



Water Quality: A Citizen's Guide



Adopt Your Catch Basin

Catch basins are storm sewer inlets that filter out debris such as leaves and litter. They are typically located next to street curbs or in the rear yards of residential areas. It is important to maintain catch basins to prevent storm sewer blockages and minimize the amount of pollutants entering storm sewers. Storm sewers usually discharge directly into streams. Clogged catch basins can also cause water to pond along streets and in yards. This flooding can be a nuisance to motorists and homeowners.

Stormwater drainage systems are typically designed to remove water from a developed area as quickly as possible during a storm. While these systems are convenient for urban residents, they also carry pollutants to surface waters at a "rapid transit" pace. **Contrary to popular belief, pet wastes, oil and other materials**

dumped into storm sewer grates do not go to the waste water treatment plant, but flow directly into streams and lakes. For example: dumping oil into a storm sewer grate has almost unthinkable consequences. When it reaches the water, five quarts of oil can create a slick as large as two football fields and persist on mud or plants for six months or more.

How can you adopt your catch basin?

- **Remove debris from grates** - the grates of catch basins can become clogged with litter or leaves, especially in the spring and fall. Regularly inspect the grate and remove debris. Encourage neighbors to adopt the catch basins in front of

their homes, and keep them free of debris.

- **Ensure regular cleaning** - catch basins should be cleaned out before the storage area is half full. Once this level is reached, debris begins to wash into sewer pipes. Cleaning these storage areas should be performed by your local jurisdiction or a private contractor. Contact your local public works department if you are concerned about the catch basins in your neighborhood.

- **Label your storm drains** - stenciled signs or applied decals that read "Dump No Waste - Drains to River" are a good reminder that nothing but water should enter a storm drain.

Having a clean environment is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean waterways provide recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, and add beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water - and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater clean. For more easy steps on protecting our lakes and streams, visit www.mywatersheds.org.



This article was adapted from a fact sheet prepared by the Washtenaw County's Drain Commissioner's office.



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