.